LIFE AND WORK OF CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

by C.H. Spurgeon

A comprehensive biography documenting Spurgeon's entire life story from ancestry through childhood, conversion, ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and his lasting influence on Christianity.

120 Chapters

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Chapter 1

BOOK: The Life and Works of Charles Haddon Spurgeon

The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Volumes 1-5 by

G. Holden Pike

Chapter 2

VOLUME ONE

Chapter 3

Picture of C.H. Spurgeon

Chapter 1:he Fatherland of the Spurgeons

Chapter 1.

The Fatherland Of The Spurgeons The Spurgeon Family of Dutch Descent—Driven from Holland by Persecution—Philip II. and the Duke of Alva—William the Silent and the Heroic Age—The Siege of Leyden—Interest felt by Mr. Spurgeon in the Country—His Preaching Tour in Holland in 1863—Dutch Characteristics—Tastes of Mr. Spurgeon—His Sympathy with Netherlanders—Job Spurgeon the Quaker.

That the earliest known representatives of Mr. Spurgeon's family were of Dutch extraction is an interesting fact; but none the less on that account the great preacher was an Englishman, who loved his country, and was content in the most unselfish manner to devote his best energies to its welfare. Before his death he had become generally regarded as one who was a servant of the Universal Church and a citizen of the world; but while he commanded the respect of all nationalities, probably it was the English-speaking race alone who could perfectly understand him. Foreigners who had to make their acquaintance with the man through a translation could never fully realise the best qualities of his discourses in their original dress.

Rather more than two centuries and a half before the subject of this work was born, his Protestant ancestors appear to have been driven from their ancient home in the Netherlands by the persecution, on a wholesale scale, which broke out under the hateful rule of Philip II. That fanatical despot had less of political sagacity than his father, Charles V.; and in the end it turned out to be a misfortune rather than an advantage for such a misguided tyrant to be served by able men whose bigotry and general sympathies were in unison with his own ignoble aims. These were the tools who enabled Philip to ruin his empire, as well as to throw away his great opportunities of conferring lasting benefit on the Spanish race and the Spanish dependencies. The Spanish monarch probably had some share in instigating the burning of the Smithfield martyrs under the reign of his wife, our own Queen Mary; but if this too zealous Romanist injured England in this respect, he unintentionally conferred benefit upon our land when he drove away the flower of his own people to seek refuge on our shores. The Spurgeons, with a large number of others who crossed the sea in order to escape death at the hands of Ferdinando Alvarez, Duke of Alva, were the cream of the Protestant population. The Spanish general, who at the head of twenty thousand mercenary troops entered the Low Countries in the year 1567, was a man quite after the heart of Philip II., and he carried out the persecuting policy with alacrity and vigour.

Soon after the death of his English wife and the accession of her Protestant successor, the great Queen Elizabeth, Philip saw that certain symptoms of discontent began to show themselves in his Flemish provinces. Those provinces were rich; they were increasing in wealth. The Reformation had already so far made way among them that numbers of the people, of whom the Spurgeons were but a sample, were sufficiently enlightened to be ready, if need arose, to make sacrifices for their religion. Such subjects did not commend themselves to the phlegmatic mind of Philip II., however. To him the maintenance of Romanism and the Inquisition was of the first importance,

and because the inhabitants of the Low Countries were beginning to hold other views on such matters, he treated them in a way which was in strong contrast to his father's benignant policy towards them. At a council held in Spain, the Duke of Feria advised that mild measures should be adopted; the Duke of Alva, on the other hand, declared that severity alone would answer the purpose they had in view, and it was to this Ahithophel that the King yielded. The advice was in accord with his own cruel nature; and the King's admiration of Alva prompted him to allow to that able general almost unlimited power. What happened all readers of history know sufficiently well. In a little over five years 18,000 persons were executed, including the two patriots, Egmont and Horn, while about 30,000 fugitives made their escape to other lands, carrying with them their arts and industries. That was the heroic age in the history of Holland, and William the Silent, the ancestor of our own William III., or Prince of Orange, was the hero of the time. One of the most memorable events was the siege of Leyden by the Duke of Parma in 1573-74, the story of which has been thus succinctly told in the "Treasury of Geography":—

"For a period of seven weeks there was no bread within the city; horses, cats, dogs, with roots of all kinds, were eagerly devoured, but the heroic example of the burgomaster, Pieter Adrianzoon van der Werff, who offered his own body to such as were clamorous for surrender, encouraged his fellow-citizens to hold out. Unable to muster an adequate force for the relief of the place, the Prince of Orange at length formed the desperate resolve of breaking down the dykes of the adjacent coast and admitting the ocean. It was some little time before the full effect was produced; at length, impelled by a violent wind, the sea rushed in, overwhelmed the works of the besiegers, and forced them to a precipitate flight, leaving above a thousand of their number drowned. A fleet of boats, prepared for the expected relief of the beleaguered place, immediately advanced from Rotterdam over the newly-formed expanse of water, and triumphantly reached the walls of the city. The Prince of Orange, in token of gratitude for the heroism which the, defenders of Leyden had shown, gave them the option of two rewards—relief from certain taxes or the foundation of a university. The citizens, to their lasting honour, preferred the latter, and thus was formed an institution which rapidly became among the most eminent in Europe, and which still preserves a large measure of its fame. The traditions of Holland are heroic, if its plains be flat and unromantic and its people of phlegmatic temperament and calculating spirit."

Mr. Spurgeon never ceased to feel interest in Holland, and it yielded him satisfaction to know that his sermons and other works were extensively circulated in the Dutch language. In the early days of 1863 the English preacher visited the chief towns of the Netherlands; and it was while making that tour that he was honoured with an interview by the then reigning Queen. At such a time the stirring memories of the sixteenth century would come into his mind: he would think of his own kinsfolk, who escaped with their lives, and of those who remained behind to lay the foundation of a great country, and in many instances to pour out their blood in its behalf.

Although he dwells in quite an unromantic country, a chief characteristic of the middle-class Hollander is a love of gardening; and this is a taste which is likely to show itself in successive generations of descendants, even though they may have become associated with the dwellers in another land. That this love of trees, shrubs, and flowers was a characteristic of Mr. Spurgeon was evident to all who were acquainted with his habits. He loved his garden, because it never failed to afford refreshment to his mind when over-wearied with work and care; and choice plants, which friends would sometimes send him from distant lands, were treasured in his glass-houses as

carefully as a connoisseur would preserve valuable specimens or works of art. He loved the open air; but from his study he could walk into what might have been called his inner garden, enclosed in glass.

All this is quite in accord with the tastes of the Hollanders at the present day. "Every Dutchman above the necessity of working to-day for the bread of to-morrow has his garden-house in the suburbs of his town, and repairs to it on Saturday evening with his family, to ruralise until Monday over his pipe of tobacco," says Mr. S. Laing, in his "Notes of a Traveller." The same writer adds: "The slip of land is laid out in flower-beds, all the flowers in one bed being generally of one kind and colour; and the brilliancy of these large masses of flowers—the white and green paintwork, and the gilding about the garden-houses—and a row of those glittering fairy summer lodges, shining in the sun, upon the side of the wide canal, and swimming in humid brilliancy in the midst of plots and parterres of splendid flowers; and with the accompaniments of gaily-dressed ladies at the windows, swiftly-passing pleasure-boats, with bright, burnished sides below, and a whole city population afloat, or on foot, enjoying themselves in their holiday clothes—form, in truth, a summer evening scene which one dwells on with much delight."

Such is Holland to-day after generations of progress, and such are the heroic memories associated with the struggle for liberty in the sixteenth century. It is an additional distinction for such a country to have been the original home of the Spurgeon family. Whenever Mr. Spurgeon met a Hollander, especially one who was interested in the extension of religion in the country, the English pastor always at once felt that there was something of kinship which bound them together in sympathy. The Spurgeon family thus had trouble enough in the era of the Reformation, and they continued to be sufferers in the days of the Puritans a century later. Mention is made of a Job Spurgeon who was imprisoned during the reign of Charles II. This Job Spurgeon is mentioned twice in Besse's "Sufferings" in the following manner:—

"Anno 1677.—Taken for a meeting at Dedham, from Samuel Groom, at whose house it was held, from Job Spurgeon, and others, goods worth £16 15 6."

"Anno 1683.—On the 22nd of the month called July, with three others, Job Spurgeon, of Dedham was committed by warrant to Chelmsford Gaol. They were, after a few weeks, bailed out till sessions, but on their appearance there on the 3rd of October they were required to give sureties for their good behaviour, which, refusing to do, they were recommitted to prison, where three of them lay upon straw about fifteen weeks in the midst of a winter remarkable for extremity of cold; but the fourth, Job Spurgeon, being so weak that he was unable to lie down, sat up in a chair the most part of that time."

Chapter 2: Birth and Parenthood

Chapter 2.

Birth And Parentage

Changes in England—The Condition of the Country in 1834—Hard Times—Ignorance and Degradation of the Common People—The Spurgeon Family at Kelvedon—Historical Memories of the Place—Removal of the Family to Colchester—Tollesbury, the Scene of Mr. John Spurgeon's Ministry—Stambourne.

Mr. Spurgeon saw many changes brought about in the social—and political world during his not very long life of fifty-seven years. When, as a very young and newly-married couple, his parents were living at Kelvedon in 1834, the general outlook was depressing rather than encouraging. The prolonged and devastating wars in which the' four Georges had indulged had brought on the inevitable reaction, trade being bad and agriculture depressed. Farmers found it difficult to make both ends meet; for while prices of produce had fallen, the rates and other demands they had to meet had largely increased. In the political and ecclesiastical world there was more commotion than usual; for, finding that the Reform Bill had not altogether answered the expectations of those who had set their hopes extravagantly high, religious equality and the abolition of various abuses were being loudly demanded. Modern philanthropy, as we understand it, had not yet commenced. A large proportion of the common people were in a state of ignorance and degradation. There were a few charity schools in the towns, and here and there a village may have had one; but no one believed, as yet, that it was the duty of the Government to undertake a scheme of national education. Lord Ashley had commenced to fight the battle of the working classes and the oppressed; but he made headway slowly from lack of public sympathy and of friends to second his efforts. When Mr. John Spurgeon married Miss Jarvis and settled in Kelvedon, he chose for his home a very typical Essex village. It is not a large place, the population at present probably not exceeding two thousand souls. Though not hitherto sought out by tourists, as may come to be the case in the future, it is pleasantly situated, and it has a few historical memories which are of some interest to the topographer. After visiting the small, old-fashioned house in which Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born on June 19th, 1834, the tourist may ramble hither and thither and think of some other things which have happened here in the distant past. Anciently the manor was the heritage of Edward the Confessor; but at present the manor of other days is divided into two, one of which seems to be attached to the See of London, while the other belongs to the master of Felix Hall, from whose Park some beautiful scenery of the vale through which the River Blackwater flows may be looked upon. Centuries ago the northern invaders of England chose these rich lands for settlement; and it is said that the massacre of the Danes at the opening of the eleventh century commenced at Kelvedon. The present Bishop of Rochester, who took part in the late great preacher's funeral, is the patron of the living. The church has a tower, Early English pillars and arches, and a later nave-roof, in all of which ecclesiastical archaeologists will find something to interest them.

After the birth of a son and heir, whom they named after his uncle Haddon, Mr. and Mrs. John Spurgeon did not remain long at Kelvedon. In or about April, 1835, they gave up their village home in order to settle at Colchester as a more convenient centre for their business, and where some of their family connections appear to have resided. Hence the statement, which has often been repeated, that the brothers Charles and James Spurgeon went to school together at Kelvedon—one being called Big Chummy and the other Little Chummy—has no foundation in fact. Charles was not a year old when his parents removed to Colchester, and soon after he had completed his first year he went to reside with his paternal grandparents at Stambourne. The way in which the name of Haddon came into the family is thus explained. The father of the pastor of Stambourne was a cheese factor, whose working capital was inadequate, but he was always able to procure a loan from his friend Mr. Haddon, a fellow deacon. While he was a model of liberality, Mr. Haddon was eccentric, and none of his odd ways could be disregarded by those who desired to retain his favour. He would lend his friend £500 at once; but although he would accept of no interest, no excuse availed if the money was not returned on the day agreed upon. The great-grandfather of the late pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle took care that nothing happened to vex his generous co-deacon; and he showed his regard by naming one of his children Haddon. In due time the mother of the future great preacher called her son Charles Haddon. Mr. Spurgeon was really named after a brother of each of his parents—Charles Parker Jarvis, and Haddon Rudkin Spurgeon. The present pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, the Rev. J. A. Spurgeon, informs me in a private letter: "The family of Haddon are now in America, and keep up correspondence with my dear father. They still consider 'Haddon Hall' to be rightfully theirs, though lost to the family."

While living at Colchester Mr. John Spurgeon had a congregation at Tollesbury, to which he ministered on Sundays. Tollesbury is approached by a creek of the River Blackwater; the parish also has some thousands of acres of water, so that on this account, and also on account of its saline pastures and oyster-dredging, the place has some rather uncommon characteristics. Mr. John Spurgeon's service at Tollesbury continued for some years, or until the children of the family were big enough to accompany their father in his conveyance on Sunday mornings, the distance being nine miles. Meanwhile, the boy Charles remained at Stambourne until he could run about and had become the precocious child. Later on, it was there that he loved to spend his holidays.

Chapte 3: James Spurgeon on Stambourne

Chapter 3.

James Spurgeon Of Stambourne The Last of the Puritans"—Hereditary Rheumatism—Job Spurgeon in Chelmsford Gaol—The Old Pastor of Stambourne—His Characteristics—His Training for the Ministry—Stam-bourne and its Surroundings—The Hervey Family—Henry Havers, Founder of the Independent Congregation—Settlement of James Spurgeon at Stambourne—The Days of War and of dear Bread—A Village Greatheart—Special Providences—Charles and his Grandfather—Visits to the Squire at Stambourne Hall—Resisting the Devil—A Relic of an older World—The old Pastor's Refusal to visit London—A last Link between the Old Times and the New.

When a man preached, talked, and dressed like old Mr. James Spurgeon, the Independent pastor of Stambourne, it was quite natural that people should think and speak of him as one of the last of the Puritans. As I have heard his chief remaining grandson explain, the veteran preacher, when between eighty and ninety years of age, would significantly rub his knees as he sat by the fire, and give expression to the apprehension that rheumatism would, after all, bring him to a premature end. The rheumatism was hereditary; and though some may trace it back only as far as the time of Job Spurgeon, already mentioned, who for conscience sake was confined in Chelmsford Gaol during some weeks of wintry weather in the reign of Charles II., it is more than probable that the refugees of a century earlier brought the affection with them from the Netherlands. A correspondent of The Christian World has made these references to Mr. Spurgeon and his grandfather:—

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

Old Mr. James Spurgeon was something more than an uncompromising champion of evangelical teaching; he had the old-fashioned habits of the older world in which he had passed his youth and early manhood. Like all veterans of the school to which he belonged, he may probably have had some deeply-rooted prejudices, but he inherited all the strong affections which were characteristic of the Puritan stock from which he had descended. James Spurgeon of Stambourne was of metal not a whit inferior to that of his valiant ancestor, Job Spurgeon. It was of the quality out of which martyrs are made. At whatever time or in whatever form the enemy might appear, James Spurgeon knew not what was meant by showing "the white feather." He was not superstitious; but he no more doubted the existence of a personal devil than his own. The Evil One was not only a real adversary, he was one to be resisted at any cost and at every turn. He might thwart the pastor's best endeavours during the week; he might be found following him up the pulpit stairs with

perplexing suggestions on the Sabbath; but no weapons which such a foe could employ could prevail. The congregation were in full sympathy with their pastor; what he preached and practised they carried with them into the world and its everyday life. Nothing was ever said in the pulpit or believed in the pew save what had been thoroughly well tested. It was a rare instance of Puritan fervour burning on through two centuries; and if there had ever been any want of harmony between the Established Church and the Independent Chapel in earlier days, all had given place to peace and friendship in the days of James Spurgeon. The two congregations had much in common; the clergyman and the Nonconformist preacher were fast friends. Depict the village as it was half a century ago, and you have a picture of English country life at its best. In the opening years of this century Mr. James Spurgeon had been a student at Hoxton Academy, where ministerial candidates were trained for service among Nonconformists. At midsummer, 1804, he was sent to supply the pulpit at the Independent chapel at Clare, a Suffolk town which dates back to Saxon times, and which has an ancient church, and formerly had a strong castle. Mr. James Spurgeon accepted the pastorate at Clare in the summer of 1806, but four years later he removed to Stambourne, where he remained till his death in 1864.

Stambourne? Of course the reader does not know the locality. It is not even a place one goes past in the train, as there is no railway station. Book to Yeldham on the Great Eastern Railway, and you will have less than three miles to walk; but if you like to alight at Halstead, the post-town of the villages thereabout, you will enjoy a fine cross-country excursion of eight miles. If you do not know the country, be careful in regard to the roads, and ask yourself if you can answer questions such as Mr. Spurgeon might himself have put to you, if in conversation you had aroused his interest by confessing you were a native, or by professing to be tolerably well acquainted with the country. In Mr. Spurgeon's childhood days there was an oak at Great Yeldham which all curious sight-seers went to see, and which, in the days of its prime, before it died of old age, measured thirty feet in circumference four feet from the ground. Toppesfield, two miles farther on in a north-westerly direction, enjoyed some local notoriety on account of the Roman relics which had been unearthed. Wethersfield is also an interesting place, with an ancient church. Finchingfield, on an affluent of the River Pant, was the parish in which the East Essex hounds used to meet when the little boy Charles felt such an interest in their exploits. The manor belonged of old to John de Compes, who received it for the distinguished service of turning the spit at the coronation of Edward III. Steeple, not far away, belongs chiefly to St. Bartholomew's Hospital. Then Hempstead had its Great Oak; and in this parish, too, was Winchlow Hall, belonging to the family of William Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood.

Such were the surroundings of Stambourne. When you actually arrive in the village, the ancient parish church, with its Norman tower, will be an object of interest; so, also, will the comfortable old mansion called Stambourne Hall. The labourers' cottages, which are gradually becoming tenantless one after the other, will probably inspire more uncomfortable reflections; but as we are concerned with the past rather than with the present, no reflection need be made on that unwelcome symptom of the decay of rural industry. Another thing to be regretted is the disappearance of the old manse in which James Spurgeon lived, and the meetinghouse, on the same ground, in which for nearly sixty years he preached the Gospel.

It is pleasant to think of Stambourne as of a typical Essex village; but apart from that the history of this quiet retreat, lying, as it were, aside from the thronged highway of modern life and progress,

illustrates some of the best phases of English rural life. In the seventeenth century there was probably no one in the country who more ardently loved the Established Church than Henry Havers, who, as ex-rector of the parish, founded the original Nonconformist chapel, in which the Common Prayer was read until the reign of George II. was far advanced. As a man of substance, he founded the church which has flourished until the present day under nine successive pastors, and he took care to place the property in the hands of trustees. When the late James Spurgeon settled in this retired sphere in 1810 he little thought that he would be the man to give new interest to a settlement which already could offer some attractions to historical inquirers. The times were hard as well as threatening; for just about the date that the pastor's eldest son—the present Rev. John Spurgeon—was born, wheat rose in price in England to a guinea a bushel, and in some counties even some shillings higher. Despite all drawbacks, however, there have been persons living in those days who were wont to speak of these as the good old times.

Under James Spurgeon, the old fashions of former days held on until long after the accession of the present Queen; and an extant diary written fifty years ago we might suppose to have been composed by some Puritan Greatheart of the Commonwealth era. The writer might occasionally feel the chill of a passing cloud, but his sun could never be really eclipsed. His faith was far-seeing and steadfast; his piety was as healthy as a palm-tree refreshed by perennial springs. James Spurgeon was always himself, and that means that he was unlike any other man who lived in England during the first half of this century. He seems to have been made for country service, and it is not likely that he would ever have succeeded so well amid the more crowded life and excitement of a town.

Many special providences would happen in the life of such a man, and one of the most signal of these was when grandfather and grandson were brought together under the same roof. The two appear to have been made the one for the other. Though the one was close upon sixty years the elder of the other, they seem to have had much in common; at all events, little Charles appears to have taken readily to such things as pleased the venerable pastor. The child was a daily comfort to the veteran Christian, and was, at the same time, learning in the school which, on the whole, was probably the best fitted to educate his heart and mind.

We cannot wonder that a man in Mr. Spurgeon's position should have looked back upon the days of childhood, spent beneath his grandfather's roof, as a sunny period. The truth is, that the conditions of life in the village were favourable all round. In his own way Mr. Spurgeon tells how the rector of the parish and his grandfather were agreed as regarded their doctrinal belief. The squire was a churchman, but he also sometimes attended the Nonconformist chapel; while on Mondays squire, rector, Nonconformist pastor, and the little boy, would all be found at the Hall together—a merry party, enjoying to the full sugared bread-and-butter for their tea. Of these things, and many others, readers should not fail to read for themselves in "Memories of Stambourne," Mr. Spurgeon's last book. As we have said, few men of his time more strikingly showed the possession of Puritan characteristics than the old pastor of Stambourne. To him the Bible was literally the Word of God, all being verbally inspired. His strong belief in a personal devil has been already referred to; and some of his experiences under this head almost read like something which might have been borrowed from "The Pilgrim's Progress." He had a notion that he was liable to be assaulted by the Evil One at the most unexpected times, and at his weakest point.

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James Spurgeon seemed to live as one of the last representatives of the Old Dissent. In all his tastes, manners, and aspirations, the veteran belonged to a generation which had long since passed away. His faith was old-fashioned in its childlike simplicity; he was never troubled with any of the doubts which are raised by modern criticism. He was a lover of psalmody; but when he sang anything not actually in the Bible it had to be one of Dr. Watts's hymns. All of his habits seemed to tally with his old-fashioned clothes. The venerable pastor of Stambourne was one of the last connecting links between the old times and the new. During his long life of nearly ninety years, what changes had time brought about in the world! In James Spurgeon's days of childhood Dr. Johnson still ruled as the autocrat of London literary society; the establishment of the Republic of the United States and the French Revolution were events of his youth; and he was in the early years of his pastorate when Napoleon was extinguished by Wellington at Waterloo. As a man and as a pastor, the Stambourne veteran belonged to the older world of the Georges into which he had been born; and it is probable that he had little or no sympathy with the innovations and modern methods of doing things which he lived to see introduced. Had any one of us stepped into the old meetinghouse in the middle of this century, it would have been like sitting beneath the shadow of those days of the eighteenth century which elderly people once liked to think and talk about. The occupants of the pews, the preacher in the pulpit, and, after the service was over, the leave-takings at the manse itself, would have seemed to tell of days which can never come again.

Chapter 4: Childhood

Chapter 3.

James Spurgeon Of Stambourne The Last of the Puritans"—Hereditary Rheumatism—Job Spurgeon in Chelmsford Gaol—The Old Pastor of Stambourne—His Characteristics—His Training for the Ministry—Stam-bourne and its Surroundings—The Hervey Family—Henry Havers, Founder of the Independent Congregation—Settlement of James Spurgeon at Stambourne—The Days of War and of dear Bread—A Village Greatheart—Special Providences—Charles and his Grandfather—Visits to the Squire at Stambourne Hall—Resisting the Devil—A Relic of an older World—The old Pastor's Refusal to visit London—A last Link between the Old Times and the New.

When a man preached, talked, and dressed like old Mr. James Spurgeon, the Independent pastor of Stambourne, it was quite natural that people should think and speak of him as one of the last of the Puritans. As I have heard his chief remaining grandson explain, the veteran preacher, when between eighty and ninety years of age, would significantly rub his knees as he sat by the fire, and give expression to the apprehension that rheumatism would, after all, bring him to a premature end. The rheumatism was hereditary; and though some may trace it back only as far as the time of Job Spurgeon, already mentioned, who for conscience sake was confined in Chelmsford Gaol during some weeks of wintry weather in the reign of Charles II., it is more than probable that the refugees of a century earlier brought the affection with them from the Netherlands. A correspondent of The Christian World has made these references to Mr. Spurgeon and his grandfather:—

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

Old Mr. James Spurgeon was something more than an uncompromising champion of evangelical teaching; he had the old-fashioned habits of the older world in which he had passed his youth and early manhood. Like all veterans of the school to which he belonged, he may probably have had some deeply-rooted prejudices, but he inherited all the strong affections which were characteristic of the Puritan stock from which he had descended. James Spurgeon of Stambourne was of metal not a whit inferior to that of his valiant ancestor, Job Spurgeon. It was of the quality out of which martyrs are made. At whatever time or in whatever form the enemy might appear, James Spurgeon knew not what was meant by showing "the white feather." He was not superstitious; but he no more doubted the existence of a personal devil than his own. The Evil One was not only a real adversary, he was one to be resisted at any cost and at every turn. He might thwart the pastor's best endeavours during the week; he might be found following him up the pulpit stairs with

perplexing suggestions on the Sabbath; but no weapons which such a foe could employ could prevail. The congregation were in full sympathy with their pastor; what he preached and practised they carried with them into the world and its everyday life. Nothing was ever said in the pulpit or believed in the pew save what had been thoroughly well tested. It was a rare instance of Puritan fervour burning on through two centuries; and if there had ever been any want of harmony between the Established Church and the Independent Chapel in earlier days, all had given place to peace and friendship in the days of James Spurgeon. The two congregations had much in common; the clergyman and the Nonconformist preacher were fast friends. Depict the village as it was half a century ago, and you have a picture of English country life at its best. In the opening years of this century Mr. James Spurgeon had been a student at Hoxton Academy, where ministerial candidates were trained for service among Nonconformists. At midsummer, 1804, he was sent to supply the pulpit at the Independent chapel at Clare, a Suffolk town which dates back to Saxon times, and which has an ancient church, and formerly had a strong castle. Mr. James Spurgeon accepted the pastorate at Clare in the summer of 1806, but four years later he removed to Stambourne, where he remained till his death in 1864.

Stambourne? Of course the reader does not know the locality. It is not even a place one goes past in the train, as there is no railway station. Book to Yeldham on the Great Eastern Railway, and you will have less than three miles to walk; but if you like to alight at Halstead, the post-town of the villages thereabout, you will enjoy a fine cross-country excursion of eight miles. If you do not know the country, be careful in regard to the roads, and ask yourself if you can answer questions such as Mr. Spurgeon might himself have put to you, if in conversation you had aroused his interest by confessing you were a native, or by professing to be tolerably well acquainted with the country. In Mr. Spurgeon's childhood days there was an oak at Great Yeldham which all curious sight-seers went to see, and which, in the days of its prime, before it died of old age, measured thirty feet in circumference four feet from the ground. Toppesfield, two miles farther on in a north-westerly direction, enjoyed some local notoriety on account of the Roman relics which had been unearthed. Wethersfield is also an interesting place, with an ancient church. Finchingfield, on an affluent of the River Pant, was the parish in which the East Essex hounds used to meet when the little boy Charles felt such an interest in their exploits. The manor belonged of old to John de Compes, who received it for the distinguished service of turning the spit at the coronation of Edward III. Steeple, not far away, belongs chiefly to St. Bartholomew's Hospital. Then Hempstead had its Great Oak; and in this parish, too, was Winchlow Hall, belonging to the family of William Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood.

Such were the surroundings of Stambourne. When you actually arrive in the village, the ancient parish church, with its Norman tower, will be an object of interest; so, also, will the comfortable old mansion called Stambourne Hall. The labourers' cottages, which are gradually becoming tenantless one after the other, will probably inspire more uncomfortable reflections; but as we are concerned with the past rather than with the present, no reflection need be made on that unwelcome symptom of the decay of rural industry. Another thing to be regretted is the disappearance of the old manse in which James Spurgeon lived, and the meetinghouse, on the same ground, in which for nearly sixty years he preached the Gospel.

It is pleasant to think of Stambourne as of a typical Essex village; but apart from that the history of this quiet retreat, lying, as it were, aside from the thronged highway of modern life and progress,

illustrates some of the best phases of English rural life. In the seventeenth century there was probably no one in the country who more ardently loved the Established Church than Henry Havers, who, as ex-rector of the parish, founded the original Nonconformist chapel, in which the Common Prayer was read until the reign of George II. was far advanced. As a man of substance, he founded the church which has flourished until the present day under nine successive pastors, and he took care to place the property in the hands of trustees. When the late James Spurgeon settled in this retired sphere in 1810 he little thought that he would be the man to give new interest to a settlement which already could offer some attractions to historical inquirers. The times were hard as well as threatening; for just about the date that the pastor's eldest son—the present Rev. John Spurgeon—was born, wheat rose in price in England to a guinea a bushel, and in some counties even some shillings higher. Despite all drawbacks, however, there have been persons living in those days who were wont to speak of these as the good old times.

Under James Spurgeon, the old fashions of former days held on until long after the accession of the present Queen; and an extant diary written fifty years ago we might suppose to have been composed by some Puritan Greatheart of the Commonwealth era. The writer might occasionally feel the chill of a passing cloud, but his sun could never be really eclipsed. His faith was far-seeing and steadfast; his piety was as healthy as a palm-tree refreshed by perennial springs. James Spurgeon was always himself, and that means that he was unlike any other man who lived in England during the first half of this century. He seems to have been made for country service, and it is not likely that he would ever have succeeded so well amid the more crowded life and excitement of a town.

Many special providences would happen in the life of such a man, and one of the most signal of these was when grandfather and grandson were brought together under the same roof. The two appear to have been made the one for the other. Though the one was close upon sixty years the elder of the other, they seem to have had much in common; at all events, little Charles appears to have taken readily to such things as pleased the venerable pastor. The child was a daily comfort to the veteran Christian, and was, at the same time, learning in the school which, on the whole, was probably the best fitted to educate his heart and mind.

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Chapter 5: Visit of Richard Knil to Stambourne

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Charles and James Spurgeon as Playmates—Characteristics of the Elder—The Toy Ships—The Thunderer—Richard Knill at Stambourne—His Work in Foreign Climes—Knill's Mother—An Escape from Drowning—Saturday Evening in the Spurgeons' Best Parlour—Knill's Experience in Madras—His Account of the Great Flood at St. Petersburg—His Prophecy concerning his Young Friend—Permanence of the Friendship.

When Charles and James Spurgeon were boys together they were very much like other children of their age, although in some respect the characteristics of the elder, which at a very early date began to show themselves, were sometimes such as would prove him to be a child above the ordinary standard. Charles seems to have read the Bible for himself with a comprehension beyond his years, and the facts found in Scripture relating to nature and everyday life he made his own, so that the knowledge he possessed of such things in those early days was sufficiently striking to surprise older people who listened to his knowing remarks, and at times possibly corrected their own ignorance.

Charles and James played together; they were greatly attached to each other, but, as there was a difference of three years in their ages, the first must have been almost a man, comparatively speaking, in the eyes of his brother. The younger would, in consequence, take many impressions from the elder, such as would probably have a lasting influence.

Thus, one day the two brothers were seen playing together near some water on which each was sailing his toy ship. They began to talk about the names which should be given to the vessels. Both looked admiringly on the boats, as in their eyes they bore proudly on their way in company, some rare hard service being supposed to be in store for them. Suddenly the features of Charles assumed an expression of determination, and he said with great energy, "I shall call mine The Thunderer." He then went on to explain that if one meant to fight and gain the victory, his vessel must carry a name worthy of the cause in hand. "Yes, I shall call mine The Thunderer!" Of course the younger brother looked on in admiration, and being already content to follow one who was horn to be a leader, he gave his own little man-of-war a humbler name. A memorable event, which relieved the monotony of the days of childhood—if, indeed, the daily round ever had aught of monotony in it—was the visit to Stambourne of the late Richard Knill, who appears to have come as the appointed preacher of the anniversary sermon on behalf of the London Missionary Society. As a traveller of varied experience and adventure, as well as a quondam missionary, and at that time as a pastor, Mr. Knill would be cordially welcomed by the Stambourne minister, who was nearly twelve years the senior of his visitor. Mr. Knill had been engaged in Christian service in India and St. Petersburg successively; and during the latter part of his life he had for a time ministered in what had been the pulpit of Rowland Hill, at Wotton-under-Edge, after which he

removed to Chester. He was thus in many ways quite an interesting character to come into a country house in days when books and stories of adventure were not so plentiful as they are at present. Then, above all, the great cause of the London Missionary Society, which the visitor came to plead, was more than enough to make him welcome to such entertainment as the manse afforded.

Old James Spurgeon would naturally be charmed with the company of a man who, though younger than himself, had seen so much more of the world. Mr. Knill, having lived in the far East, as well as in distant northern regions, had much new information to give respecting little-known customs and strange peoples, and the progress of the Gospel amongst them.

However much Mr. Knill might take with his host, however, he appears to have been much more powerfully attracted by the old pastor's grandson, who then must have been passing some of his holidays at Stambourne. He saw something above the commonplace in the bright, speaking eyes of that round-faced child. Then, when the boy was spoken to, there seems to have come a response beyond his years, so that a bond of sympathy presently united the two. At the same time, Mr. Knill may have been drawn towards this engaging child partly because of his yearning love for young people, since his own children had, one by one, been borne to the grave. In the year 1848, which may have been about the date of this visit, Mr. Knill's last surviving son, who had been trained for the Christian ministry, had passed away, leaving in the fond father's heart a void never to be filled. The visit of the missionary preacher probably extended only from Saturday afternoon to Monday; but as the weather was sufficiently genial, he and the little boy passed some time together in the open air. The two knelt together in the great yew arbour at the bottom of the manse garden, when the elder prayed for his child friend in a way that was believed in after years to have drawn down the blessing of heaven. There was conversation also that related to Christ and His cause, which could not but have deeply impressed the boy's susceptible nature. But while the veteran missionary and his young friend are together in the manse garden, or while they quietly ramble along the sweet Stambourne lanes, now in their early summer dress, we shall hardly over-shoot the mark in supposing that the inquisitive child had his wholesome curiosity gratified by hearing something about his mature friend's experience and adventures in the world. Was Charles a lad who had to go to school morning by morning? That had once been the lot of Richard Knill; but in those old days of George III. England was nearly always at war, and the times were altogether harder. How interested little Charles would be in hearing of his friend's providential escape from drowning when a boy; and one may well suppose that the anecdote would be told because the circumstance pointed an obvious moral. Down in Devonshire, at the end of the last century, bridges over running streams were not always considered to be absolutely indispensable; and one such river, which had to be crossed morning and evening when going to and returning from school, had nothing better for the convenience of foot passengers than great blocks of stone, to step aside from which would be to risk drowning. On one occasion, while playing on one of these great blocks, Richard Knill fell in; but as it happened, a poor widow, who was carding wool not far away, heard the splash, and hastened to the rescue of what was then the flaxen-haired little boy. Mr. Knill could tell how the old dame—who, of course, was to him a veritable heroine—had saved him by seizing hold of his curls, so that, at times, there was genuine advantage in having long hair. "She could not read, but she saved my life," the old missionary would add. When the pastor's family and their visitor assembled on the Saturday evening in the best parlour of the

Stambourne manse, old James Spurgeon, as an ardent Puritan enthusiast, would naturally be interested in hearing about what was being done in foreign lands. We have no certain record of what passed; but we know fall well that the pastor and his grandson, as well as others who may have been there, would listen spell-bound to such accounts of service and adventure as a man like Knill could give. All this, moreover, would increase their interest in the missionary sermons to be preached in the adjoining meetinghouse on the morrow.

One seems to hear the pastor of Stambourne, his grandson sitting on a hassock at his feet, ask his brother Knill to tell them something about India, as he had known it in the early days of the century, more than thirty years before. Mr. Knill knew a good deal about life in Madras as he had found it in the year 1816, when it was the fashion for nominally Christian Europeans to lead very unworthy lives. On a certain Sunday, after service, soon after he arrived in the city, the missionary dined with a number of military officers, whose habits reflected the condition of society in general. "The wine passed round merrily; they pressed me to drink. I politely declined. The captain said, 'When you are at Rome you must do as Rome does.' I said, 'Captain, if you urge me to drink I will write to your sister about it, and what will she say?' The snare was broken. 'Well,' said he, 'do as you please.' They related soldiers' stories, and I related missionary stories, and by way of application I said: 'Gentlemen, we are going to build a girls' school in Black Town, near our chapel, to correspond with the boys' school, and as this is the first visit I have paid, I should like to make it memorable by your becoming the first contributors. Give me something for a foundation stone.' They cheerfully responded, and sent me home in the captain's palanquin with £15 towards the girls' school. From that time the captain became a regular attendant at chapel, and sometimes ten or twelve officers came with him."

Mr. Knill could talk not only of India, but of Russia; for he was in St. Petersburg at the time of the memorable overflowing of the Neva in November, 1824, and also daring the terrible outbreak of cholera in 1830. Had the little boy, who was so interested in all that was taking place in this old Essex village, ever heard of the storm of fire which nearly two thousand years before had overtaken the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii? If so, his new friend, Mr. Knill, had actually lived in the Russian capital, which, as a great modern city, might possibly one day be overtaken by a flood that would allow none of the hundreds of thousands of inhabitants to escape from death, any more than those in the ancient towns were able to get away from the overwhelming fire.

What the missionary once related concerning the flood in the Russian city is a sample of the anecdotes with which he was able to entertain friends at home in England while sitting as a guest at their firesides:—"The wind was high, and the waters rose very much, so that guns were fired to warn the inhabitants of those apartments which were nearly on a level with the river. The next morning the guns fired again, as the waters had greatly increased. About ten a.m. some of the streets near the Neva were beginning to be covered; but the people would not believe that the waters could rise much higher, forty-seven years having rolled away since the city was inundated. By half-past ten it was too late to attempt the removal of any property, and all the people were thrown into confusion. Those who could run, ran; and those who could not, cried for deliverance from immediate death. In some instances assistance reached the sufferers, but in many more they were suffocated by the flood. By two p.m. the city presented a scene the most awful that can be conceived. Every place was deserted. There was nothing visible that had life, and the streets were occupied by ships, and boats, and watch-houses, and floating trees, and even coffins from the

cemeteries, with property of various kinds. Several entire villages were carried away, with the exception of a cottage here and there to make known where they once stood."

Such was the man who came to the old manse at Stambourne to preach the missionary sermons between forty and fifty years ago, and such were the things he was able to relate from his own varied experience when opportunity offered. We are interested in him because he appears really to have been the first who entered the village with an eye of sufficient discernment to detect the uncommon genius of young Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Mr. Knill had never before heard a child of his little friend's years read the Scriptures at family prayer with such effect; and he had a presentiment, for which he could not account, that the little fellow before him was destined to undertake distinguished service in the Church. All have heard of the striking prophecy that his young friend would grow up to proclaim the Gospel to multitudes; and how he asked that when he preached for the first time in Surrey Chapel he would allow the people to sing Cowper's familiar hymn, "God moves in a mysterious way." All that the devoted ex-missionary had spoken of, and much more besides, at last came to pass; and no one was more delighted with Mr. Spurgeon's early successes than the friend who had met with the future great preacher at his grandfather's manse, had prayed with him, and had admired him as a child of remarkable promise. "I know him!" cried Richard Knill, when news of the vast crowds attending Mr. Spurgeon's services reached Chester; and Mr. Spurgeon still knew and loved Richard Knill. The friendship commenced at Stamboume continued until the old missionary's death in 1857, at the age of seventy. Both the missionary and his younger friend appear to have looked upon their first meeting at Stambourne as quite providential; and although the striking prophecy to the effect that the little boy would one day preach in Rowland Hill's chapel may have helped to bring about its own fulfilment, the episode, as a whole, is sufficiently remarkable to warrant particular notice.

Chapter 6: Schooldays and Conversion

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Schooldays And Conversion

Quality of Spurgeon's Education—Preaching from a Hay-rack—His Mother's Teaching—His first Schoolmasters—A School Incident—Removal with his Brother to Maidstone—A precocious Letter-writer—Incidents connected with his Conversion—Scene in the Colchester Primitive Methodist Chapel—The Sermon—Mr. John Spurgeon's Testimony—Zeal in Christian Work—A Boy's Humour.

When Mr. Spurgeon settled in London in the year 1854 there were those who industriously circulated the report that the young preacher was quite uneducated. This was not the opinion of those who were better acquainted with the facts of the case, however. The truth was, that he was not only as well prepared as circumstances would allow for the distinguished position he was destined to occupy in the world, but was evidently prepared for his future eminent service in the best manner possible. That is the view the late Pastor would himself have taken of the matter, while the tutor to whom he was chiefly indebted—the late Mr. Charles Leeding—would have borne similar testimony. They would both have maintained that the hand of Providence had overruled all things from beginning to end. The parents of the future preacher were not people who undervalued education; they rather exercised becoming self-denial in order to give their children educational advantages. If, therefore, we follow young Spurgeon through the course of his education, and at the same time take full account of the discipline he received in his grandfather's manse, we shall probably also see for ourselves that he was singularly favoured in the days of childhood and youth; that, in point of fact, all things seemed to work together to fit the wonderful boy for the great sphere he was designed to occupy.

What his work in the world would really be appears to have been seen even in the early days of childhood. As a man of observation, Mr. John Spurgeon saw that his son was destined to become a preacher. "Yes, yes; he always was to preach," he told a correspondent of a daily newspaper who questioned him on this subject; and the veteran then went on to tell of a characteristic scene he once witnessed in his stable at Colchester. Looking into this building on a certain afternoon, the father observed that his son Charles had climbed into the hay-rack above the horse's manger, and, supposing that to be his pulpit, was addressing an audience below with all the energy he could command. As his chief auditor, the child-preacher's brother James was becomingly accommodated with a seat in the manger, while his sisters occupied a more humble, though probably a more comfortable, position on trusses of hay. There could be no doubt about the bent of such a lad's inclinations, although it might not be possible as yet to discover that he was a unique genius.

Like many other great personages before him, young Charles Spurgeon was no doubt greatly indebted to his mother as a teacher before he went to school at all. When he first left home to get

instruction, his first schoolmistress was the wife of a certain Captain Cook, a namesake of the well-known eighteenth-century discoverer, but not related to him, so far as I am aware, although an ancient tobacco-box, which is supposed to have travelled round the world in the pocket of this intrepid discoverer, is still treasured in the family as a memento of the old days at Colchester. The promising lad next went to a school in the same town kept by a Mr. Lewis, under whom he made some progress. Perhaps the young scholar may thus early have been interested in the topography of the ancient Roman town, the old-time associations of which had extended to the Trinobantes among the Britons, to Claudius Cæsar and Boadicea at later dates, and to the Saxons still later. It was at Colchester that Charles first met with his favourite tutor, Mr. Leeding—the friend to whom he was chiefly indebted for painstaking instruction.

It was a good school which young Charles Spurgeon attended at Colchester; and, as many misrepresentations on this subject have gained currency, I am glad to quote the testimony of Mr. E. D. Cheveley, of Harrogate, given since Mr. Spurgeon's death. The writer was educated at the same academy, and, having grateful memories of the advantages he received, is anxious to correct misleading statements. "Stockwell House, Colchester," he says, "where Charles Haddon Spurgeon was being educated from the age of eleven to fifteen, was a thoroughly good middle-class classical and commercial school. Mr. Henry Lewis, the principal, was a man whose literary attainments were of a superior order, and for years he was assisted by a very scholarly man in the person of Mr. Leeding, whose death occurred only very recently. Mr. Leeding was the classical and mathematical tutor; his teaching was very thorough, and in Charles Spurgeon he possessed a pupil of a very receptive mind, especially with Latin and Euclid. I remember well that in both of these subjects he was very advanced, so that he left Stockwell House a thoroughly well-educated youth; in fact, quite as much so as it was possible for him to attain outside of the Universities. Such statements, therefore, as have appeared in the public press to the effect that Mr. Spurgeon's education, 'such as it was,' was obtained at a school at Colchester, convey the idea that it was education of a most elementary character, and are, in consequence, somewhat incorrect."

"J. B.," of St. Botolph's, Colchester, has also given in the same journal—The Christian World—some reminiscences of the old days at Colchester, when he was at school with Spurgeon. Speaking of the rollicking humour, combined with great industry, which was even then characteristic of Spurgeon, this correspondent says:—

"Spurgeon was always top boy of his class—in fact, top boy of the school. Once only I remember he lost his place in class, and lost every place until he reached the very bottom. In vain did his teacher remonstrate with him; he was at the bottom, and couldn't get away. At last it occurred to the teacher, perhaps the fire near the bottom of the class might have something to do with it. It was a very cold day, and the top of the class was close to a draughty door. The teacher reversed the class, making the top by the stove. Spurgeon immediately brightened up; not a chance was missed of getting up, and he was soon back in his old place at the top.

"About half-a-dozen boys, who lived at some distance from the school, used to carry their dinners and eat them in the schoolroom. Spurgeon was one of these, and it was his usual custom while eating his own dinner to be turning over the pages of a joke or riddle or anecdote book in search of something to amuse the rest. Anything extra good he would sometimes commence reading before

his mouth was quite ready. Many were the laughs we had, and many the half-chokings we had, in trying to feed and read and laugh all at once. The playground was never Spurgeon's forte; play of the intellect was his delight." The anecdote about the stove I have myself heard Mr. Spurgeon tell at the Pastors' College. The next move was when, in the year 1848, the brothers Charles and James went together to a college at Maidstone, in which special attention was given to the study of agriculture as a science. The principal was Mr. Walker, a relative. The journey thither from the Eastern Counties was through London; and that was probably the first sight the brothers had of the great metropolis where in the future their united life-work was to be undertaken. Railways were not so universal then as they are at present; and memories of the coach and other things belonging to the journey appear to have lingered in the minds of the travellers.

After leaving Maidstone another move, fraught with still greater consequences, was made, when young Spurgeon became junior tutor in the academy of Mr. Swindell at Newmarket. Some particular account of the progress made in this town will need to be given; but in the meantime some reference must be made to that great crisis in life which we call conversion, which occurred before the situation of tutor was accepted. In connection with this subject we have to bear well in mind that, all along, the training of this child of genius had been of a distinctly religious character. One reason why he had so readily caught up the modes of thinking and feeling of his Puritan grandfather was because his mind had been prepared for the reception of such impressions by the training of the home. From his earliest childhood the future preacher had lived in a religious atmosphere, and the talk of religious people had been, as it were, his native dialect. In an extant letter, written at the age of fourteen and addressed to an uncle, this precocious child is found using language and scriptural phrases such as might have come from a seasoned Puritan of full experience in the seventeenth century. Mere knowledge of such things, however, does not necessarily affect the heart and life so as to ensure peace of mind. The great change of conversion appears to have occurred towards the close of the year 1848, or the opening of 1849, when the boy was in his fifteenth year. The family were then living at Colchester. Mr. John Spurgeon was engaged in business, but on Sunday mornings he regularly drove over to Tollesbury, nine miles away, there to minister to a congregation at the Independent Chapel. As the Spurgeon household was a tolerably large family, the custom was observed of the young people accompanying their father to Tollesbury in turn. On a certain Sunday morning in the winter of 1848-49 it had been arranged for Charles to accompany his father to the service, as he had so often done before; but, as the weather happened to turn out cold and stormy, it was thought advisable for the lad not to go. "You cannot go to Tollesbury, therefore you had better go to the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Colchester," his mother said to him, and Charles at once felt disposed to obey. On that particular morning he was not in a happy state of mind; and it was probably quite as agreeable to his feelings to go alone to public worship as it would have been to accompany his father in the chaise through the wind and snow. In point of fact, this son of the Tollesbury Independent minister was in that transition state of doubt and terror—eager for the pardon and peace of soul which he could not yet find—which Bunyan refers to in the opening of his immortal allegory: "Behold, I saw a man, clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him open the book, and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying, 'What shall I do?'" Tortures of mind, such as Bunyan himself may have endured, and such as he alludes to in another of his works,

were at this time oppressing the heart and soul of young Spurgeon. When the anxious youth walked from his home into the Colchester street on that memorable tempestuous winter morning, he appears hardly to have settled in his own mind whether he would enter the Primitive Methodist Chapel, as his mother had recommended, or whether he would go further afield. He went onward, engrossed with his own thoughts, and little heeding the storm, on account of the weight which well-nigh bore him down. When he presently came up to the Methodist meetinghouse he entered, however, thinking he might as well do that as go further, or do anything else. As Mr. John Spurgeon has explained, "the preacher in the Primitive Methodist Chapel was a local man; a local preacher, who also worked at digging, planting cabbages, and so on." When he entered the pulpit this humble peasant evangelist saw so few persons in the pews that he began to question with himself whether it was worth while to conduct a service at all. The snow and wind would not allow of the people leaving their homes, so that no one was to blame; but, at the same time, what good end would be answered by his wearing himself out by preaching in a practically empty chapel? The good man still hesitated in regard to abandoning the service; however, on taking another survey of his audience his eye may have been attracted by the pale, round-faced, anxious-looking lad sitting by himself, who looked like a subject that needed a good word. At all events, he resolved that the service should go on; and when the time came for the sermon he opened the Bible at Isa 45:22 —"Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Presently he became more animated, and again surveying the nearly empty chapel, as though each pew contained an anxious listener ready to receive the life-giving message of the Gospel, he called out with all his energy, "Look! Look! LOOK!" The arrow thus shot at a venture went home into at least one heart.

That, indeed, was a supreme moment in the life of young Spurgeon. The word that he most needed to hear had not only been spoken, he had received it with gladness; in an instant he felt that he was not only free, he was a new creature in Christ Jesus. What had really happened corresponds so precisely with what happened to Christian at a certain stage in his pilgrimage, as depicted by our great allegorist, that the passage may well be given. "So I saw in my dream," says Bunyan, "that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more. Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, 'He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death.' Then he stood still awhile to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked, therefore, and saw again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks. Now, as he stood looking and weeping, behold, three Shining Ones came to him, and saluted him with 'Peace be to thee.' So the first said to him, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee'; the second stripped him of his rags and clothed him with change of raiment; the third also set a mark upon his forehead, and gave him a roll with a seal upon it, which he bid him look on as he ran, and that he should give it in at the Celestial Grate." This is Bunyan's language in "The Pilgrim's Progress," and Mr. Spurgeon would have acknowledged that the passage exactly described his own condition on the stormy winter's day in 1849, when, for the first time, he realised that he was accepted of God for Christ's sake. The storm had not abated when he again stepped forth into the street; but what cared he for snow or wintry blast now that the burden had rolled from his shoulders, while peace flowed into his heart? He went homeward with a lightened step, for, instead of all things seeming to be against him, all things appeared to be in his

favour. Even the elements in their violence seemed to be friendly towards him. Life had now another meaning; the world opened up new prospects. The wonder was that so gloriously simple a matter had not been clearly apprehended before. "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth!" In that brief sentence the Evangelical Prophet had summed up the Gospel which in the fulness of time was to supersede the dispensation of the law.

Referring to the latter part of that eventful day, Mr. John Spurgeon said to a newspaper representative;—

"We spent the evening as an evening should be spent, reading the Bible, and so on. Then by-and-by I said, 'Come, boys, it's time to go to bed.' 'Father,' remarked Charles, 'I don't want to go to bed yet.' 'Come, come,' said I, whereupon he told me that he wanted to speak with me. We sat up long into the night, and he talked to me of his being saved, which had taken place that day, and right glad was I to hear him talk.' In the text, "Look, look, look," Charles said to me, holding up his hands, 'I found salvation this morning. In the text, "Accepted in the Beloved," preached at the Baptist Church in the evening, I found peace and pardon.' These, I think, were his words, and so was his conversion to God brought about."

Concerning the preacher at the Primitive Methodist Chapel, Mr. Spurgeon, senior, remarked:—"Some years afterwards, when I was opening a church in Cambridgeshire, a man came up and spoke to me, telling me that he was the local preacher of the Primitive Methodist Church. We had only spoken a few words, when I was whisked away to speak to some other of the many friends, and I never saw him again. About his entering the Baptist Church, Charles used to say that I was a wise father to let my children read the Bible for themselves." In its attendant circumstances, this conversion was a striking episode in a great man's life; so that naturally efforts have been made to identify the man who occupied the pulpit on the stormy Sunday when the lad was converted. In after years the convert himself described the preacher as a "lean-fleshed" man, but who he really was does not appear to have been discovered. Some supposed for a time that a Mr. Eaglen was the friend who preached what is now known as the "Look" sermon; but when he was confronted with Mr. Eaglen on one occasion Mr. Spurgeon failed to recognise in him his Primitive Methodist benefactor. Probably it is quite as well that he is hidden among that unknown crowd of honourable workers who have done their duty with great results following, but without having their fame trumpeted through the world. For such a youth to become converted was for him to become zealous in the various kinds of Christian work that he was competent to undertake. As Mr. John Spurgeon himself has said: "Before he went to Newmarket Charles had been converted, and while at Newmarket he was zealous to do something for religion. He distributed tracts among the people, some of whom, I suppose, were not particularly anxious at that time to have them. Anyhow, Charles adopted a measure to keep him in his house-to-house visitation and distribution. He carried copybooks, and taught the boys of a household to write, while at the same time he distributed the tracts. Indeed, from the very first, Charles was active to do good."

Other characteristics, which became more and more developed as years passed by, are also referred to by the great preacher's father. "Charles," he says, "had always a strong vein of humour, or, if you like, fun, running through him. An illustration of my words strikes me, although it carries me back many, many years. After Charles had begun to preach he used often to drive into Colchester from meetings. I don't mean that he drove himself, because he never would, and on

the occasion to which I refer James was driving. It was a four-wheeled machine, and one of my daughters was sitting behind, Charles and James being in front. 'You're asleep, Polly,' said Charles, turning round in his humorous way. 'No, I'm not,' she answered. A little later he turned round again with 'Now you're quite asleep, Polly. If you sleep I'll unhook you, and leave you behind!' Whether she had been dozing in the cold I don't know, but the prospect of being unhooked and left behind—an impossibility—kept her awake." This reminiscence somewhat anticipates events, however; for at the date at which we have now arrived, Charles Spurgeon was still only a schoolboy, whose education was as yet not nearly completed.

Chapter 7: At Newmarket

Chapter 7.

At Newmarket

Starting in Life—Newmarket, Past and Present—Mr. Swindell's Academy—Professor J. D. Everett's Reminiscences—Mr. Mattingly's Recollections—Temptation to Infidelity—Adoption of Baptist Views—Baptism at Isleham—Engaging in Christian Work—A Stock Contribution to Albums.

It was on the morning of August 17th, 1849, that young Spurgeon left his home at Colchester for Newmarket. As this represented something like his first start in life on his own account, Mrs. Spurgeon accompanied her son to his destination, in order to see for herself that all things were arranged satisfactorily and comfortably. Although the youth had only just commenced his sixteenth year, he had accepted the appointment of under tutor in the academy of Mr. Swindell at Newmarket, the return being the privilege of continuing his own education, especially in Greek. The town of Newmarket was in itself a place which Spurgeon, with such tastes and aspirations as had been particularly characteristic of him since his conversion, would have avoided rather than have selected for a residence; but, as he would be housed with a Christian family, the uncongenial surroundings would not unduly affect him. Newmarket was then what it still remains—the principal centre of racing in Great Britain. There the Jockey Club has its headquarters, and in the neighbourhood are many training establishments. The races are said to have originated in the days of Queen Elizabeth, when some fine Spanish horses, saved from the wreck of the Spanish Armada, were taken into the town. Be this as it may, Newmarket became a favourite place of fashionable resort early in the seventeenth century. James I. there erected for himself a palace which he called a hunting-seat; and this was afterwards rebuilt by his grandson Charles II. Part of the site, and also a portion of the materials of this building, were used for the erection of an Independent Chapel some years after Spurgeon had left the town. The town was a Roman station, and ancient relics are still occasionally discovered. The race meetings are held seven times every year, and the general surroundings of the place seem to show that sport constitutes its chief business. At the time that Mr. Spurgeon became an articled pupil in the academy of Mr. Swindell at Newmarket, Professor J. D. Everett, F.S.A., now of Queen's College, Belfast, was also engaged in the same establishment. Mr. Everett was about three years older than the junior tutor, and the two soon became sincere friends. The following reminiscences have been given by the Professor in The Christian World:—

"In the summer of 1849, when I was not quite eighteen, I went to Newmarket to assist in a school kept by a Mr. Swindell, who had been an old friend of my father's, and who had my brothers Percy and John as pupils. There were two other assistants, but not long after my arrival they went off, and I was left for a week or so as the sole assistant. I was then relieved of part of my duty by a lad of fifteen, who came as an articled pupil. This was Charles H. Spurgeon, and for the next three months we shared the work between us. We boarded in the house, occupied the same bedroom,

took our walks together, discussed our common grievances, and were the best of friends.

"He was rather small and delicate, with pale but plump face, dark brown eyes and hair, and a bright, lively manner, with a never-failing flow of conversation. He was rather deficient in muscle, did not care for cricket or other athletic games, and was timid at meeting cattle on the roads.

"He had been well brought up in a family with strong Puritanical tendencies, and was proficient in the subjects taught in the middle-class schools of those days. He knew a little Greek, enough Latin to gather the general sense of Virgil's 'Æneid' without a dictionary, and was fond of algebra. He had a big book of equation problems (by Bland, I think), and could do all the problems in it, except some two or three, which I was proud to be able to do for him. He was a smart, clever boy at all kinds of book learning; and, judging from the accounts he gave me of his experiences in his father's counting-house, he was also a smart man of business. He was a keen observer of men and manners, and very shrewd in his judgments. He enjoyed a joke, but was earnest, hard-working, and strictly conscientious."

Professor Everett is also able to quote from a shorthand diary which he kept at that time. One of the entries is as follows:—

"Tuesday, October 9.—After dinner I took Percy and four other boys to see the races. We saw the Cesarewitch, the most celebrated race at Newmarket; thirty-one horses ran. We also saw four other races. I saw quite enough to gratify my curiosity, and did not wish to stop to see any more races. Mr. Spurgeon did not go, as he thought he should be doing wrong if he went."

We thus see that the young tutor was keeping himself pure and unspotted from the world. He was also making appreciable advances in the Christian life; stimulated as he was in his endeavours to reach to higher things by a devoutly Christian housekeeper in the schoolmaster's household, who, by precept and example, encouraged the young man in every possible way. In his reminiscences already referred to, Professor Everett says something about this honourable woman:—

"As to the early history of his theological views, I can add something to what has been already published. In Mr. Swindell's household there was a faithful old servant—a big, sturdy woman, who was well known to me and all the inmates as 'cook.' She was a woman of strong religious feelings, and a devout Calvinist. Spurgeon, when under deep religious conviction, had conversed with her, and been deeply impressed with her views of Divine truth. He explained this to me, and told me in his own terse fashion that it was 'cook' who had taught him his theology. I hope I am not violating his confidence in mentioning this fact. It is no discredit to the memory of a great man that he was willing to learn from the humblest sources."

Mr. Swindell confirms all that the Professor says about the "cook" or housekeeper at the academy. He also notes that Mr Spurgeon refers to the old servant in his first published book, "The Saint and his Saviour," while on another occasion the great preacher confessed: "I got all the theology I ever needed a good many years ago from an old woman who was cook in the house where I was usher, and I have never had any wish to get a newer sort."

Mr. Robert Mattingly, of Great Cornard Street, Sudbury, has also contributed some interesting information concerning this good woman to the same journal:—

"About twenty-five years ago I became acquainted with the person referred to, Mary King by name. She was then living in cottage lodgings, facing St. Margaret's Church, Ipswich, and was a member of the Bethesda Strict Baptist Church, close by. She was a staunch Calvinist, logical, clear-headed, and had a wonderful knowledge of the Bible. I have often heard from her lips the account of her intercourse with the youthful Spurgeon, of which she was naturally not a little proud, as he had then attained the height of his marvellous popularity. Professor Everett says she was known as 'cook.' She always spoke of herself as 'housekeeper,' and as the intercourse between Mr. Spurgeon and herself seemed to be quite within the order of the household, she probably occupied something more than a menial position. During my acquaintance with her I learned that she had outlived all, or nearly all, of a small income (I do not remember from what source). I wrote to Mr. Spurgeon acquainting him with the facts, and received from him a prompt reply, thanking me for my letter, sending a hearty greeting to his old friend, and with characteristic generosity he enclosed a cheque for £5, with a request that I would minister to her immediate necessities, pay her 5s. a week, and generally use my discretion in dispensing the amount in his behalf. This I did, and reported to Mr. Spurgeon from time to time, always receiving a fresh cheque when the fund in hand became exhausted, and this was continued till her death about three years later."

It was during the Newmarket period that young Spurgeon learned from experience that the Christian life is a serious warfare, the narrow way leading from the strait gate having snares and pitfalls for unwary, youthful feet. He learned for himself all about the dangers of Bypath Meadow, as well as of the terrors of the Slough of Despond. Referring to freethinkers and their unbelief, Mr. Spurgeon confessed many years afterwards in a sermon at Exeter Hall, that he had himself been subject to the temptation to scepticism. In an evil hour, which he shuddered to think about, he let go the anchor of faith, and while starting on a mad voyage, he asked Reason to be his guide. The voyage thus entered upon was tempestuous, but brief, and the lesson learned would never be forgotten. What was spurious in infidelity he had seen for himself; he keenly realised also the horrors from which he had providentially escaped. If any invited him to go that way again he said No; for he had tried those seas for himself, and was personally aware of what was before any voyager who ventured upon them.

Mr. Swindell, the proprietor of the academy at Newmarket, was a Baptist, but I am not aware that it was through coming in contact with this friend that Mr. Spurgeon was led to embrace the sentiments of the Particular Baptist denomination. Mr. and Mrs. John Spurgeon, who, like old Mr. James Spurgeon, were Independents, wished their children to read the Scriptures independently, and then to decide for themselves on such a matter; and, so long as they were conscientious, it was never anything of a cross to the parents that their two sons should think differently from themselves in regard to baptism.

Having become fully persuaded in his own mind that adult baptism by immersion was the only mode sanctioned by Scripture of administering the ordinance, Mr. Spurgeon desired to be baptised and to become a member of a Baptist Church. When he looked around the neighbourhood in which he was living he could discover no pastor of a congregation to whom he cared to apply nearer than the one at Isleham, eight miles distant. Isleham was a place of over two thousand inhabitants in the Fen Country; and at a ferry of the River Lark the Baptists of the district had been accustomed to have baptisings in the open air periodically since the latter part of the eighteenth century. Being about half a mile from the village, the ferry itself is a quiet, sylvan spot,

such as old Isaak Walton would have loved as a retreat where sport and contemplation could be combined; but when persons were baptised there a concourse of onlookers was attracted. On his mother's birthday, May 3rd, 1850, Mr. Spurgeon rose early, and after spending some time alone he walked the eight miles to Isleham, and was baptised with some others by the late Pastor W. W. Cantlow, who was then settled at the place. The school-house, erected in 1888, was put up in memory of the man who thus immersed Mr. Spurgeon in the neighbouring river, and the memorial-stone of the building records the interesting event.

Mr. Spurgeon does not appear to have united himself with the congregation at Isleham, for, being separated from the people by a distance of eight miles, he could not conveniently have joined with them in their worship, communion, or Christian service. From that date, however, the young Christian had but one aim in life—to promote the glory of God and the good of his fellow-creatures. Of course, he had as yet no suspicion that his lot in the world would be more than a commonplace one; but he was already desirous of doing even commonplace things in the best manner possible. He keenly realised the responsibility of being a Christian; and the doctrines he then embraced were such as remained dear to him until the end. Those doctrines were identical with what his grandfather and father had preached before him. As time passed on he may have altered in some respects in his method of presenting those doctrines, but from the great truths themselves he never swerved. In after years in London, when, as was often the case, he was asked to make his contribution to an album, there was never any difficulty in regard to what should be written: it was, I believe, the great preacher's invariable custom to give Cowper's well-known verse, which so well expressed the character of his own life-work:—

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply, Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be till I die."

In his reminiscences Professor J. D. Everett says of Spurgeon at this time:—

"He had a wonderful memory for passages of oratory which he admired, and used to pour forth to me with great gusto, in our long walks, long screeds from open-air addresses, of a very rousing description, which he had heard delivered at Colchester Fair by the Congregational minister, Mr. Davids. His imagination had evidently been greatly impressed by these services, at which, by-the-bye, his father was selected to give out the hymns, on account of the loudness of his voice—a quality which would appear to have run in the family, but which had not at that time shown itself in my young friend. I have also heard him recite long passages from Bunyan's 'Grace Abounding.'

"He was a delightful companion, cheerful and sympathetic, a good listener as well as a good talker. And he was not cast in a common, conventional mould, but had a strong character of his own.

"The school was broken up before the regular time by an outbreak of fever, and I did not return to it; but we exchanged occasional letters for some years afterwards. He remained with Mr. Swindell for a year or so, and then removed to another school, kept by an old friend of his own at Cambridge." To Cambridge, therefore, we will now follow the young tutor.

Chapter 8: Cambridge--The First Sermon

Chapter 8.

Cambridge: The First Sermon

Residence at Cambridge—Engages in Christian Work with new Ardour—Mr. Leeding—Robert Hall's Opinion of Cambridge—Troubles in the Church during Mr. Robinson's Pastorate—The Outlook in Mr. Spurgeon's Time—Mr. Spurgeon and the Lay Preachers' Association—Work in the Villages by Local Preachers—Mr. Spurgeon begins his Career as a Cottage Preacher—"Bishop" Vinter's Stratagem—A Walk—Effect on the Congregation—Mr. Spurgeon and the "Gentlemen at Cambridge."

Mr. Spurgeon's residence at Newmarket did not extend to more than about a year, and, as he had a good deal of time which he could call his own, he made some advances in self-improvement, while he was all along assiduous in such Christian work as he had an opportunity of undertaking. In Sunday-school work, in giving addresses to scholars, and in tract distribution, there was no lack of useful service; and whatsoever the hand of this youth found to do he did not fail to do it with all his might. When the young teacher left Newmarket, in 1850, he went to reside at Cambridge; and although his surroundings had been sufficiently comfortable in the great racing town, things were probably still more to his liking now that he was living beneath the shadow of the University. In the Newmarket academy the articled pupil had found a friend in the head of the household, Mr. Swindell; Mr. Everett had there been to him a companion who was nearly as young as Mr. Spurgeon himself; and the devoted Christian housekeeper had given advice which would influence her youthful friend throughout his whole life. At Cambridge, however, Mr. Spurgeon once more came in contact with Mr. Leeding, the accomplished tutor whom he had first met at Colchester, and who, next to Richard Knill, probably understood his young friend's bent of mind and developing genius better than anybody else. It was no small benefit again to enjoy the tuition of such a man, to whom the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle till the last acknowledged his indebtedness.

Mr. Spurgeon took some interest in topography. He must have seen much to gratify curiosity in such a town as Cambridge; and in this respect he would be a contrast to that ardent lover of nature, Robert Hall, who once remarked, "I always say of my Cambridge friends when I witness their contentedness in such a country, 'Herein is the faith and patience of the saints!' My faith and patience could not sustain me under it, with the unvarying kindness of my friends in addition." The distinguished pulpit orator of a century ago had even still more pronounced opinions in reference to the drawbacks of the great University town. "'Tis a dismally flat country, sir, dismally flat," he once remarked. "Ely is twelve miles distant, but the road from Cambridge thither scarcely deviates twelve inches from the same level; and that's not very interesting. Before I came to Cambridge," he added, "I had read in the prize poems, and in some other works of fancy, of 'the banks of the Cam,' and of 'the sweetly-flowing stream,' and so on; but when I arrived here I was sadly disappointed. When I first saw the river as I passed over King's College bridge, I could not help

exclaiming, 'Why, the stream is standing still to see people drown themselves'; and that, I am sorry to say, is a permanent feeling with me. Shocking place for the spirits, sir; I wish you may not find it so; it must be the very focus of suicides."

These singular notions about Cambridge are quoted because the great and good man who uttered them had formerly been a pastor of the church and congregation of which Mr. Spurgeon now became a member. That congregation, at the period in question, was carrying on its full share of Christian work in and around Cambridge; but there had been a time when the usefulness of the people was threatened by a wave of Socinianism. The distinguished Robert Robinson, author of the well-known hymn, "Come, Thou fount of every blessing," had been the pastor, and it was his unhappiness to let go the anchor of his faith in the Scriptural verities he had once preached with soul-moving power. "Fascinating as a preacher, delightful as a companion, perseveringly skilful in the insinuation of his sentiments, his influence could not hut he great," says Dr. Olinthus Gregory. "From the profession of orthodox opinions," adds the same writer, "he had passed by a rather rapid transition, not to Socinianism, hut far beyond, to the very borders of infidelity; such, at least, was the substance of his declaration to Dr. Priestley, whom he thanked for preserving him from that awful gulf. Vain speculation was substituted for knowledge, faith, and experience; confession and prayer but seldom made a part of the public worship which he conducted, his effusions before sermon consisting almost altogether of ascriptions of praise; and the congregation became so transformed and deteriorated in consequence that among the more intelligent class, with only two or three exceptions, 'he was esteemed the best Christian who was most skilled in disputation, not he who evinced most of the spirit of Christ.' The majority of the poorer members, however, escaped the contagion, and were ready to co-operate with the late Mr. Foster, who was then the senior deacon, and another of the deacons, who equally deplored the evils which had fallen upon them. Cordially attached to those doctrines which they regarded as fundamental, and therefore as constituting the basis of Church union, they were preparing to call upon the whole body to consider the expediency of requesting Mr. Robinson to resign, when his sudden death at Birmingham, just after he had been preaching in Dr. Priestley's pulpit, rendered such a measure unnecessary." This dark passage in their history was only a distant memory when Mr. Spurgeon became associated with the church. Mr. Roff, the pastor, had just died, and Mr. Robinson, his successor, was not yet in office. In the middle of this century the people represented a prosperous Christian church; they maintained a number of agencies at work, and they did specially good service by means of the Lay Preachers' Association, which sent its agents into the villages around the University town. When the youthful Spurgeon associated himself with the congregation in St. Andrew's Street, how little did he think that a student educated in the Pastors' College he was himself to establish would one day be its minister. Such is the case, however; for Mr. T. Graham Tarn, who has been settled with the people for a lengthened period, completed his theological course in the College in the year 1872.

Mr. George Apthorpe, who is still living at Cambridge, was acquainted with Mr. Spurgeon from the time of his first coming to the University town till the last, and he has obligingly sent me some particulars. In the Sunday-school, Mr. Apthorpe had his class next to Mr. Spurgeon's, and he says, "Many a time I was listening to him while teaching my own boys." There was a select number of friends whose interest in the young man who had just come from Newmarket was very great; and one of the number, named Williamson, then a deacon of St. Andrew's Street church, openly

declared of young Mr. Spurgeon, "Whoever lives to see it, he will become one of the greatest men in England." These ardent admirers do not appear to have exceeded eight or nine, however; for as Mr. Apthorpe adds: "The majority of the friends were rather averse to him, thinking what seemed to them his boldness and forwardness was rudeness in one so young." Among those who saw in the new-comer a power that would one day be mightily felt, was Mr. Vinter, who was also a deacon; and as the chief spirit among the members of the Lay Preachers' Association, which had then been established about twenty years, he was naturally ever on the look-out for new talent to press into the service. Mr. Vinter was a robe-maker by trade, and he had some years before been a member of the congregation of the devoted apostle of the Established Church, Charles Simeon, who died in November, 1836. Mr. Vinter was a very genial man, somewhat humorous, and was very highly esteemed. He had two brothers, Charles and Robert, and these also lived earnest Christian lives, the first being described as a tower of strength among the Wesleyans, while the other was equally useful among the Episcopalians. Of course, the attention of the Mr. Vinter of St. Andrew's Street chapel was first attracted towards Mr. Spurgeon in the Sunday-school; for it was obvious that if a youth could speak with such force before an assembly of teachers and children, he could do the work that was required of a lay preacher equally well.

There is also at Cambridge another old friend of the late pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in the person of Mr. Watts. On a certain Sunday, after the Lord's Supper, Mr. Spurgeon followed this latter and showed a desire to become acquainted with him. He asked of Mr. Watts the loan of Scott's Commentary, and this being granted, the two drank tea together, and a friendship of the closest kind was commenced, which lasted until the preacher's death. There is an entry in the Church Book notifying the fact that Mr. Spurgeon had accepted the pastorate of the church at Waterbeach.

While studying under his friend Mr. Leeding, and at the same time teaching younger boys during the week, Mr. Spurgeon thus ardently engaged in Christian work on the Sabbath. For some time his efforts may not have extended beyond the Sunday-school, and tract distribution in the poor districts; but that would not long continue to be the case. He had already become much interested in the successful operations of the Lay Preachers' Association; and, when competent volunteers were always being sought after, it was not likely that a Sunday-school teacher who seemed to be endowed with special genius for giving addresses would escape being pressed into the service.

Since the Revival in the last century, what is called lay preaching has found great favour with Nonconformists; and throughout his life Mr. Spurgeon did all in his power to encourage and extend a practice which has now become common in villages and towns alike throughout the country. The custom is for young men who have gifts for public speaking to undertake cottage services, and these are in sufficient favour with working people and others to ensure their being on the average pretty well attended. The good influence thus exercised is in the aggregate very great; for the general civilising effect can only be adequately estimated when the condition of England is compared with that of other countries. Even the colporteurs who are diffusing Bibles and pure literature throughout the country, are expected to he local preachers as well as booksellers. It is also a fact that some of the most successful ministers of our times have been men who commenced their career as preachers in a peasant's cottage. Young men who had already borne something of the burden and heat of the day in this kind of active service always carried with them a passport to the favour of Mr. Spurgeon. Such candidates alone were eligible for admission to the

Pastors' College. That institution was never intended for the training of merely clever young men in whom relatives detected literary gifts, and who thought themselves destined to occupy some commanding position in the world. From the first the College was intended for the encouragement and assistance of men who had already become preachers.

It was as a cottage preacher that Mr. Spurgeon was to commence his great career in the pulpit. When he first became connected with the congregation in St. Andrew's Street, Cambridge, the Lay Preachers' Association represented a numerous as well as an active band of workers—Mr. James Vinter, the directing genius, being familiarly known as "Bishop" Vinter. To the genial nature and Christian zeal of this warm-hearted veteran Mr. Spurgeon in after years bore cordial testimony. He appears to have preached with some acceptance himself; but he was at all times one who encouraged the younger volunteers whom he brought into the service. On a certain Saturday morning in the year 1850, "Bishop" Vinter called at Mr. Leeding's house to ask young Mr. Spurgeon if he would walk over to Teversham on the following day with a young man who was unaccustomed to preach. To such a proposition there could be no possible objection. Though Mr. Spurgeon himself had given divers Sunday-school addresses, he had never yet attempted to deliver anything so pretentious as a genuine sermon; and had his friend the "Bishop" outspokenly asked him to preach, the young tutor would at once have shrunk from the proposal as an impossibility. It would be a pleasure, however, to accompany another who was to conduct the service.

After tea, in the evening of the next day, Mr. Spurgeon set off along the Newmarket road in company with a young man somewhat older than himself—their destination, Teversham, being a village of less than sixty houses, three miles away, in the Chesterton district. The conversation was of a cheerful character until the younger of the two ventured to give expression to the good-natured wish that his companion would have a profitable time while preaching. The misunderstanding now came to an end. The good brother had no intention of giving a sermon; he had never attempted such a feat; he was not even a member of the Lay Preachers' Association; he had come for the simple object of accompanying the appointed preacher to Teversham! Thus it became plainly apparent that "Bishop" Vinter's young man not much used to preaching was no other than Mr. Spurgeon himself. Mr. Leeding's timidly sensitive assistant was somewhat appalled at the prospect of preaching, even in a cottage, but he bravely faced the inevitable, not heeding the well-meant advice offered by his companion, to the effect that the repetition of an old Sunday-school address would be sufficient for the occasion. That was not Mr. Spurgeon's way of doing things even at this early date, when he stood, as it were, on the threshold of his career, and the fact was of good omen for the future. He resolved at once that, if he must preach, he would do his best; and, although that involved the taking of a new subject, he did not shrink from the ordeal. Though still full of the dread which came of misgiving, he began to collect his thoughts, and presently the two came up to the cottage in which the service was to be held. The congregation were there waiting in expectancy, and no doubt many were surprised when the eager-looking boy took the place at the desk instead of his older companion. After singing, reading, and prayer the preacher, about to give his maiden sermon, announced his text—the familiar words of the great apostle—"Unto you, therefore, which believe, He is precious." How long his first sermon was Mr. Spurgeon never remembered, but none of the fears which tormented him while on the Newmarket road were realised. A familiar talk on the work of Christ and on the Saviour's worth to His people

was really not strange work to the young disciple even at sixteen years of age. His clear voice and plain language would not fail to captivate the people. They were not only edified by what they had heard, their hearts were warmed, although no one in the humble congregation could have suspected that one destined to become the greatest preacher of the century had broken silence in their midst. At the same time, there were those present who were more or less surprised at the way in which the boy-preacher had acquitted himself. The principal representative of these was an ancient dame, who called out when the sermon was finished, "Bless your dear heart! how old are you?" Not yet being accustomed to the unconventional ways he may have afterwards favoured, Mr. Spurgeon replied in a rebuking tone, "You must wait until the service is over before making any such inquiries," and he then proceeded to announce the concluding hymn. After the benediction had been pronounced and the people were dispersing, the affectionate dame who had asked the preacher's age still showed no disposition to go away without having her curiosity satisfied. How old was he? Well, he was under sixty. "Yes, and under sixteen!" the old lady insisted. She not only wanted to know the lad's age, he was asked to promise to come again, which he was not averse from doing if his superiors at headquarters saw proper to sanction it.

Having broken new ground, the lad may have felt some confidence in his ability to go forward; but he might not be quite so sure about what the gentlemen at Cambridge would say on the point. What, for example, would "Bishop" Vinter say when he heard that the boy of sixteen had been acting as a lay preacher before being formally recognised by the director and the brotherhood? The youth whose awakening voice was so soon to be heard in London and the great towns of England was as yet a timid amateur, whose humble deference to his superiors was characteristic. The "gentlemen at Cambridge" were still personages of whom the stripling stood in wholesome awe; but to have a lowly opinion of himself, while he entertained becoming notions of the importance of his superiors, was a promising sign. But the days of childhood were over, and although only a boy as regarded his years, Charles Haddon Spurgeon would henceforth have to undertake the work of a man--work, moreover, which only one who stood as a giant among his fellows could accomplish.

Chapter 9: Mr. Spurgeon As A Local Preacher

Chapter 9.

Mr. Spurgeon As A Local Preacher

Close of the first half of the Nineteenth Century—The Great Exhibition—Mr. Spurgeon and Mr. Leeding—Papal Aggression: "Antichrist and her Brood"—The Prospects of the Boy-Preacher—A great Acquisition to the Lay Preachers' Association—Perseverance in the Work of Preaching—Reminiscences of surviving Friends at Cambridge—The "Miller of Houghton" and Mr. Spurgeon—Mr. James A. Spurgeon's Recollections.

The close of the first half of the nineteenth century was a period of more than ordinary interest in our national history; and it was particularly so in the life of the great man whose course we have followed to the opening of his seventeenth year. Those who are old enough to look back upon the closing days of the year 1850 will remember that the outlook in general seemed to promise many things which were destined never to be realised. In Hyde Park an army of workmen were engaged in erecting the vast, fairy-like palace of glass for the Great Exhibition, which it was fondly hoped would introduce or commemorate the opening of the new era of universal brotherhood. Sanguine persons entertained the most extravagant hopes of the general civilising influence which this unique industrial and artistic show would exercise over the nations of the world. Patriots thought that the golden age was at length beginning. The period of devastating and exhausting wars was now to be followed by the era of universal peace, so far as civilised nations were concerned. Social reformers also saw in the Great Exhibition a promise of better things for the future than had ever been known. Even Christian missionaries saw in the wonderful festival to be celebrated in London that which would prepare the way for the progress of the Gospel. If people of all colours and of all nations were brought together, the lesson they would learn would be that all would benefit by all working with heart and soul for the common good of the world.

Young Mr. Spurgeon and his faithful friend and tutor would be interested in these things, and they would talk about them; they would each give an independent opinion on the outlook, and speculate in reference to the good times coming, which many were predicting with such excess of confidence. As ardent Evangelicals, we may confidently assume that neither of these friends was carried away with over-sanguine feelings in regard to the opening prospect. Art, science, and industries were good things in their way; the welfare of the nation demanded that they should be promoted by every legitimate means; but they could never be expected to bring about a reformation which the Gospel alone could effect. We have some conclusive evidence that at or about the time in question Mr. Spurgeon manifested lively interest in events which were happening, but matters pertaining to religion evidently affected him more than politics or even social reforms. Thus, the year 1850 was the period of what is known in history as the Papal Aggression. When the Pope mapped out this country into bishoprics and appointed his representatives to take possession of them, the public mind became violently agitated, and popular sentiment found expression in Parliament, an Act being passed attaching certain penalties

to the assumption of episcopal titles without royal warrant. In addition to what was given in the daily and weekly journals, there was the abundant supply of books and essays usual at such a crisis. Mr. Spurgeon was, of course, an enthusiast on the Protestant side, as well became his notable ancestry. It was in hope of winning the prize offered by a member of the Morley family at Nottingham for an essay on Popery that he penned his still un-printed work on "Antichrist and her Brood." This work is consequently a memento of the Papal Aggression and of the extraordinary excitement it caused in the middle of this century. But to turn to more personal matters, we can imagine that there would be a little more excitement in the quiet home of Mr. Leeding, the Cambridge schoolmaster, when his youthful pupil-assistant returned to tell how he had been caught by guile, and had been obliged to preach a sermon against his will. Mr. Leeding would probably offer his congratulations. He also saw in his young friend the future popular preacher, as was the case with Richard Knill; for the tutor was shrewd enough to see that Mr. Spurgeon possessed gifts far above the average, while his acquirements were likewise beyond his years. Mr. Leeding was well aware that he had in his house a youth who could with ease have passed an examination at the University, had not all the colleges been closed against him as a Nonconformist. The tutor seems to have been a man who knew when and how to encourage an aspirant. Apart from the ordinary routine of daily work, there was much in Sunday-school teaching, in the writing of essays, etc., and in the giving of addresses in cottages, to develop and draw out latent powers.

Even as a teacher in the Sunday-school, who occasionally spoke to the children collectively, the addresses of Mr. Spurgeon had attracted some notice; but when he had began to preach he found the work grow upon him. "Bishop" Vinter and the other "gentlemen at Cambridge" must soon have perceived that, in securing the services of such a volunteer, they had made an acquisition which would in no small measure redound to the credit of the Lay Preachers' Association.

It might truly have been said that he had been led by a way that he knew not from the days of early childhood till the days of youth, when his powers were developing, and the way in which he would have to go was opening before him and being made plain. The past had been an experience which would inspire gratitude; for step by step he had advanced in a providential manner till the service he loved best promised to become his life-work. Then the enthusiasm he already began to show as a preacher was in itself an augury of success. Now that he had made a beginning, he not only found peculiar pleasure in his work, he was an examplar, as regarded zeal and perseverance in face of any discouragement or difficulty, to all the other members of the Lay Preachers' Association. Wind and rain, which often enough came in company to discommode foot-passengers across those Cambridgeshire flats, never sufficed to drive his good humour away or to cool his ardour as an evangelist. Even the villagers he preached to must have caught something of the fervour which characterised this youthful Apollos; for if, on arriving at a village on a stormy evening, the weather threatened to keep his congregation within doors, he would call at their houses to remind them that a sermon was about to be given. Protected with waterproof coverings, and having a stout stick and a lantern, this representative of the Cambridge Lay Preachers' Association would appear in one village after another; and long years after, when the boy-evangelist had developed into the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, there were many who fondly remembered these early days of small things.

Some years ago, in 1875, my friend the late Edward Cressell, who was then pastor of the Congregational Church at Houghton, Huntingdonshire, gathered for me some things relative to this period of Mr. Spurgeon's career, which show how appropriately he was called the boy-preacher. One gentleman told Mr. Cressell that he had been present at a service at Somersham, conducted by Mr. Spurgeon, twenty-six years before, when, as a lad in his seventeenth year, the preacher wore a jacket and broad, turned-down collar. The text on that occasion was, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob" (Isa 41:14). The chapel was one at which an aged minister officiated, and the contrast between the tones of the venerable pastor and the voice of the youthful orator is said to have been striking. There were people about who plainly saw that the itinerant, boy though he might be, was introducing new methods into the pulpit, and that he had about him the promise of a powerful, original preacher. One old man, a Calvinistic Baptist, who was not easily suited by ordinary ministers, having heard Mr. Spurgeon, soon contrived to hear him again and again.

One lady remembered to have heard Mr. Spurgeon in the Congregational Chapel at Houghton when the youthful preacher was the guest of the late Mr. Potto Brown—an occasion of which the great preacher retained very vivid recollections till the end of his days. The discourse he then gave was calculated to make a deep impression; but it was not such as anybody would have expected to hear from a preacher who had the appearance of a boarding-school lad; it was rather such a sermon as a divine of ripe experience might have given. Under the circumstances it was hardly to be wondered at that the "Miller of Houghton," as Mr. Brown was called, should have looked upon his guest as a pretender content to appear in borrowed plumes. The schoolmaster of the village was also greatly impressed with the uncommon power of the preacher. It is to be regretted that many more things of this kind were not gathered while the opportunity offered. Those who remember these earliest services of Mr. Spurgeon in the villages around Cambridge some forty years ago are now themselves rapidly passing away.

Speaking as President of the Pastors' College Evangelical Association on May 5, 1892, Mr. James A. Spurgeon gave an interesting account of his brother's early days. The family home at Colchester, he said, was as godly a household as could be met with in a Christian land, the mother, Mrs. John Spurgeon, being the starting-point of all goodness. In one "Life" the amusing statement was made that Charles Spurgeon was sent to Stambourne at the age of eighteen months because he was "one of seventeen"; but as he was the first-born, that was hardly consistent with fact. He returned to his parents' roof when between five and six years old, and after that went only during holiday time. The household at Stambourne was also of the most godly sort, old Mr. James Spurgeon being an earnest preacher of the Gospel, with a magnificent voice. He is still well remembered; and the President of the Association made the confession that his first notion of a joke was derived from his grandfather. One day, when a number of friends were congregated together, someone said, "Mr. Spurgeon, how much do you weigh?" "Well, that depends on where you take me," replied the veteran preacher; "in the balances I should be found wanting, but in the pulpit they say I am heavy enough." At first that explanation was hardly apprehended by the child listener, but presently he was found laughing in company with more elderly people. Thus, while such an uncompromising Puritan, both as regards his theological belief and his habits generally, the old pastor could indulge in fun after the manner of his more distinguished grandson in after days.

Mr. James Spurgeon also remembers his grandmother, the wife of the Stambourne pastor. She was remarkable for her good-nature to children. On one occasion when he visited Stambourne as a delicate boy, Master James was to have no pastry, a maternal order which somewhat disconcerted the good grandmother, who appears not to have been herself unless children could enjoy themselves. The old lady would not let it appear that she directly disobeyed orders from Colchester; but she whispered to her grandson the information that in a certain cupboard a plentiful supply of tarts could be found, and left him to help himself. He soon discovered that a mistake had been made, and learned that a mother's restraint was better than a grandmother's indulgence.

According to Mr. James Spurgeon, his brother got much good at Stambourne, but he was nevertheless chiefly indebted to the good influence of the home at Colchester. It is thought to be a wonderful thing that Mr. John Spurgeon was able to give his sons so good an education as he did. They had the best that could be given them, and the school-books, which are still treasured, are evidences of the thoroughness with which the work was done. While the younger brother kept rabbits and so on, the elder kept to his books. He had a mind "as capacious as a barn," and he began to be a tutor as far back as could be remembered. He also made such progress as few could have equalled, and perhaps none surpassed.

Mr. James Spurgeon further remembers when his brother began to preach; for the younger usually drove the elder in the family pony-chaise to the appointed preaching-stations. The Spurgeons' home at Colchester was a rendezvous for preachers, where rest and refreshments were to be had. While delivering some of his earliest discourses, Charles was regarded as a wonderful preacher by his brother; a rare kind of unction attended his sermons, and the impressions made on the country people were as deep as ever was the case afterwards in the town. He was a marvellous example of a preacher leaping at a bound full-grown into the pulpit; and though in after years there might be more depth and spirituality, there was not more genius. There was more of God's Word and its meaning at a later date; but his earliest recollections of his brother were, Mr. James Spurgeon said, the brightest and the best. He remembers his going to Waterbeach, the impression made, and the wonder there was in the Colchester household. He was a God-made and God-sent man—he was sent to the age; and his memory was one of unalloyed joy and happiness.

Chapter 10: Settlemen At Waterbeach

Chapter 10.

Settlement At Waterbeach

Waterbeach Past and Present—Winfold Farm and Denney Abbey—The Doctrines preached—The Old Chapel—A Time of Preparation for Higher Service—The Young Preacher's Method of Study—His Ingenuous Nature—An Old Deacon's Recollections—Mr. Spurgeon's first Sermon in the Chapel—Characteristics of his subsequent Discourses—Reproving an Old Minister—"The Sauciest Dog that ever barked in a Pulpit."

In the natural order of things it was impossible that the light of such a preacher as Mr. Spurgeon could for long remain hidden under a bushel; or, in other words, that he would be allowed to work as a mere wandering agent of the Cambridge Lay Preachers' Association for any lengthened period. As Mr. Spurgeon was accustomed occasionally to tell his own students, there is always room for candidates at the top of the tree, however great the competing crowd may be at the bottom. Not that Waterbeach was in any sense to be regarded as representing a topmost position; but it was the very place in which a promising man, with credit to himself and benefit to others, might make an encouraging start. The congregation was quite a model one for a thriving Cambridgeshire village; and if the people did not raise much more than the proverbial forty pounds a year for their pastor's maintenance, it was probably through their keeping to the old-time fashion rather than through any want of thought or lack of kindness. In the middle of the nineteenth century it was a very general thing in English country places for notions of the most modest description to be entertained concerning the temporal requirements of a preacher of the Gospel. The fact was that a pastor's income did not consist of money alone, the people making him many presents in kind.

Waterbeach itself is an ancient place, and when Mr. Spurgeon first went there he found the church of the Establishment, dedicated to St John, to be an interesting building, while there were almshouses and a charity-school dating from the seventeenth century. Though sufficiently flat to call forth expressions of aversion from Robert Hall, the surroundings are in some respects charming in genial weather, and have besides some attractions for archæologists. Mr. Samuel Lewis remarks in his "Topographical Dictionary of England":—"About the year 1160 a cell to the monastery of Ely was established in a small island called Elmeneye, but was shortly after removed to Denney, both in this parish. In the following century it was occupied by the Knights Templars, who then possessed the manor of Waterbeach. In 1293, an abbey for minoresses of the order of St. Clare was formed....., which in 1338, the order of the Templars being then abolished, was transferred to their house at Denney. At the Dissolution there were twenty-five nuns, and the annual value of the lands was estimated at £172. The abbey house and the demesnes have been many years rented as a farm, and the refectory has been converted into a barn."

These things are worthy of mention because the remains of mediaeval England referred to were objects of rare interest to Mr. Spurgeon himself in his oft-repeated visits to the scene of his early labours during the nearly forty years of his ministry in London. Mr. Spurgeon has often visited Winfold Farm at Waterbeach; and visitors to that charming spot are able to inspect the remains of Denney Abbey. For many years Winfold Farm had its "Orphanage Acre," the entire proceeds of which, consisting of flour, potatoes, etc., were regularly sent to the Stockwell Orphanage as a gift to the inmates. That fact alone would have been almost sufficient to attract Mr. Spurgeon to the spot; for persons who were kind to his great family of orphan children were regarded as being kind to himself.

It would appear that Mr. Spurgeon first became acquainted with the village and people of Waterbeach in the course of his travels as a member of the Cambridge Lay Preachers' Association. He never had a settled home in the place; and there is reason for believing that he found so many friends there that during the time of his ministry he had a fresh house of entertainment on the occasion of every visit. The people were a warm-hearted community, who at once showed the most cordial appreciation of the young preacher's services. The doctrines he preached were such as they themselves loved and built their hopes upon; and these doctrines were identical with the teaching which had been given forth from the Baptist pulpit in the village for long generations. In point of fact, Waterbeach was as much a little stronghold of Puritan ideas as Stambourne itself; and that is the reason why the grandson of the aged Essex pastor at once felt himself at home with the congregation. The strong silken cords which bound the boy-preacher and his people together in the bonds of love were never severed. In early days it was as the Garden of Eden; in after years it was a quiet resting-place to which the orator loved to retire for change and refreshment. In the middle of this century, when Mr. Spurgeon first became associated with the Waterbeach friends, many fashions such as we now associate with a former age had hardly passed away. The railway through Cambridge had not been opened many years; and the many signs of agricultural depression which are now apparent even in the richest tracts of England, did not then sadden the hearts of observant tourists. The evidences of plenty and of quiet progress were seen on every hand. On alighting from the train, the vast dome of the sky—similar to that overhead at sea—would remind the visitor that he was on an extensive plain; but the land was rich and the people were prosperous. To a Londoner, escaping for a brief space from noise and smoke-charged atmosphere, the fine air and rustic charms were irresistible. The chapel itself, a quaint, square building, might almost have been mistaken for a rick of wheat or a haystack, if it had not been for the odd-looking little windows, one above another, which were supposed to let sufficient light into the sanctuary. Other things in the village so far corresponded with this commanding object that probably Waterbeach presented quite a similar outlook to that which greeted the early preachers of the Methodist revival when they gave forth the Gospel in this district a century before. To come upon such a place and such a community as this, at so interesting a period in his career, must be regarded as a providential circumstance in the experience of Mr. Spurgeon. If the young evangelist had gone straight from the Cambridge Lay Preachers' Association to London, his success would no doubt have been immediate; but the abrupt suddenness of such a transition would have been excessively trying. In after days the achievement of a unique popularity came with sufficient suddenness; but after the experience gained at Waterbeach, and while itinerating among the surrounding towns and villages, the boy-preacher was in some measure prepared for the trial attending the more exhausting labours

which awaited him in London. The service rendered at Waterbeach was a time of preparation and of strengthening which could not well have been dispensed with. The preacher already, as it were, saw in miniature the popularity which awaited him in London. The quaint little chapel of which he had become the pastor was nothing like large enough to accommodate the numbers who came to hear the Gospel preached in fulness and freeness; and in proportion as people in other places became acquainted with Mr. Spurgeon's pulpit characteristics, crowds were drawn together when he undertook to preach at anniversaries or on special occasions. The whole period was therefore one of trial, as well as of preparation for a great and unique life-work in the future; for if the metal of which the preacher was made had not given forth the ring of sterling quality at Waterbeach, it could never have borne the severe tests to which it was exposed in London shortly afterwards.

Although Mr. Spurgeon was only about seventeen years of age when he commenced work at Waterbeach, he was thoroughly well equipped. He had not only learned things which were actually of use to him, he had acquired habits of study such as would yield him good profit. He already knew how to read to advantage, and a good book once read became his own. His own explanation of his method, to the effect that he tore things out of books by the hair of their heads, sufficiently explained his ways to those who understood him. In point of fact, his knowledge already took an enlarged range for a preacher of his years. There was nothing of the mere flash-in-the-pan kind of brilliance about his earliest sermons. Even among his rustic audience there were those who could readily enough distinguish between rhetorical fireworks and genuine sterling eloquence. It was seen by such that a pulpit genius had arisen; but, if that had been all, the impression made would not have been the profound one that it was. What chiefly astonished the members of mature age of the Waterbeach church was the advanced Christian experience of the youth of seventeen who had accepted the pastoral charge. If he had been speaking at the dictation of his grandfather, the pastor of Stambourne, this characteristic could not have been more prominent. His experience was apparently that of one who had progressed far in the Christian course. This probably may have occasioned some inconvenience, because some were led to doubt the preacher's honesty. To keen observers it must have appeared that the boy in the pulpit could not be giving his own sermon, but rather the words of some of the Puritan sages of extended knowledge and experience whom he so often referred to or quoted. On the other hand, there must have been that about the preacher which many were able to accept as evidence of his honesty and earnestness. He had an open face, which did not look like wishing to deceive anybody; his manners all seemed to testify to his ingenuous nature. Hence, while the common people heard him gladly, those who were not of the common people regarded the young preacher as being somewhat of a phenomenon which needed to be explained. "Who is this Spurgeon?" was often enough asked in Cambridgeshire before it came to be one of the stock questions of London quidnuncs. And as in London in after years, the answer to the question was generally coloured by the prejudgment, favourable or unfavourable, of those who gave it. In taking a retrospect of Mr. Spurgeon's early days one writer says:—

Mr. Spurgeon's Birthplace at Kelvedon: now the Wheatsheaf Inn

"There is something to be said for the paradox that the common people are the real leaders of opinion.. They have proved to be so at any rate regarding a great man who has recently left us, and who is now universally spoken about as the greatest of modern preachers. It was not in a sermon by a learned canon in St. Paul's Cathedral, nor in a leading article in The Times or The

Standard, that the boy-preacher was welcomed to the Metropolis, when he came up to it in much fear and trembling from his little chapel at Waterbeach. The new note Spurgeon struck in pulpit oratory sounded harsh and discordant in the ears of cultured people. But it was sweet music to the rude peasantry and humble tradesfolk of Cambridgeshire, and in course of time people in high places came to be of the same opinion. The common people heard him gladly, and the lords and ladies of London, after much scoffing and jeering, were fain to hear him too. Suppose the good folk at Waterbeach had been as diffident about their own judgment in the choice of a preacher as many at the time would think they ought to have been; suppose they had gone to men of light and leading—say bishops of the National Church, or men distinguished in literature, or even experienced ministers of their own body, and asked them to listen to the boy-preacher and pronounce a verdict upon him, what a rating the good folk would have got for their imprudence in dreaming of choosing such a person! They would have heard much about his extreme youth, his inadequate learning, his lack of experience, perhaps of his presumption and the vulgarity of his style and bearing in the pulpit. And if the affairs of Waterbeach had been managed with such ideal perfection that the common herd would have given heed to the counsels of the wise, the career of the great preacher would have been nipped in the bud, and he might have lived and died as unnoted as thousands of others. Happily the Waterbeach people were left to choose for themselves. The seed of genius was allowed to germinate, the promising plant attracted ere long the attention of a slightly higher circle in London, and so step by step this nursling of the people fought his way until the successes of Exeter Hall, the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, and the Metropolitan Tabernacle became the talk of London, and rang over the world."

More than once I have visited Waterbeach in order, if possible, to obtain information from those who might be able to give personal reminiscences of Mr. Spurgeon's early days. One elderly deacon of the church declared that at the outset the youthful pastor astonished everybody who heard him. The good man spoke of those memorable days with enthusiasm; but that which seemed chiefly to strike him was the fact that the boy-preacher appeared to possess the experience of an elderly or mature Christian. It was as though the preacher had been perfected at once for his work. Others, as we have said, observed the same thing, and to them it was a phenomenon which could not be explained in any ordinary way, because it was of an altogether exceptional character. One who was a friend of Mr. Spurgeon in his early days, gave it as his deliberate opinion that the pastor became fully equipped in youth for his work, and that from youth to mature age he never improved like other people. In the nature of things this could not be, but such an opinion shows how the advanced Christian knowledge and experience of the preacher was viewed by friends in the days before he came of age.

Mr. Robert Coe, who was a deacon of the church at Waterbeach in Mr. Spurgeon's time, was quite a typical man of his class; and he maintained a lifelong friendship with the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. This worthy and his wife, as I found them, were more in love with old-time fashions than with new customs; and they could talk with delight of the great man who had been associated with their little chapel in the past. The good deacon had often been invited to London; but he did not really appear in the great congregation at Newington until he was partly drawn thither by the promise of a new flagon for the communion-table, which should supersede the common wine-bottle previously used. A quarter of a century after Mr. Coe had first seen the young lay preacher from Cambridge, pale with misgiving, enter the Waterbeach pulpit, he visited

London for himself, was entertained at Nightingale Lane, and carried back the coveted flagon to his native village.

Mr. Coe's recollections of Mr. Spurgeon's early days in Waterbeach were not only entertaining, they may be regarded as a warning to those who are tempted to form an adverse conclusion respecting a preacher's capacity on account of his youth. When Deacon Coe for the first time met Mr. Spurgeon in the old chapel, he thought that his new friend was too pale and too young to do anything worth speaking of as a preacher; but when he discovered what kind of a voice he possessed, and what he was able to say, he could only sit and listen in admiration and astonishment. Then some of the early sermons had made impressions deep enough to be remembered. The preacher might be carried away with his descriptions of the glorious privileges of believers; but his denunciations of sin, his pictures of the doom of the impenitent, were terrific warnings. He in those days spoke as a decided Calvinist, but accustomed himself to milder phrases when he became a little older.

Many anecdotes respecting his early days are afloat in the neighbourhood of Waterbeach, but there is some difficulty in regard to their authenticity. One may hear that he suffered severely from sickness when he commenced to smoke; and then this is denied, and we are told that his first "churchwarden" never occasioned him the least inconvenience. Such trivialities, however, may well be left in obscurity. When Mr. Spurgeon first joined the church there were many good and grave people who failed to understand him, and to whom, consequently, he appeared uncouth, forward, or even irreverent. I have heard that a certain person once expressed surprise to the leader of a prayer meeting on account of his having "called upon that rude young man to pray." I have also heard it stated that at the time of his joining the church, Mr. Spurgeon at the conclusion of a meeting went up to one of the leading members and very cordially asked him how he did. The person looked a picture of surprise, and, while quite polite, confessed that he had not the pleasure of knowing his interlocutor. "Not know me! Then you ought to do. I have sat down with you three Sabbaths at the Lord's Table, and you ought to know me!" was the reply. It was now discovered that he was young Mr. Spurgeon. "Then perhaps you will go home with me to tea," was the next remark. "That's just what I'm going to do," was the reply.

Those were also days of adventure, many of which were of sufficient interest to oblige the preacher once to say that there had been almost enough in any one day of his life to make up the materials for a three-volume novel. The particulars of one diverting incident I was the first to give to the world some years ago, having received the facts from Mr. Spurgeon himself as he sat in his study at Clapham while in too weak a condition to work. At such a time, if free from pain, he always seemed to relish entertaining his friends with recollections of those good old times when, in the strength and freshness of youth, he could enjoy life to the full, the heavy burden of the London pastorate not yet having cast its shadow across his path. In the year 1852 he had already become uncommonly popular for a preacher who was a mere youth, and whose ministerial position was only that of a very small village pastorate, the stipend of which was less than a pound a week. The extraordinary fame of the young pastor occasioned his being invited to preach at anniversaries and on special occasions by friends at a distance, who in some instances may never have seen his face. One of these was an elderly man, whose chapel was not very far away, and who was in himself as faultlessly respectable as he was dry and orthodox. The day of the services would be an important one, because good collections would be expected. When the time at length came

round, and Mr. Spurgeon actually appeared on the scenes, he cordially greeted his octogenarian brother; but until he heard his boy-visitor confess that he had come to preach the anniversary sermons, the old man hardly dared to believe his eyes. When polite inquiries respecting his health were made, the veteran abruptly replied, "I am none the better for seeing you!" Then he paced the room in great concern of mind respecting the success or failure of his anniversary; and in the course of the soliloquy in which he indulged he muttered something about boys who went up and down the country preaching before their mother's milk was well out of their mouths. A great concourse of people had assembled for the anniversary service; but the old pastor was at first half-ashamed to take a place in the chapel where he could be seen by the congregation.

Mr. Spurgeon was not one to be greatly disconcerted by the treatment he had received; but, on the other hand, he would not miss the opportunity of administering a becoming reproof. He already observed the custom, which he kept up to the last, of making explanatory remarks on the passage of Scripture read before the sermon. Now was Mr. Spurgeon's opportunity; and he read what Solomon had said about the honour attending a hoary head, this being accompanied by his own characteristic commentary. "A hoary head is a crown of glory." Was it really always so? The wise man was an authority not to be challenged; but, Solomon or no Solomon, it did not seem to be always so, for there was a tongue in one hoary head which had not been civil to the boy who had come to preach. "If it be found in the way of righteousness." That, of course, altered the case, and Solomon was right, after all; for unless an old man was found in the right path he might as well have red hair as white. The old minister, who had now emerged from his hiding-place, at once saw the reasonableness of this reproof. He had evidently acted wrongly, and it would look handsome to make some honourable amends. As the boy-preacher was descending from the pulpit, therefore, the octogenarian slapped him on the back, at the same time remarking, "You are the sauciest dog that ever barked in a pulpit!" It may be that he thus gave rise to the itinerant's being called "the saucy young rascal," as he sometimes was about this time.

Chapter 11: Progress at Waterbeach

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Progress At Waterbeach

Increasing Popularity—Stepney College in 1852—A Singular Misadventure—A Voice on Midsummer Common—Resolution not to go to College—Reminiscences—William Jay and John Angell James—Calvinist or Arminian?—The Poor Pastor and his Clothes—The Prayers of Children—Professor Everett's Recollections—Mr. Edward Ingle's Reminiscences of Mr. Spurgeon as a Tutor—"The Old Pope"—A Missionary Meeting in the School—Predictions of future Greatness—A Letter of 1853.

Though not a few may have been tempted to despise his youth, as had been the case with that afterwards sincere friend Deacon Robert Coe, Mr. Spurgeon met with many outsiders who accorded him hearty encouragement while he was at Waterbeach. Among those who visited the village and preached in the meetinghouse in those early days was the late Cornelius Elven, a native of Bury St. Edmund's, who devoted fifty years of his life to pastoral labour in that town. Mr. Elven was a giant in stature, and it is said that he was charged the fare of two persons when travelling by coach. When this worthy visited Waterbeach, he appears to have noticed that the boy-preacher's abilities were above the common order, and while encouraging him in his work he ventured to give some common-sense, fatherly advice, which was thankfully accepted and acted upon. Some years afterwards, when Mr. Elven had grown old enough to need a co-pastor, Mr. Spurgeon recommended him one of the best preachers that had been trained in the Pastors' College—Mr. William Cuff, who has since had erected for him the Shoreditch Tabernacle, in which he now ministers. Mr. Elven was also one who watched the progress of Mr. Spurgeon during the early days in London, and preached for his young friend at New Park Street Chapel. In the meantime, while the pastor of the little old-fashioned chapel at Waterbeach was making rapid progress, and achieving quite an uncommon kind of popularity, the most interested observers of what was happening were naturally Mr. and Mrs. John Spurgeon of Colchester and the aged pastor of Stambourne. Whatever misgivings may have been harboured in relation to the subject in earlier days, it was now plainly seen that Charles had found his life-work. The father, more especially, became particularly anxious that his son should be as well equipped as possible for the service which lay before him. Charles had enjoyed the advantages of a good school education; it was now indispensable that he should add to this a theological training such as could only be obtained at a college established for the purpose. Labour at Waterbeach would have to be suspended for a time; the young pastor must go to college. At that time the Baptist College at Stepney had existed for between forty and fifty years; but though the surroundings at the time of starting in 1810 may have been of a semi-rural kind, they had now all the characteristics of a murky, East-end London parish. The Principal of the institution was Dr. Joseph Angus, and that veteran tutor still holds the same office at Regent's Park College, to which the Stepney students were removed in 1856. As his son had become a Baptist, Mr. John Spurgeon regarded Stepney

College as being the place to supply what was wanted in the way of a more complete theological education.

Mr. John Spurgeon reasoned with his son long and earnestly on the subject, the result being that it was arranged for a meeting to take place between Dr. Angus, the tutor of Stepney, and the young Waterbeach preacher, who might have been called the itinerant evangelist of Cambridgeshire. The place of meeting was to be at the house of a well-known publisher in the University town, and both the Doctor and the proposed student duly kept their appointment; but although both were in the house together, it seemed to be destined that they were not to meet. Mr. Macmillan's servant-maid was apparently not the shrewdest of her sex; at all events, she quite failed to understand that the staid professor and the round-faced lad, who arrived at the house nearly at the same time, had any business with one another. She showed the Doctor into one parlour and closed the door; in his turn, she showed young Mr. Spurgeon into a second parlour and closed the door; and then, probably forgetting all about such a trivial circumstance, she left both of the morning callers to their peaceful cogitations. Having to keep an appointment in London, Dr. Angus had at last to hasten away to the railway station; and when Mr. Spurgeon felt that he could hold out no longer, he rang the bell, to learn when the servant came that the Doctor had gone away. This was not at first regarded as a circumstance which in anywise indicated that the idea of going to college would have to be abandoned. An application for admission to the College could be made in writing, and, as that plan promised to answer the purpose equally well, Mr. Spurgeon resolved that he would despatch a letter to the committee asking that his desire might be favoured. Man proposes and God disposes, however. Persons of strong Puritanic sympathies, such as the Waterbeach pastor and his grandfather entertained, have always strongly protested against what were to them merely man-made ministers. If a man was really called of God to preach the Gospel, let him go forth in the strength of the Lord, and let all bid him God-speed. If, on the other hand, a man thought he could take his destiny into his own hands, and transform himself into a minister of the Word, let him check presumption by heeding well the inspired warning, "What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldst take My covenant in thy mouth?"

Probably no one was ever further removed from superstition than Mr. Spurgeon; but such things as we call premonitions or presentiments may have had some meaning for him, just as they have for many others who would shrink from attempting to make everything plain to objectors. There were stranger things in his world than are dreamt of in the world's philosophy. In the after-part of the day on which he missed seeing the Stepney professor by a seeming accident, Mr. Spurgeon had a strange experience, which would appear to have exercised an influence over the whole of his after-life. His devotion to the cause of the Lay Preachers'

Association was still as ardent as ever, and an engagement had to be kept at a village on that very evening. Lying about a mile to the north-east of Cambridge, Chesterton includes the site of the ancient castle; but it is now the suburb containing the pleasant homes of well-to-do people who are engaged in business in the University town. While crossing Midsummer Common, near to this place, and thinking about various things, certain words of Holy Writ occurred to the mind of the young preacher with such force that it seemed they were actually spoken through the opening clouds, direct from heaven itself—"Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not!"

Whatever may have been the way in which these words were suggested to the mind of the young pastor in a meditative mood, as he crossed Midsummer Common to keep his village preaching engagement, a turning-point in his life had arrived. Where was he? what were his aims? what were the things that his heart was really seeking after? He seemed, as it were, to be brought to a sudden standstill in his life-course, and some serious self-examination had become necessary. The searching questions which a young Christian would ask himself at such a time seem to be sufficiently obvious. Had he given himself unreservedly to his Lord's service, and did the entire unselfishness of his aims testify to his sincerity? If God had called him to the work of preaching the Gospel, and had given him a sphere of labour, was he justified in leaving it for the purpose of spending several years in the seclusion of a London college? Were the claims which the poor but warm-hearted people of Waterbeach had upon him to be altogether ignored? If the Lord appointed His workmen, would He not fully equip them for their service?

Some such questions would suggest themselves to the preacher's mind, and, while seeking an answer to them, his resolution concerning a theological education was taken once and for all. He was plainly called to do the work he was engaged in, and he would not leave it. The idea of seeking any additional benefit from a college training would therefore have to be abandoned. Many had sought great things for themselves in the direction of the College. A large number had undoubtedly derived great benefit from the prescribed studies; but for himself, he must seek them not.

Mr. and Mrs. John Spurgeon did not see things in this light; for, from the standpoint of their wider worldly experience, the opportunity of securing a thorough theological training was a providential opening to be entered without hesitation. The father reasoned long and earnestly with his son on this matter; but it was impossible to shake the young preacher's resolution, which he had arrived at under such singular circumstances. He would not actually be disobedient to so good a parent; if the order, "You are to go," was authoritatively given, he would yield as a duty, but he would never go to college of his own free choice. The pastor of Tollesbury thought that his son was making a mistake; but he judged that, as a father, it was his duty to give way. He may have suspected that, after all, things were not quite what they appeared to be to him, and that everything would be made plain in the course of the good providence of God. In any case, persuasive words fell flat on the ear of the young Waterbeach pastor, while the most forcible arguments were pointless; for all that the father could bring forward in favour of securing a college training was answered by the words which had been so mysteriously suggested on Midsummer Common—"Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." This, then, is how it happened that Mr. Spurgeon never went to college. The youthful pastor returned to his little sphere at Waterbeach in a happy and contented state of mind. He harboured no doubt concerning the Divine guidance; and to have the pathway of life made plain before him was really to have a stumbling-block removed out of the way. The outlook of a village pastorate never appeared more encouraging to a pastor. The old, picturesque, thatched chapel still continued to be crowded; conversions were so numerous that Waterbeach itself began to show visible signs of improvement; while the pastor's services were still sought for special and anniversary celebrations. Every step he now took confirmed him in the assurance that he had done right in remaining where he was. At times Mr. Spurgeon would indulge his friends with anecdotes and reminiscences of those early days, and, as may be seen in the religious papers of that date, one of these occasions occurred during the first week of December, 1880. The

fact was then referred to that at Waterbeach baptisms took place in the open air and in the neighbouring river, as had been the case at Isleham, where Mr. Spurgeon was immersed, as already described. This primitive mode of administering the ordinance had some drawbacks, however; and it might become especially trying on a wet day. On one memorable occasion, when that worthy giant, Cornelius Elven, had volunteered his services, it rained heavily; and the Bury St. Edmund's pastor grew more than a little nervous at the prospect of getting wet through, for the weighty reason that he had no change of clothes, and, if it came to borrowing, there were none within a radius of forty miles which would be anything like large enough. As a young beginner whose preaching had been found to have attractions for large numbers of all ages and of all conditions in life, Mr. Spurgeon himself felt great interest in the ministrations of the leading divines of their day. He took care to hear a sermon from the venerable William Jay, of Bath, when he visited Cambridge, and ever afterwards harboured grateful memories concerning him. Even the text was never forgotten—"Ever let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ." He also thought it worth while to travel to Birmingham to hear John Angell James, who gave a much appreciated discourse from the words, "Ye are complete in Him." Mr. James was not quite so ardent a Calvinist as his younger friend, and did not suppose that his preaching would always prove so acceptable. He was, however, a man in whom dignity and simplicity were combined. The preaching adventures of Mr. Spurgeon's early days were many and varied. Thus, at one well-known town in Hertfordshire, he was viewed as an intruder according to the prejudice of different observers. There were several chapels in the place; but he was too much of a Calvinist for one, and too much of an Arminian for another. However, at last he was admitted to the pulpit of a third. The pastor of the congregation received a stipend about equal to the wages of a farm labourer, so that a visitor to his cottage might well feel some misgivings about accepting his hospitality. "I noticed," Mr. Spurgeon afterwards said, "that my host wore a very shiny alpaca coat; and at the close of the sermon I said to the congregation, 'Now I have preached my best to you. Freely you 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 said that his Master had always sent him his living, but that he was beginning to wonder where the next suit of clothes would come from."

Mr. Spurgeon has also told of another experience which he met with in that same town, and on the same day. He offended certain strait-laced Calvinists by telling a company of children that God would hear their prayers even before they were converted. In the estimation of some Christian professors of "high" sentiments, this savoured of the most dangerous Arminianism, and as these gathered together in grave consultation the question triumphantly asked was, whether the prayers of the wicked were not an abomination to the Lord? "What are you battling with this young man about?" asked an elderly dame, whose red cloak served to make her conspicuous. "What do you know about the Scriptures?" she added, with some vehemence. "You say God does not hear the prayers of unconverted people; why, have you never read that He heareth the young ravens when they cry?—and there is no grace in them. If God hears the cry of the ravens, don't you think He will hear the cry of a man made in His own image?" That seemed to settle the point, and it was found more convenient to walk away than to continue the argument. In such secluded country places as the young pastor from Waterbeach was called upon to visit from time to time, many eccentric samples of humanity would be discovered—lineal descendants, as it might have been imagined,

of the quaint Puritan heroes whose wit left its impression on their age. Think, for example, of a devoted veteran who, after serving the neighbouring farmers as a common shepherd for forty years, took to the more responsible service of tending a flock belonging to the fold of Christ. The force of habit being what it is, such a man would hardly be able to be very greatly different from what he had been during the main part of his life, so that it was quite a natural confession for him to make when he declared that his second flock was far more sheepish than the first.

Professor J. D. Everett has given some interesting facts concerning this period:—"In or about 1852," he says, "I was occupying a post in a high-class school (Mr. Thorowgood's, at Totteridge, near London), and there being a vacancy for another assistant, I wrote, with Mr. Thorowgood's approval, to my old friend Spurgeon, proposing that he should come and fill it. He asked for a few days to decide definitely, and then wrote declining, chiefly on the ground that he was unwilling to renounce the evangelistic work which he combined with the position he then held. He stated then or in a subsequent letter that he had preached more than three hundred times in the previous twelve months, and that the chapel at Waterbeach was not only full, but crowded with outside listeners at the open windows."

These preaching engagements in towns and villages of the surrounding country appear to have yielded the young itinerant great satisfaction; and they were so far from adding to his burden that they appear rather to have relieved the weekday teaching in Mr. Leeding's school at Cambridge. Those were happy and profitable days, and some of the pupils who were then pursuing their education still survive, and are able to give sunny memories of the time they spent at school under such masters.

Thus, referring to Mr. Spurgeon as he was in the year 1852, my friend Mr. Edward Ingle, now of Willingham, but who was then a pupil in the Cambridge academy, supplies me with some personal reminiscences. In a private letter dated March 23, 1892, Mr. Ingle remarks: "I count myself honoured in the providence of God to have come under his tuition in my schooldays. Newspaper references to his position in Mr. Charles Leeding's school in Cambridgeshire refreshed pleasant memories of study and friendship. As boys, we were, I believe, drawn to love him by a spell similar to what his students of later years have felt." As he looks back through the vista of forty years, Mr. Ingle can recall to mind that the young tutor—who was himself only of schoolboy age—already showed great force of character, which could not fail to exercise a powerful influence on those lads who came into contact with him. At the same time, Spurgeon had in his character all those attractive traits which come of the freshness of youth and of a sanguine temperament. In the year 1852 he was eighteen years of age, and he resided in the house with Mr. Leeding and his housekeeper, the school and its surroundings being kept quite apart from the house. On a certain afternoon young Ingle arrived exceptionally early, no doubt hoping to have some play before lessons. Just at that moment Mr. Spurgeon happened to be coming out of the house, and taking hold of his scholar in his kind, familiar way, the young tutor said, "Come along, Ingle, I'll show you what I am writing against the old Pope." The two then entered the school, when from his desk the amateur author brought forth that manuscript entitled "Antichrist and her Brood" which George Smith, the pastor of Poplar, had commended, although, as adjudicator, he had not awarded its writer Mr. Arthur Morley's prize. Mr. Spurgeon "turned over the pages with a relish," says his quondam scholar, and then remarked, with an emphasis worthy of his ancestors who had suffered under the agents of Philip II. in the Netherlands, "Plow I should like to pull the old Pope from his

throne." At that time, as Mr. Ingle can vividly remember, nothing more readily awakened the enthusiasm of his young tutor than a reminder of the unscriptural pretensions and teaching of the Papacy. To the hoys whom he taught, Mr. Spurgeon's mind seemed to be occupied with great subjects, or, at all events, with things which lay beyond the ken of his class. The young tutor was also known to be very warm-hearted; and while there was something in his eye, as well as in the compass of his voice, which already attracted the attention of those who lived or studied with him, Mr. Ingle assures me that, "to a casual observer, his tout-ensemble was very extraordinary." So long as he was neat and comfortable, the prevailing fashion in dress never troubled young Spurgeon; whether people were reminded of a former generation or of the present by the cut of his coat or the shape of his stock, was a matter of no concern. The boys thought that their teacher was without doubt an odd-looking young man to have charge of a class of lads; but, nevertheless, all they saw in him only served to confirm their confidence and command their admiration. He might be singular in some respects, but when he came to be engaged in the serious business of teaching, all things save the subject in hand were at once forgotten. Only let this somewhat odd-looking young tutor read a stirring passage from English history, or give a page from Milton's masterpiece, or explain in a way that boys could comprehend something relating to astronomy, physical geography, or some other science, and the pupils at once had their attention arrested, the too-frequently dull routine of school-hour lessons became at once invested with a charm which was irresistible. All was the more effective because the teacher never gave himself up to the assumption of airs which would not have been becoming in one of his years. Just as in after-years, when he ranked as the first preacher of his age, Mr.

Spurgeon would say in his jovial manner, "You know, I'm not the reverend gentleman," so at Cambridge he was a youth among boys. Hence Mr. Ingle is able to add, "We used to have plenty of fun; Spurgeon would laugh as heartily as anyone I ever saw." On one occasion one of the scholars became perplexed over a matter of spelling, although the word consisted of only four letters. "Please, sir, do you spell York, York or Yeaork"? asked the lad, the query at once provoking a round of laughter. Lending strong emphasis to the Yea, Mr. Spurgeon gave it as his decided opinion that the word should begin as the scholar suggested—as though a new discovery had been made. He then wrote down Yeaork, and, handing the paper to the inquirer to show him how natural it looked, the youngster was obliged to join in the merriment. On another day there was a lesson in botany, when mention was made of "cruciform plants." Mr. Spurgeon asked, "What is a cruciform plant; what shape is it?" Then when the boys showed a dull apprehension by not answering, the tutor presently gave the command, "Now then, out you go into the playground or garden, and fetch me in the flower of a cruciform plant." Of course, the young botanists found the adjournment into the open air an agreeable change. One of them was successful in finding on a certain vegetable a flower in the form of a cross. Then followed a reminder of the scientific or Latin name of the plant; but the lesson did not conclude without some passing earnest references to the cross of Christ. As my friend at Willingham is able to testify, the boys who made up Mr. Spurgeon's class needed no urging to be attentive when the time for going through a Scripture lesson came round. Though the Bible is often regarded as a dry book by boys, the Scripture lessons were given with a freshness which made them of extraordinary interest. "There was no long, sombre face with Spurgeon, no starchiness," remarks his former pupil; "he was very homely and happy in these lessons." While giving them, the young teacher would not only become animated, but seemed to speak about the old-time characters who stood out on the page of

inspiration as though they were his own personal acquaintances. One occasion is still memorable—that on which the lesson embraced the passage wherein the prophet Elijah challenges the people to determine by-fire whether the Lord of Hosts or Baal was the true God. The great scene on Mount Carmel was depicted before the boys with wonderful vividness. To everyone present it almost seemed that the youth had actually been an eye-witness of the spectacle. On another occasion, when the class had to read Isaiah 55, which Mr. Spurgeon told them was one of the gems of the Bible, he asked them if they would not commit that passage to memory, and all did so. It was evident to the boys that their tutor read with rarest delight what he would have called the Gospel according to the Evangelical Prophet, although it was hardly to be supposed that the pupils would be able fully to understand their leader's fervour. There was another passage in the Psalms which he seemed to love specially to dwell upon at this time, for in it he saw a wonderful revelation of the Divine character as viewed from the human standpoint: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us."

There were other things than lessons, however, which had to receive attention; for we have to remember that, in addition to the regular work at Waterbeach, the young tutor was also still a member of the Cambridge Lay Preachers' Association. Thus, on a certain dark and damp winter afternoon, just before breaking-up time, the door of the room is opened, and the figure who enters, laughing merrily at what he supposes may be his own somewhat odd appearance, is no other than young Mr. Spurgeon in the costume of an itinerant preacher of the Fens. Completely enveloped in an oilskin suit, the junior tutor had looked in just to show Mr. Leeding and the lads at their desks what he appeared like when fully equipped for the road. "Here I am, going off to fight the battles of the Lord," he remarked; and away he went to keep a preaching engagement in a village not far away.

While he aimed at exercising the best possible moral and religious influence over the boys he had in charge, Mr. Spurgeon was careful at the same time to develop their talents; and he appears to have been particularly anxious to bring out or encourage those who showed any faculty for public speaking. He was at all times ready to make allowances for natural shortcomings, and overflowed with sympathy; but it was not always easy for the scholars to keep pace with such a teacher. For example, he once remarked, "We will have a little meeting amongst ourselves some evening;" and, because the boys knew well enough that he meant what he said, they somewhat dreaded the novel kind of entertainment in prospect. Though it was such a miniature affair, all the arrangements were to be similar to those of a public gathering in the town. Mr. Spurgeon and several of the lads were to constitute the audience; the subject was to be the foreign missionary cause; a duly qualified boy would be voted into the chair, and the speakers would be expected to say something to the purpose. Mr. Edward Ingle vividly remembers this diverting incident of his schooldays. In due time the evening came round, and preparations worthy of the occasion had been made in the schoolroom: a platform, with a table and chairs, had been erected; there was a proper seat for the president of the coming meeting, there were forms for the auditors. The chairman who happened to be elected was rather diminutive for his years; but, being a clever little fellow, it was supposed that he might do what was required of him with credit to himself and profit to others. It turned out, however, that both the chairman and those who were to support him showed some symptoms of nervousness just at the time when they should have remained calm and self-possessed. The chairman showed unmistakable weakness about the knees; and when he

rose it was not to make a few appropriate remarks on the subject of foreign missions, but earnestly to ask that he might be allowed to resign his office. He had no sooner spoken than circumstances seemed to favour his petition, though in a manner as unwelcome as it was unexpected. In a moment the entire little platform collapsed, the chairman and the table, the appointed speakers and the seats, suddenly showing a striking transformation scene, of which confusion and alarm were the main characteristics. Mr. Spurgeon himself appeared to be terror-stricken, until the welcome discovery was made that no one was much hurt, and that little damage was done. When Mr. Spurgeon had completed the rescue of his young friends there was a hearty, all-round laugh; and then the serious business of rebuilding the structure in a more enduring way was undertaken. The platform having been rebuilt, a stronger-kneed chairman was elected, and the meeting proceeded in a way which yielded satisfaction to all who took part in it. Instead of the boys being disheartened, as might have been the case, they were encouraged to persevere and to attempt to do better another time. The young tutor well knew the value of an encouraging word, accompanied by a kind pat on the shoulder, at such a time; and it was because the boys became anxious to please one who so greatly appreciated all that they did for him that they were willing to go on to do better. As Mr. Spurgeon went on his course in this manner, he occasionally came into contact with those who thought that they saw in him that which would develope into something greater. One friend and then another would give opinions as regarded the future which were not always easy to understand at the time, but which were destined to be more than realised. Men of learning, and of experience in the Church and the world, sometimes had to do with him, and they saw that he possessed gifts of no common order. It was customary at times to hear such a remark as, "That Spurgeon will be a wonderful man some day; there's something marvellous about him." Those who lived in the same house with him were sharers of this conviction, and were, if possible, even more convinced that a distinguished future awaited him. This was the case with Mr. Leeding and the housekeeper, both of whom were profoundly impressed with their young friend's character and abilities, as also were many who came to the house. One visitor in particular declared he had an irresistible conviction that the young tutor and itinerant preacher had a great future before him, and that mighty works would be done by him for God. And there was one who at this early date was discerning enough to make the striking prophecy—"That young man will yet shake England like a second Luther!"

Having been associated in his youth with Mr. Spurgeon, Mr. Edward Ingle naturally watched the progress of his old tutor in London with no common interest; to meet with him, to hear a sermon from him, came to be regarded as one of the greatest of gratifications. On one memorable occasion in 1874 it was my own privilege to accompany Mr. Spurgeon to Willingham, when he preached in the open air to a great crowd on behalf of the building fund of the new chapel, which his brother-in-law, the late Mr. Jackson, had erected. Mr. Ingle, who has supplied the above facts relative to schooldays in Cambridge, vividly remembers this festival, of which some account will appear in the proper place.

During this time, while the young pastor was living at Cambridge, and towards the end of 1853, or about the time that he first came to London, his home was at 9, Union Road, and we find him also at 60, Upper Park Street. Though his ministerial income was then less than a pound a week, his people at Waterbeach made him many presents, while he realised something from teaching the boys who now remember him so fondly. It was not only a time of happiness and of progress, it was

also a period of preparation for more arduous service. A religious newspaper has reproduced the following advertisement, which throws some light on Mr. Spurgeon's movements at this period:—

"No. 60, Upper Park Street, Cambridge.

"Mr. C. H. Spurgeon begs to inform his numerous friends that, after Christmas, he intends taking six or seven young gentlemen as day pupils. He will endeavour to the utmost to impart a good commercial education. The ordinary routine will include arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and mensuration; grammar and composition; ancient and modern history; geography, natural history, astronomy, Scripture, and drawing. Latin and the elements of Greek and French if required. Terms £5 per annum."

While conducting one of the prayer-meetings which were held during the latter half of 1891 to plead for Mr. Spurgeon's recovery, Mr. Stott, who was then assistant pastor at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, read a letter in which the young pastor of Waterbeach referred to his work and prospects in the ingenuous and warm-hearted way which was characteristic of him even in those early years. It was as follows:—

"My Dear Uncle,

"I have two or three reasons for writing to you just at this time. We are going to have a baptising on October 19, and I should be so glad to see my uncle following his Master in the water. I am almost afraid to mention the subject lest anyone should charge me with giving it undue prominence; if they will do so, they must. I can bear it for my Master's sake.... Now, with regard to coming for a week to preach at Stambourne and neighbouring villages, I am yours to serve to the utmost. Not on the Sabbath, but all the week. I have a good sphere of labour here, but I want to do more, if possible. It is a great field, and the labourers must work with all their might. I often wish I were in China, Hindostan, or Africa, so that I might preach, preach, preach all day long. It would be sweet to die preaching. But I want more of the Holy Spirit; I do not feel enough—no, not half enough—of His divine energy.... I shall not mind preaching two evenings in Stambourne if you cannot get other convenient places; and I should love to have some good thoroughly hot prayer-meetings after the service.... I wish to live in unity with every believer, whether Calvinist, Arminian, Churchman, Independent, or Wesleyan; and, though I firmly believe they are tottering, I do not like them well enough to prop them up by my wrangling at them.... I am, yours most truly, "C. Spurgeon.

"9, Union Road, Cambridge, "September 27, 1853."

Chapter 12: The "Miller of Houghton"

Chapter 12.

The "Miller Of Houghton"

Mr. Spurgeon and the "Miller of Houghton"—Mr. Potto Brown's Characteristics—The Boy-Preacher visits Houghton—"Felicitous Misery"—"The Prophet's Chamber"—A Veteran Arminian and a Young Calvinist—"A Battle Royal"—A Friendly Parting—Mr. R. W. Dixon on Potto Brown's Peculiarities.

A man who was a remarkable character in his day now demands some passing reference. The late Mr. Potto Brown, the eccentric "Miller of Houghton," as he is sometimes called, the head of a family which owned large steam flour mills on the Ouse, both at Huntingdon and St. Ives, has to be included among the friends of Mr. Spurgeon's youth while he was pastor at Waterbeach, or during the time of his connection with the Cambridge Lay Preachers' Association. Mr. Potto Brown himself lived at Houghton, a pleasant village which lies about midway between St. Ives and Huntingdon, his house being of the old-fashioned comfortable sort in which a lover of nature and of country life would delight, the gardens being a special feature which had their attractions for all visitors. In addition to the charms of Houghton itself, which in Mr. Brown's time was justly regarded as a model village, the outlying country was of considerable topographical or historical interest. Along that river bank, regarding its characteristics, as well as "Ouse's silent tide," with a poet's eye, Cowper often walked; and in and all around St. Ives memories of Oliver Cromwell seem to be awakened at every step. What young Spurgeon may have thought of such things need not be conjectured; but he would no doubt take notice of them when, as the guest of Potto Brown, he had to occupy the pulpit at Houghton Chapel during one of the most memorable Sabbaths of his early days. This was afterwards referred to by the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle as a time of "felicitous misery"; but the experience may have served to enlarge his views of human life. Although the two were far apart as regarded their theology, there was much in each to win the admiration and esteem of the other.

Born in the year 1797, in the house in which he died in 1871, Mr. Brown was a benefactor to Houghton such as the village may hardly expect to see the like of again. In every direction might be seen the results of his kindness. The best products of his gardens and hot-houses were not considered too choice for the sick poor who needed them. He would have disliked having to enlist the aid of the village constable in dealing with dishonest neighbours, but he would nevertheless find out a way of making such see for themselves the contemptibleness of theft. One who stole Mr. Brown's vegetables would, if traced, probably have a piece of meat sent to him direct from "the house" to make his meal complete; and such a one might feel his punishment as much as many who atone for their misdeeds in prison. In many respects, to an ordinary observer, it might have appeared that the Miller of Houghton was aiming at making himself and his actions a conundrum.

Mr. Brown was associated with the Union Nonconformist Chapel at St. Ives; but he took care that what was to him a chapel-of-ease nourished also at Houghton. When news of the achievements of the boy-preacher of Waterbeach reached the ears of the good-natured but eccentric miller, he seems to have determined that he would hear the youthful prodigy for himself and judge of his merits. The spare room, or "prophet's chamber," in Mr. Brown's house was always available for the pulpit "supplies"; and, for the sake of the entertainment it afforded him, the master liked to have somebody in it. At the same time, it is a singular circumstance that so far-gone an Arminian as the Miller of Houghton should have invited to his house, as a Sunday "supply," so uncompromising a Calvinist as young Spurgeon. When Mr. Spurgeon reached the village mansion on the Saturday evening, he would be struck with the singular code of laws by which the household was ruled. At family prayer the preacher would not be allowed to read a portion of Scripture; that would be done in turn by one of the servant-maids, and it was understood to be a great trial to bashful maidens. If, on the following morning, the "supply" was downstairs before eight o'clock he would be greeted with approval; for Mr. Brown admired a preacher who observed what he called his Sunday time. "My time is eight o'clock by my clock in the kitchen, and that always gains a quarter of an hour in the week, and I let it remain till after breakfast," the miller would remark, adding, "Then I set it right that the servants may know the correct time to go to public worship." At the breakfast-table the preacher would have to take the place set apart and the food prescribed for him, and he would also have to eat what was supposed to be best for his personal benefit. "That is your place," the host would remark; "there are two eggs; we always provide two eggs for the minister's breakfast on Sunday morning, because there is a large amount of phosphorus in eggs, and that acts on the brain, and so we get better sermons." "What sort of an old fellow is this Potto Brown?" once asked an unhappy student of the miller himself while under the impression that he was addressing a man-servant. "Oh, a queer old fellow," was the reply, and a very correct reply it was. When Mr. Spurgeon found himself the guest of such a host as this village philanthropist, it was very natural that he should feel ill at ease, for the two might seem to have little in common. Probably the Miller of Houghton had as kind a heart as the old pastor of Stambourne; but in matters which chiefly touched Mr. Spurgeon's sympathies the two men were a complete contrast. After Mr. Brown had heard his young "supply" on the Sunday, he spoke of his preaching in a very disparaging tone. If, as was supposed by the late Mr. Edward Cressell—who during some years was pastor at Houghton—Mr. Brown suspected young Spurgeon to be so far an adventurous impostor that he preached, as his own, the sermons of mature divines, we can understand the miller's ground of misgiving. As an enterprising, shrewd business man of Quaker descent, who had seen something of the world, the Houghton miller had never heard a mere boy preach with such force as his present visitor, and he seemed to lay claim to a Christian experience which, in the ordinary course of things, could only belong to a much older person. Then what Mr. Spurgeon would have regarded as a necessary and emphatic enunciation of the doctrines of grace was to Mr. Brown a too outspoken parade of the doctrines of Calvinism, against which his life and action had been a prolonged protest. A collision between two such champions of opposite teaching was inevitable, one being as determined as the other in speaking out plainly what he believed. No quarter was given on either side; and it is to be regretted that a fuller account of what the younger disputant many years afterwards described as "a battle royal" has not been preserved. The miller opened the combat by telling the boy-preacher that his discourses might do very well for an apprentice boy; but there was nothing in them beyond that, and then he went on in an animated strain to show

how utterly distasteful to an experienced man like himself was the Calvinistic doctrine which had been the groundwork of the sermons. Nettled by being so sharply rebuked, and feeling indignant that the teaching which his Puritanic grandfather and the godly housekeeper at Newmarket had found to be the very marrow of the New Testament should thus be made light of, the youthful evangelist told the Miller of Houghton to his face that his theology was worthless. The discussion continued with great warmth for some time; but as each disputant was able to respect an opponent who believed something for himself, and held his ground against all comers, no scars remained to tell of actual ill-feeling. Indeed, it is not improbable that this very disagreement may have had the effect of heightening Mr. Brown's respect for his guest; for not only would there be demonstration that he could with boldness and honesty defend a faith which he believed to be scriptural, but the dispute would give evidence of the "apprentice boy's" possession of genius and knowledge, which could not possibly have been borrowed for the occasion from a more experienced Christian. From that day Charles Haddon Spurgeon and Potto Brown were very good friends. Seeing that they could not agree, they gave up their wordy combat, and conversed in a friendly way about things which they held in common. When the time for separation came, the two were to all appearances fast friends; they walked together to Huntingdon, and as a parting gift the miller handed to the young preacher a copy of Haldane's "Life."

We properly speak of the good Miller of Houghton as a Christian and a philanthropist sui generis. He was no more like any other man than young Mr. Spurgeon himself was; and it would have been as hopeless for any person to attempt to copy the one as the other. He has some attraction for us as an early friend of Mr. Spurgeon, and as such it may be interesting to give what Mr. B. W. Dixon says about him in a memorial brochure issued some years ago:—

"The care Mr. Brown took to educate all who came within his influence was very-marked; the servants of his household—any friends, especially young friends, who might be staying in the house—he took pains with all. He sought to interest his household in the family worship. He wished to inculcate the feeling that people should not depend upon any priest or one man to lead the devotions, laying stress on the text, 'And hath made us (all) kings and priests unto God.' He tried to get all to engage in this service, which he made informal and simple. He would hand a Bible to any one person in the circle, and say, 'Read, please, but don't read a fighting psalm'; or, 'Don't read a long piece'; or, 'We are some of us going to market, read something to guide us in buying and selling'; or, 'What good news is there for us to-day?' or, 'We must read our Bibles the same as we read our newspapers.' Sometimes he would interrupt the reading with a remark; as, when that Psalm was read which says David roared in the night, Mr. Brown said, 'What would they say to us if we went on like that?' His younger servants he got to read the Scriptures in turn, the older ones to pray aloud. The younger ones were corrected when they misread; this led them to rehearse their portion before coming in. Sometimes he would make a running commentary on what was read, or show how it applied to everyday life. Thus he redeemed a regular service from what it might have become—a dull routine, and used it as a means of education for those about him. He found it difficult to get women to pray aloud, and would say to them, 'Women should pray aloud, or they may be accused of drunkenness, as Hannah was.' He had great difficulty in inducing his first wife to pray aloud, even in private. She said she could not. He said, 'Could you not repeat words after me?' She thought she could. Then they knelt down, and he said, 'Lord, be merciful'; she repeated, 'Lord, be merciful.' He continued, 'to me a sinner.' He then rose, and said,

'There, you can pray very well.' After a time she took her part in vocal prayer at family worship. Mr. Brown liked to have several short prayers. He did not appeal to anyone in particular, but was troubled if no one followed after he had prayed, when he paused before rising to give them the opportunity." A man of this stamp would not only interest Mr. Spurgeon in early life, he would continue to have rare attraction till the last. After the death of the Miller of Houghton an article on his life, work, and characteristics appeared in The Sword and the Trowel.

Chapter 13: Last Days at Waterbeach

Chapter 13.

Last Days At Waterbeach An Invitation from London—New Park Street Chapel—Decaying Prosperity—Mr. Spurgeon's First Night in London—His Misgivings—First Impressions of the Chapel—Dr. Gill's Chair—Differences of Opinion—The Evening Sermon and its Effects—Offer and Acceptance of the Pastorate—Impressions of Outsiders—Entry in the Church Book at Waterbeach.

We are now approaching the close of the days at Waterbeach, which the great preacher never ceased fondly to remember in London in after days. The manner in which he was first introduced to a larger sphere of labour in the metropolis might look like accident; but Mr. Spurgeon himself would have called it a particular providence. As the reader will be aware, when the pulpit of an important church and congregation becomes vacant, any mention of a promising village genius, who might be able to maintain the prestige of eminent predecessors, is listened to with interest. Men who have already made a reputation are commonly too scarce to be available; but it is always just possible that some rising star may be found who will equally well serve the anxious deacons' purpose. In the case of Mr. Spurgeon, it happened that news of his uncommon talents and unexceptionable teaching was carried to the Baptist Church at New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, at a time of urgent need in the autumn of the year 1853, when the pastorate was vacant. The sanctuary, which had accommodation for twelve hundred persons—not more than a sixth part of which was occupied—was supposed to be as handsome as it was spacious. Though the cause was an ancient one, the chapel itself was comparatively new; it had been erected in the reign of William IV., in place of one which had been taken down to clear the approaches to the present London Bridge. As will be shown in the proper place, quite a succession of notable theologians had been associated with the people from the seventeenth century downwards; but at the time mentioned the outlook was altogether disheartening. It was becoming more and more difficult to maintain congregational prosperity in crowded industrial centres, from which the best families showed a growing disposition to remove in order to secure the greater quiet and purer air of the suburbs. This was the case with New Park Street Chapel forty years ago; and to any ordinary observer it must have appeared that nothing short of the miraculous could arrest the process of decay.

Mere appearances may be deceptive, however; no actual miracle was needed to turn back the tide to the high-water mark of prosperity; all that was wanted was a man possessing certain gifts and characteristics. Where was such a man to be found? That was a question which the deacons wished to have answered; and at a very opportune moment a friend came forward to give the desired information. The man wanted was down at Waterbeach; and one of the friends had become impressed with his talents while noting the way in which he had been somewhat roughly rebuked at a meeting at Cambridge on account of outspoken adherence to what he judged to be the truth. When the late Mr. William Olney heard of this circumstance, he resolved that he would

write to the young preacher to see what he might have to say to the proposal that he should make a trial of his gifts before a London congregation. From Mr. Olney's standpoint, all the precedents of the past seemed to favour a successful issue. The church of which he was a member had so repeatedly, with the best results, selected a man for its pastor who was still in his teens, or had scarcely got out of them, that the fact of Mr. Spurgeon being only nineteen years of age was of good omen. It had been much the same with Dr. John Grill, who had been pastor for over fifty years, with Dr. John Rippon, who held the office during sixty-three years, and with Dr. Joseph Angus, who had resigned the post about a dozen years before.

Mr. Spurgeon himself was by no means elated with the proposal that he should visit London. He had had little experience of life in the metropolis; but the vivid portrayals of Ragged London, which had so often had a fascination for him in the columns of Household Words, would only tend to make him love all the more the charms of his native East Anglia. The boy-preacher's private address being unknown to the magnates of New Park Street, the letter of application was sent to Waterbeach Chapel, and the mysterious-looking missive was lying on the communion-table when, after the winter-morning drive from Cambridge, Mr. Spurgeon entered the building to conduct the usual service. At first he thought that the letter was not for him; but a deacon was present in the person of Mr. Coe, who knew well enough that the application had reached the person for whom it was intended. There might be another Spurgeon at another place with a larger congregation, but the suggestion that the letter was intended for him was none the less mistaken. The more the preacher looked at the matter all round, the less he appears to have liked the prospect which the proposed visit to London opened before him. The situation was so far peculiar that pride or desire for a higher position must have nothing to do with influencing him in making his decision. It was not long since he had seemed to hear on Midsummer Common the admonition which had entered into his very soul: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." A reply was at first sent to London, saying that a mistake had evidently been made; but at length Mr. Spurgeon agreed to visit the metropolis. Being in love with the sphere he was occupying, and having no ambition to remove to London, Mr. Spurgeon left home on a memorable Saturday in December, 1853, with a heavy heart. Indeed, the affair was so genuine a trial to him that the passage of Scripture on which his mind continued to dwell was, "He must needs go through Samaria." We have to picture the country youth travelling up the Eastern Counties Railway to the old terminus at Shoreditch, thinking all the way of those he had left behind in Cambridge, and eagerly anticipating the time when he would return to them. In London the signs of approaching Christmas might be apparent on every hand; but all that did not tend to relieve his own lowness of spirits. Where was the young preacher to find a lodging? Not one of the good deacons who had favoured the notion of asking him to make a trial of the exercise of his gifts before a London congregation had offered him lodging and entertainment. A "supply" could be provided for at a boarding-house in Queen Square, and that was the most convenient arrangement. Though this was a highly respectable place, it was not one calculated to inspire a new-comer with a love of London. Those who commonly frequented the boarding-house were precise religionists of the Evangelical section of the Established Church, and their conversation was not of a kind to exhilarate one who had just come up from the Fens and was destined to strike out for himself a new path in the great centre of the world's commerce and civilisation. The select company of the common-room would at once see that the new-comer not only did not belong to their coterie, but appeared to be in certain respects somewhat of a greenhorn. They all saw at a glance that his clothes had not been made in Bond Street or Regent

Street; and while the formidable-looking black satin stock he wore was such as might have come as an heirloom from Stambourne, the red-and-white cotton pocket-handkerchief which occasionally became visible naturally awakened dismay in the hearts of persons whose notions of propriety were of such an approved standard. When these good people learned that the round-faced boy who had suddenly appeared among them was actually engaged to preach on the morrow at one of the great chapels of London, which had its memorable associations, they could not help being amused, although they may have been too polite to show what they felt. At the same time, the temptation to entertain their young friend with trustworthy information relative to the men of might and of miraculous eloquence who then held forth in the various London pulpits was too great to be resisted. "There were giants in the earth in those days," and these Anglican Evangelicals plumed themselves upon being minutely acquainted with their characteristics. Mr. So-and-so who ministered in one quarter was the oracle of thoughtful people; Mr. Somebody-else in another direction had an irresistible attraction for men; and then there was another whose powers were such that City merchants flocked to hear him a thousand at a time! There may have been others whose powers of voice and of oratory were too great for human estimation; but the very thought of having to sleep in the same town with such men of world-wide fame was more than enough to unnerve a rustic evangelist who was timidly anticipating having to stand in the pulpit of Dr. Rippon within the space of a few hours. After all this it seemed meet that the boarding-house manager should, for a bedroom, allot Mr. Spurgeon a small place over the street door, hardly more than large enough to turn round in, and in which peaceful sleep was impossible on account of noises from the streets. When, at length, the morning came—a sombre December morning in London—the Evangelical Churchpeople of the boarding-house common-room went their several ways to hear those wonderful magnates of the English pulpit whose genius and labours imparted such lustre to the metropolis. It was too much to expect that any one of the number should volunteer to accompany the odd-looking visitor from the Fens to his singular destination at the Baptist meetinghouse, with which they were probably only very imperfectly acquainted. Being a stranger in London, the young preacher's first business when he left his lodging on the Sunday morning was to find the way to New Park Street. Turning into the great main thoroughfare of Holborn, he went on down the hill, the Viaduct being then hardly thought of, and turning again into Farringdon Street, he went on over old Blackfriars or Southwark Bridge, to come at last to the chapel which had such a memorable history associated with it. Before entering, there seems to have been another pang of misgiving; but, as the visit to London had not been of his own seeking, he resolved to go boldly forward and do what was expected of him. The meetinghouse appeared to be as dull and gloomy within as it was black and uninviting without; but all this was quite in keeping with the state of Mr. Spurgeon's mind. He was still thinking of the words, "He must needs go through Samaria." At the same time he could not but feel interested in his surroundings when he actually entered the building. There were warm-hearted friends to welcome him, while here and there were memories of a distinguished past. The temptation to sit down in what had been Dr. Gill's chair was irresistible, and there were pictures, etc., to see, as well as things to hear, in which such a visitor would be greatly interested. Some few persons still survive who were present at the old chapel on that memorable Sunday morning; but the one who retained the most vivid recollections of the occasion was my friend the late Mr. William Olney, from whom I received a particular description of what happened. When Mr. Spurgeon left the vestry to enter the pulpit the outlook was more dispiriting than ever, the mere handful of people dotted about the building

representing altogether a much smaller congregation than would have assembled at Waterbeach, or at any of the special services in the parts surrounding that village. Everything associated with the place seemed to indicate that the prosperity of the past had gone down to low-water mark, and this could not but affect the preacher's spirits. The sermon was founded upon Jas 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Perhaps some of the veteran Calvinists among the congregation may not have thought it a promising omen when the first text was thus selected from the Epistle of the Apostle of Works. Be that as it may, the original style and method of the youthful preacher struck all discerning persons present. The extraordinary clearness and power of his voice were also noticed. As to the general merits of the preacher, however, there was division of opinion. Some were captivated at once; others, who posed as more discerning, deliberate critics, hesitated to give their approval. This was all very natural. If it needs a great man to introduce original methods, such as will inevitably supersede the old-time ways or fashions, it also needs persons who are something more than commonplace to appreciate the innovation. But apart from what he had actually done in the way of preaching the Gospel to a London audience, Mr. Spurgeon had given his hearers something to talk about. The two hundred persons present, who on this occasion had an average of six seats each in the Southwark meetinghouse, went home not only to dine but to discuss what they had heard and seen. They had passed through a new experience; and while some may have ingenuously confessed that they were charmed, others were persuaded that such preaching would never do. We have to remember that on that first Sunday of his appearance in London, Mr. Spurgeon was a fair sample of what he would surely continue to be in years to come. He gave neither more nor less than one of his ordinary sermons, such as he would have preached to his rustic flock at Waterbeach had he remained at home. Any notion of delivering an elaborately prepared discourse to impress the congregation "with a view" to the pastorate, was far from his thoughts; he was too anxious to get the business over, and to return to dearly-loved Cambridge, to be tempted by such a prospect. At the same time, he was pointed in his remarks and simple in his style; and while his overflowing humour might provoke a titter through the chapel—staid deacons and grave matrons being unable to resist the temptation—the young preacher would actually be seen at times to smile himself. Nothing could be more impressive than the way in which he presented the solemn truths of the Gospel; but, nevertheless, the fact remained that this man was capable of smiling in the pulpit, and did not account it a sin to make others smile as well. The greater part of those who were present in the morning took care to go in the evening, and the reports they had made about the strange ways of the young man from Cambridge proved to be a sufficient advertisement to draw together a much larger assembly. An eccentric preacher who was only nineteen years of age was sure to prove a powerful attraction to the religious quidnuncs of London of forty years ago. The subject of the evening sermon was taken from the Book of Revelation, "They are without fault before the throne of God." The theme was a congenial one; the preacher had gained confidence since the morning; he was in better spirits, so that he was enabled to speak with comfort to himself while he powerfully impressed those who heard him. It was an extraordinary occasion, and those present felt it to be such. At the conclusion of the service it was a somewhat perplexing thing to know what to do with the people. They lingered in and about the chapel in a state of excitement; and the majority were anxious that the young Waterbeach pastor should forthwith be asked to remove to London. The day was thus a success, after all; and the youth whom the company at the Queen

Square boarding-house had set down as a mere odd-looking rustic had so far become master of the situation that he had no reason further to fear being put to the test of preaching before a London congregation. The ordeal had not been what he had anticipated; he had succeeded in a signal manner when he thought it more than possible that he might fail; and he had gained new friends where he may not have hoped to find them. The evening repast in the boarding establishment, therefore, was a far pleasanter affair than breakfast in the early morning had been. The boy-preacher was no longer depressed by contrasting his own native littleness with the mighty pulpit orators who were the wonder of London. He might be but an apprentice hand, as Potto Brown had said; but he had a Gospel message to give such as the people were glad to hear. All things now seemed to wear a more attractive face; and though this Cambridge youth was not seeking a London pastorate, nothing was more certain than that he need not shrink from it if, later on, he should be disposed to enter upon such a sphere. The good people at Waterbeach of course felt regret at the turn which things were taking in connection with their pastor; but as such a termination of his services in the village was well known to be inevitable sooner or later, they reconciled themselves to it. The first letter of invitation arrived at No. 60, Upper Park Street, Cambridge, where Mr. Spurgeon was then living, in the latter part of January, 1854, after he had preached again on several occasions in London. In reply, the young pastor referred to his comfortable position among a devoted and loving people; and the only reason that moved him to leave them was the fact that they were unable to raise sufficient for a minister's maintenance. This seemed to indicate that the hand of Providence was opening the way for work in another direction. Mr. Spurgeon himself at this time acted with caution, and he admired the exercise of prudence in others. When he had accepted the call to Waterbeach, he would not bind himself to serve for longer than three months; and when the deacons asked him to occupy the London pulpit for half a year he shrank from the unqualified acceptance of their offer. He reserved the right to retire should anything like failure attend his ministry; and, on the other hand, he would not disregard a hint to resign if the other side felt disposed to give it. He was quite incapable then of measuring his own capacity, although after a time, when he had discovered what he could do, he was remarkable for self-reliance. People may have supposed later that he believed in himself; he really believed in what God was capable of accomplishing through his means. In January, 1854, however, he was particularly careful to keep open a way of retreat into the Fens should the London experiment not answer his expectations. He thought that people's enthusiasm might cool down, and then his popularity would be sure to wane. In any case, he would not leave Waterbeach abruptly, for the people had all been kind and devoted; and they would heartily welcome him back into their midst if the London arrangement should not become permanent.

Any hope that the people of Southwark would repent of their choice, or that Mr. Spurgeon himself would see that it was his duty to retire into the country, was doomed to meet with disappointment. The preacher's popularity continued to increase in a way that was quite without parallel. Instead of New Park Street Chapel having twelve hundred seats for two hundred persons, the doors were soon besieged by crowds who were content with standing room if seats were not to be obtained. At first there was a small minority who were not in favour of inviting Mr. Spurgeon to accept the pastorate, but eventually these gave way to the wishes of the majority, so that the call became practically unanimous. This cordial invitation to the pastorate was acknowledged by the youth of nineteen, and no difficulty appeared to stand in the way of his accepting it. He reminded his friends that he had never sought advancement at their hands; he had had nervous misgivings about

making the experiment of preaching in London at all, and now the general outlook filled him with astonishment. His one desire was for God to lead him on and open the way. Since he had seemed to hear that mysterious admonition outside of Chesterton, he would not dare to harbour any ambition on his own account; but at the same time he could not but feel some satisfaction at becoming the pastor of a people with so noble a history. As he thought of his illustrious predecessors—Keach and Stinton, Grill and Rippon—he asked for the prayers of the saints that such an inexperienced youth might prove worthy to follow in their train. He hoped that any unguarded words he might use, or any mistakes into which he might fall, might be overlooked. While making a great venture, he did so in faith that the Lord would strengthen him to undertake the service. This was no vain confidence, but rather full dependence on the Divine strength.

It is interesting to us to learn what the young preacher from the Fens appeared like to shrewd observers who were tempted to enter New Park Street Chapel to see and hear for themselves. One who was an excellent judge wrote: "His voice is clear and musical, his language plain, his style flowing but terse, his method lucid and orderly, his matter sound and suitable, his tone and spirit cordial, his remarks always pithy and pungent, sometimes familiar and colloquial, yet never light or coarse, much less profane. Judging from a single sermon, one supposed that he would become a plain, faithful, forcible, and affectionate preacher of the Gospel in the form called Calvinistic; and our judgment was the more favourable because, while there was a solidity beyond his years, we detected little of the wild luxuriance naturally characteristic of very young preachers." From the first, the Quakers appear to have appreciated Mr. Spurgeon's forcible outspokenness while giving his message; and if Job Spurgeon, who in the seventeenth century was thrown into Chelmsford Gaol, suffered as a Quaker, there was some kinship between the Essex youth and the Friends. Even at this early date there was a notice of the New Park Street pastor in The Friend which was characteristic of the quarter whence it came. It ran thus:—

"The interest excited by his ministry, and the conflicting opinions expressed in reference to his qualifications and usefulness, have been altogether without parallel in modern times. It was a remarkable sight to see this round-faced country youth thus placed in a position of such solemn and arduous responsibility, yet addressing himself to the fulfilment of its onerous duties with a gravity, self-possession, and vigour that proved him well fitted to the task he had assumed." In reference to the transformation scene which had taken place at New Park Street Chapel, it was added:—

"In a few weeks the empty pews were crowded, every sitting in the chapel was let; and ere twelve months had elapsed the eagerness to hear him had become so great that every standing-place within the walls was occupied on each Sabbath, and it soon became evident that increased accommodation must be provided." In the meantime, while all this was taking place in London, nearly sixty miles distant, the deacons at Waterbeach plainly saw that their young friend would never return to that little pastorate. Then they made this historic entry in their Church Book:—

"Mr. Spurgeon continued to labour amongst us with very great success till the beginning of 1854, when he was called to the more important pastorate of New Park Street, where his popularity and usefulness continue beyond all parallel in modern times, being often called upon to preach on public occasions in all parts of the country." When Mr. Thompson, the present pastor at Waterbeach, read that passage to his congregation on Sunday, February 7, 1892, he very

appropriately added:—

"Our beloved friend has gone from us, leaving no stain behind him. A man greatly beloved by all. He has left a terrible breach. He was a man of great faith, with an unswerving fidelity to the truth, loyal and devoted to his God, docile, childlike before God, fearless before men. He possessed a gentleness of soul known to few men, and when buildings and books shall be no more, Charles Haddon Spurgeon will continue to live, and his works will follow him."

Chapter 14: The Old Style And The New

Chapter 14.

The Old Style And The New The Work in London commenced—The Older Pulpit Models—Characteristics of a "Great" Sermon—Other Ministers of the Time—"The Gold-headed Cane Era"—Professor Everett's Reminiscences—The Situation in London—Mr. W. Ford's Recollections—Lord Shaftesbury's Work.

Mr. Spurgeon's great work in London was commenced before either the preacher himself or his friends were well aware of the fact. Certainly no one as yet understood that a new era in the history of the English pulpit had been opened, and that in time the style of ornate oratory which had been in fashion since the days of Dr. Johnson would give place to a more natural method of public speaking, of which the young preacher from Waterbeach was to become the chief model. Of course, persons were able to see at once that there was something strikingly novel about the young pastor at New Park Street; but it was not to be expected that they would all at once realise that one of the most far-reaching innovations of modern times was being introduced. There were superfine critics who detected what they called "Saxon" as the leading characteristic of the discourses given at the Southwark meetinghouse, and that might be a merit in one who was incapable of soaring higher. The Latinised style of Johnson and Gibbon was still their standard of excellence. To observers of to-day it will appear sufficiently strange that such a standard should have been in favour, while in Addison and Gold-smith, as well as in Matthew Henry and Cowper, models existed which were so infinitely superior. As regarded the common people, who knew little or nothing about either style or Saxon, Mr. Spurgeon spoke a language they could understand without being obliged to refer to a dictionary, and they heard him gladly. No doubt it looked something like presumption in so young a man when he thus deliberately set his face against the fashion which had prevailed for generations, and set up a method of his own. Indeed, this appears to have been one of the charges brought against him; and very early in his London career Mr. Spurgeon found it necessary to say something in reply. He did the best thing possible under the circumstances, by acknowledging that the new method of preaching had been introduced; but he explained that he had acted as he had done because he judged the new method to be better than the old. The reader can best understand the importance of the innovation of which Mr. Spurgeon was one of the pioneers, by reminding himself of the style of preaching exemplified by the leading pulpit orators of those days. There was John Angell James (1785-1859), for instance, whom Mr. Spurgeon himself greatly admired. In a sketch of James's life, Dr. E. W. Dale tells us that "his sermon in May, 1819, for the London Missionary Society, was long remembered and spoken of as one of the most remarkable of the 'great efforts' which in those times made the annual sermon at Surrey Chapel the chief attraction of the May week.... Like all his great sermons preached in his earlier years, it was delivered memoriter, and his brother, who sat in the pulpit with the manuscript in his hand, to 'prompt' the preacher if for a moment he faltered, has told me that hardly an epithet, a conjunction, or a preposition was forgotten." A sermon of this kind, with its introduction, divisions, subdivisions, transitions, application, and peroration, was an exceedingly elaborate production, to

which people might listen in wondering admiration, but which was not calculated to answer the chief end of preaching; and we can well believe that Dr. Dale is right when he says of the estimable colleague of his younger days, "I think that he was at his best when he did not feel himself under any obligation to make a great effort." Dr. Stoughton, too, speaks of James's rhetoric as being "too ornate and ambitious," although it drew forth encomiums from Lord Holland.

Another pulpit celebrity of those days was Henry Melvill, of whom the late E. Paxton Hood remarks:—"Fine preaching, we say, this of Mr. Melvill's; and the labour bestowed upon it was said to have been immense. During the time that he preached at Camden Chapel in London, the reports in circulation respecting the solicitude manifested by him during the composition of a discourse were many and ludicrous. We heard that he was quite inaccessible for about eight hours of every day in the week, closely locked, it was said, in his study. He, at that time, was said to bestow pains upon his discourses as if, instead of being delivered to two thousand persons, they were to be models for all future ages. We have sometimes doubted this, and are still prepared to believe that they are exaggerators who assure us that at these times he invariably wrote his discourses twice and sometimes thrice; after which they were transcribed by his wife in a clear and legible hand for the pulpit. Suppose the case not to be so bad as this, still is it not dreadful thus to misunderstand the intentions of the Gospel ministry?" The introduction of a simpler, more natural style of preaching is not to be traced to Mr. Spurgeon alone, although his was doubtless the chief share in it. We find the Rev. Edward White claiming some share of the work for the late pastor of the Weigh House Chapel:—"He was an epoch-making man, though marking an epoch perhaps as much as making it. Providence seems to have given this eminent person to the Congregational Dissenters just when such an influence was needed to lift them out of the somewhat cramped formulas of the Georgian era.... The age of silk and lavender, and of successful suppression of inquiry under devious phrases, was coming to an end. It was inevitable that much of the ancient style of thought, handed down since the age of Charles II., should pass away, and no single person did so much to promote the reform as Mr. Binney." In the course of an address to his old students, given just twenty years after he first came to London, I overheard Mr. Spurgeon characterise the old times as the "Gold-headed Cane Era." He would also occasionally refer to those antique ornaments of the London pulpit who, in the first place, took care to be gentlemen, whatever they might be, or might not be, besides. When such portrayals were carefully examined, they were found not to be so charged with exaggeration as some may have been disposed to think.

Mr. R. J. Curtis, of the Ragged School Union, communicates the following concerning Mr. Spurgeon and the "Gold-headed Cane Era":—

"An early impression of his was that of want of contact between the people and the pulpit. The ministers, with a sort of kingly or priestly dignity, awed the people into a sort of slavish timidity of anything approaching familiarity with such dignified personages. He determined to smite this, and he did it with a blow of a giant, and this smaller dignity soon gasped itself away. A friend of mine, a great admirer of Mr. Spurgeon, relates the following:—'Mr. Spurgeon had been preaching during the week, I think, at Bexley. After the service a great many persons remained to see him, and, if practicable, to shake hands with him. When apprised of the same he said, 'I will come and shake hands with them like one o'clock'!"

What Mr. Spurgeon was at the opening of his London career, and what kind of world seemed to be opening before him, we have well depicted in the reminiscences of Professor J. D. Everett, from which I have already quoted. Mr. Everett visited his old Newmarket comrade soon after his settlement at New Park Street.

"I spent half a day with him," he says, "and he poured forth to me, without reserve, the full tale of his successes, telling me of the distinguished men who continually came to hear him, and of the encomiums pronounced on his delivery by elocutionists like Sheridan Knowles.

"He showed me the small manuscript books in which he wrote his morning sermons, in a plain round-hand (his evening sermons being less carefully prepared), and read me one of the sermons as thus written. It did not consist of notes and jottings, but was complete in itself, and occupied about a quarter of an hour in the reading. I estimated that it must have been amplified about threefold in actual delivery. He told me that he could always say exactly what he intended, and in exactly the time which he intended.

"His fame was not then known to the general public, and it was only from himself that I learned it. There was something ludicrous in the idea of a man talking so big about his own performances, but it was the simple truth, and he told it with the simplicity of a child. His great power was to him a simple matter of fact, of which he had no more reason to be proud than a bird of its power to fly, or a fish of its power to swim.

"One of his most marked characteristics was the consummate ease with which he did his work, and he was fully conscious of this strong point. He certainly was a thorough believer in himself from the time that he first went to London. He knew what he meant to do, and he did it in his own way, without troubling himself about adverse criticism. He did not break his heart at being scorned or misrepresented.

"This characteristic of being always at his ease was at the root of what was called his irreverence. I remember suggesting to him, in this connection, that a man ought to feel and show some sense of awe in the presence of his Maker; and his reply was to the effect that awe was foreign to his nature—that he felt perfectly at home with his Heavenly Father." At this time the outlook in London was sufficiently gloomy to discourage and even alarm anyone whose nerves were not of the strongest. In certain parts of the town something like a panic actually prevailed, while the sights and sounds must have reminded some observers of the time of plague in the seventeenth century. Thus in and around Golden Square on Saturday morning, the 9th of September, the scene is thus described:—"There was scarcely a street free from hearses and mourning-coaches. A number of the tradespeople left their shops and fled, the closed shutters bearing the announcement that business had been suspended for a few days. Messrs. Huggins, the brewers, have issued an announcement that the poor inhabitants may obtain any quantity of hot water for cleaning their dwellings, or other purposes, at any hour of the day or night." The official report at this time was as follows:—"In the seven days extending from the 3rd to the 9th of September, the deaths of 3,413 persons were recorded, and 2,050 of the number were caused by cholera; which had, in partial eruptions all over London, destroyed in nine weeks, 5, 26, 133, 399, 644, 729, 817, 1,287, 2,050, or in the aggregate 6,120 lives. The outbreak began later than the corresponding outbreak of 1849, which by the same date had, in sixteen weeks, been fatal to 10,143 persons. Will the epidemic pursue its ravages? Will it observe its own times, disregard the seasons, and exact its

full tale of victims? Such were the questions that were asked, with no little anxiety, by those who watched over the public health during the last week." It is then added that "no exertion should be spared to save the thousands whose lives are still threatened; and the dread lesson, before regarded so little, should never be forgotten—that men can no longer drink polluted water, breathe impure air, neglect sanitary measures year after year, with impunity."

Like others whose lot was cast in the thickly inhabited part of the town, Mr. Spurgeon was much affected by this terrible visitation; but the young pastor had an encouraging experience which is thus referred to by Mr. W. Ford, of Westminster:—

"In the year 1854, the first year of Mr. Spurgeon in London, the cholera raged in the locality of his church, and the neighbourhood where he resided. The parochial authorities were very thoughtful for the poor, and caused bills to be placed at the corners of the streets, headed 'Cholera,' in large type, informing the public where advice and medicines would be supplied gratis. At that time I lived in the Great Dover Road, and Mr. Spurgeon lived a little further towards Greenwich, in Virginia Terrace. Seeing the bills above named at every, turning, I was forcibly impressed that they were very much calculated to terrify the people. With the concurrence of a friend I procured one, and wrote in the centre 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.' This bill I placed in my shop window, hundreds read it, and I am not aware of one jeer or improper remark—so subdued and solemnised were people by the awful visitation. Among the readers of the bill was Mr. Spurgeon, and he graphically describes the incident in his work entitled 'The Treasury of David.'" In his notes on Psalm xci., Mr. Spurgeon refers to this incident, and tells how he was refreshed and strengthened by reading the inspired words which the Christian tradesman exhibited in his window.

We do not find any mention of the name of Mr. Spurgeon at the Baptist Union meetings in 1854, and this may perhaps be accounted for by the general distrust with which he was regarded by the more elderly ministers. The following general resolution passed by the members of the Union, shows that the prospect before the churches was not so very cheering at that time:—

"That the Union learn with unfeigned regret that the rate of increase in the churches, as shown by the Association Returns of 1853, is smaller than in preceding years, and smaller than it has been in any year since 1834, the limit of the Union records, it being only at an average of 11/3 per church per annum; that while the impression made by this numerical statement might be somewhat modified by a regard to the temporary causes—such as emigration, for example—which have operated to the diminution of the churches (and the statement cannot alone be taken as a satisfactory basis on which to form an estimate of the spiritual state of the churches) in the judgment of the Union it presents at once an occasion for humiliation and a loud call to united activity and prayer: the former in every department of the work of the Lord, the latter for the gracious outpouring of His Holy Spirit."

While the future seemed gloomy, we find complaint in regard to the inadequate supply of able preachers. "At no period since the Reformation from Popery was there so much need for a constantly increasing supply of competent ministers, both for home and foreign service," one authority declared. "The outcry is very great of the deficiency, both in Great Britain and in America. It is stated that the reasons are to be found partly in the extremely straitened circumstances in

which large numbers of ministers, both in and out of the Established Church, are placed, and the temptations which commerce, in its varied walks, holds forth to men of ability." In its social aspect, London itself was probably in a transition state. The town was beginning outwardly to improve in appearance; but those earnest Christian people who headed the Ragged School crusade needed all the heroism which they could command, and all the perseverance of which human nature was capable, to ensure success in their self-imposed tasks. The late Lord Shaftesbury and his colleague Judge Payne devoted a large part of their time to the encouragement of such service. The office of the Ragged School teacher had not ceased to be a service of peril. The slums were in the condition in which they had been for generations, and large areas which have since been cleared to have large and imposing buildings erected on their sites were then an eyesore as well as a common danger. Lord Shaftesbury explored the most notorious districts, and what he saw inspired him with sentiments akin to despair. It was just about the time of Mr. Spurgeon's coming to London that this great philanthropist passed his Bill for the control of common lodging-houses, which till this time had been the inferni of poverty wherein tens of thousands of miserable beings languished or rotted "in lairs fitter to be the habitation of hogs than of human beings." Crime and pauperism were extending their domain; and in view of the great increase of offences among children and young persons, the authorities had to face the alternative of more schools or more prisons. In the course of a year, "according to a return, there were 3,098 children under fourteen years of age found in London, living either as mendicants or thieves. Of these, 1,782 were living in lodging-houses, and 1,316 'at large,' as the return says. There were 148 of them parentless, 336 of whom the parents appeared to be in a condition of life to educate and maintain them, and 844 whose parents sent them to beg and lived, at least, partly on their earnings. Captain W. Hay, the Commissioner of Police, states that there are 20,641 children under fifteen living in idleness, without education, and apparently neglected by their parents, and of these 941 have been charged with other offences than as mendicants and thieves." Altogether, there must have been at least 100,000 children growing up in London without education. Temperance was in its infancy, and an enormous number of persons were arrested every year on account of drunkenness. For a youth of nineteen to leave the congenial sphere of Waterbeach to enter upon work in an already overgrown metropolis, with characteristics such as have been depicted, was a trial in more senses than can well be comprehended. At the very outset, when cholera was working havoc among the members of his church, young Spurgeon was brought face to face with death in its worst form; but he never shrank from duty, though at times he was tempted to think that his first year in London would be his last.

Chapter 15: Mr. Spurgeon's Predecessors

Chapter 15.

Mr. Spurgeon's Predecessors A Church, with a Notable History—The Days of Strafford and "Thorough"—The Brownists and Early Puritans—Accomplished Scholars in straitened Circumstances—William Rider, the first Pastor—Henry Jessey—Benjamin Keach—Old-time "Justice"—Benjamin Stinton—Divisions after his Death—John Gill—An eminent Scholar—Life in the City of London—Gill's "Commentary"—A social Age—Clubs and Coffee-houses—The Singing at Carter Lane Chapel—Dr. Rippon—A long Pastorate—New London Bridge and New Park Street Chapel—Dr. Joseph Angus—James Smith—William Walters—Long Pastorates.

The church and congregation which had succeeded in securing the services of the young itinerant preacher of the Fens could boast of a notable history, extending back as far as the stirring days of the Commonwealth. Even before the ascendency of Cromwell, in the early days of the Long Parliament, the Baptists of Southwark began to show sympathy on the side of the people and against the king in the dispute that was to be settled by war. Strafford, with his scheme of "Thorough," and his friend "William the Fox," as many already called the Archbishop of Canterbury, were not any more in favour "over the water" than they were in the City. We hear of Brownists being imprisoned in the Clink because they would not use prayers "made by bishops"; and it was by such interference with the right of private judgment, as well as by the imposition of illegal taxes, that the crisis of civil war was hastened. The Brownists became somewhat numerous in Southwark during the reign of James I.; and, though they were more sweeping in their desires for reform than the Puritans of after days, these sectaries were really the forerunners of the Puritans. What is especially striking in the character of these early Nonconformists is their devotion to duty and their indifference to worldly comfort or distinction so long as conscience was satisfied. Those were the days when even accomplished scholars who refused to be timeservers had to be content with coarse fare and a poor lodging. We find Ainsworth, a first-class Hebraist, working as a bookseller's porter. Roger Williams lived on a few pence a day, and John Canne, the Baptist itinerant preacher, who was the first to collate marginal references for the English Bible, appears to have worked as a printer. In the dangerous times of Charles I., the Baptists of Southern London met in private houses in order to elude the informers, and their first recognised pastor appears to have been William Rider, of whom little is known beyond the facts that he was tolerably well-to-do in the world, and published a book to advocate the practice of laying of hands on such as were baptised. Although the rule of the country had passed from the king to the Parliament, a teacher who held Baptist views and did not hesitate to proclaim them had no easy time of it. Eider was one of those who became sufferers for conscience' sake. Then it happened that Henry Jessey, who held the living of St. George the Martyr, Southwark, was converted to the views of Eider, the consequence being that many others followed. Popular excitement on the question of baptism by immersion found vent in public disputes. When or where the first pastor died is not known; but he was succeeded by the more celebrated Benjamin Keach in the year 1668, when London was recovering from the ravages of plague and fire. Born in 1640, Keach was a native of

Buckinghamshire, and like young Spurgeon, about two hundred years later, he at the age of fifteen gave up the Pædobaptist views in which he had been educated to accept the faith and practice of the Baptists. Keach, as a youth, also preached up and down his native county, just as his successor afterwards did in the Fens; the difference being that in the seventeenth century a preacher might have his labours interrupted by the military and be haled off to gaol. Persecution, however, could never repress such a man's ardour. On one occasion he was arraigned for publishing a primer for children. The language used by the judge in passing sentence is remarkable for the insight it affords into the character of the times. "Benjamin Keach," remarked the representative of English justice as it was understood in the seventeenth century, "you are here convicted for writing, printing, and publishing a seditious and schismatical book, for which the Court's judgment is this, and the Court doth award: That you shall go to gaol for a fortnight without bail or mainprize, and the next Saturday to stand upon the pillory at Aylesbury, in the open market, from eleven o'clock till one, with a paper upon your head with this inscription: 'For writing, printing, and publishing a schismatical book entitled, "The Child's Instructor; or, a New and Easy Primer."' And the next Thursday to stand in the same manner and for the same time in the market at Winslow; and there your book shall be openly burnt before your face by the common hangman in disgrace of you and your doctrine. And you shall forfeit to the King's Majesty the sum of twenty pounds, and shall remain in gaol until you find sureties for your good behaviour, and for your appearance at the next assizes, there to renounce your doctrines and make such public submission as shall be enjoined you. Take him away, keeper."

Even an experience of this kind could not discourage such a man; he persisted in preaching and teaching as opportunities offered, and the country people had more admiration for the evangelist than for his persecutors. Truth could not be repressed by burning in market-places piles of the books which contained it. I believe that the meetinghouse at Winslow in which this worthy preached is still standing. In his twenty-eighth year, Keach left Buckinghamshire to succeed William Eider in the pastorate at Southwark; but on arriving at his destination he was penniless, robbers on the road having taken his money. He was cordially welcomed by the Baptists, and his loss made good. The chapel in which he preached was, for those days, an attractive-looking building. On entering the iron gates a visitor passed on through a pretty avenue of lime-trees. There Keach laboured amid many difficulties until the atmosphere of the religious world was cleared by the Revolution. The meetings were often disturbed by representatives of the law, and when liberty of conscience was ensured by the accession of William III., other troubles disturbed the peace of the congregation. The pastor was in favour of introducing the practice of singing hymns during public worship; but others were so violently opposed to what they believed to be a mere anti-Christian innovation that they seceded, and founded a rival congregation. Others were for observing Saturday as the true Sabbath; and it was this latter agitation which led to the publication of Keach's book on "The Jewish Sabbath abrogated." Keach was much loved by his people, and till the last maintained a spotless character. The labours in which he engaged were so abundant that he was quite worn out at the time of his death, in the summer of 1704. He had a son named Elias, who planted two Baptist churches in Pennsylvania and afterwards preached at Wapping. With the death of Benjamin Keach the Puritan age of the church may be said to have closed. How sincerely he was mourned is shown by a broadside poem issued at the time in accordance with a practice then common:—

"Is he no more? has heaven withdrawn his light, And left us to lament in sable shades of night Our loss?

Death boasts his triumph, for the rumour's spread Through Salem's plains, Keach, dear Keach, is dead."

In all, Keach left over forty published works; and while one of these, "The Rector Rectified," shows his taste for controversy, the best remembered is his "Key to open Scripture Metaphors." His remains were laid to rest in a graveyard owned by the Baptists in the Park, Southwark. Hence the future name of New Park Street, in which was situated the chapel wherein Mr. Spurgeon opened his London ministry a century and a half later.

Keach had a son-in-law, named Benjamin Stinton, who now became pastor of the church. The responsible office was accepted very reluctantly, however, for Stinton was at this time thirty years old, and he had received no proper training for ministerial work. He did the best he could under the circumstances: he studied hard under a competent tutor, and was soon able to discharge, in more than a creditable manner, the duties required of him. The old Baptist historian, Thomas Crosby, speaks of him as "a very painful and laborious minister of the Gospel," adding that, "though he had not the advantage of an academical education, yet by his own industry, under the assistance of the famous Mr. Ainsworth (author of the Latin Dictionary), after he had taken upon him the ministerial office, he acquired a good degree of knowledge in the languages and other useful parts of literature, which added lustre to those natural endowments which were very conspicuous in him."

Mr. Stinton was zealous as a pastor, and, although we do not know very much about him, he was a commanding figure in the Southwark of the days of Queen Anne and of the earlier part of the reign of George I. The pastor was before his times; and it was not until the Protestant Succession had triumphed by the Crown passing to the House of Brunswick that a charity-school for Dissenters could be established. He also collected materials for a work on the denominational annals, and these appear to have been largely used by Crosby in the compilation of his History. Neal, the historian of the Puritans, also had the papers in his possession for several years, but without making any particular use of them. Another distinguished piece of service on the part of Benjamin Stinton was the part he took in founding the Baptist Fund in the year 1717. This fund remains until our own day; and Mr. Spurgeon, being one of the trustees, always manifested becoming interest in its welfare on account of the eminent service rendered by the distribution of a large sum annually amongst aged or necessitous ministers. The death of Benjamin Stinton occasioned a division in the congregation, through one section wishing to have "William Arnold for his successor, while the choice of others fell upon John Gill, of Kettering, who was then a youth very nearly corresponding in age to Mr. Spurgeon when he left Waterbeach. The chapel was then in Groat Street; but some time afterwards a more convenient building was erected in Unicorn Yard. This was at length forsaken, in 1757, for the chapel in Carter Lane, Tooley Street, and this was the place of meeting until its removal necessitated the building of New Park Street Chapel. Should anyone be interested in discovering the site of this eighteenth century chapel, it may be seen at the south end of London Bridge, at the entrance to the railway-station yard.

John Gill, who now succeeded to the pastorate which he retained for more than fifty years, was a native of Kettering, and was born in 1697. In childhood and youth he was famed for his genius and

acquirements; and a proverb which became current among the market people indicated his general character—"As surely as John Gill is in the bookseller's shop." Immediately after his birth, a stranger who happened to be passing is said to have voluntarily made the prophecy that the child would become a great scholar. He began to preach in 1716, and soon attracted some attention. It is possible, however, that he may have been too hard a Calvinist for some of the critical hearers of Southwark, who raised a loud outcry against his election, and would not rest until they had submitted their case to the ministerial coterie which then assembled at the Hanover Coffee-house. The only thing to do was for each section of disputants to retain its man, and live in peace with those who thought differently from themselves. The fact was, that those who objected to the young preacher were as little aware of his power as those who at first thought little of Mr. Spurgeon were aware of his wonderful gifts. Although John Gill was not a Spurgeon, he soon established his claim to rank as the foremost man of his denomination. Apart from his idiosyncrasies, he was one of the best scholars of his time, and, judged by the quantity he wrote, its most industrious author. When it was customary to live in the City, he found a congenial home in Gracechurch Street. In tastes and habits he was a man of the eighteenth century. As a Hebrew scholar Dr. Gill had few equals among his contemporaries. The Baptist Fund, which still annually supplies a number of young pastors with grants of books, assisted him to purchase a valuable collection of Hebrew works; and being competent to read the Talmud and the Targums in the original, Grill turned this advantage to excellent account. He read systematically with a view to the exposition of Scripture, and after more than twenty years of labour commenced the publication of that voluminous commentary which originally extended through nine folio volumes. This achievement won for its author the distinction of Doctor in Divinity, the diploma coming from Marischal College, Aberdeen. The work also attracted the admiring notice of the pious Hervey, to whom the annotations on Solomon's Song, more especially, were "a paradisiacal garden." Of the honour which came to him from the Scottish University, Dr. Grill spoke in a characteristic way when he remarked, "I neither thought it, nor bought it, nor sought it."

While as a commentator he had accomplishments which were peculiar to himself, Dr. Gill was also an ardent controversialist. Such was his unceasing industry that a proverb which now became current in London was to the effect, "As surely as Dr. Grill is in his study." On a certain day he was not in his sanctum, however; but his temporary absence seemed to be providential when a heavy stack of chimneys crashed through the roof and shattered the writing-table. The doctor appears not to have possessed even the elementary social qualities; he had lived as a recluse in his study until he seemed to have little or no talent for conversation. To Samuel Johnson, who was then passing his time in London, and who made talking about the chief business of life, this would have looked like a serious drawback to life itself. The London of the middle of the last century, when traders and merchants who had their businesses in the City lived there, seems to have attractions of its own as we look back upon it. What a centre of social enjoyment such a town must have been when a large circle of friends all lived within the bounds of so comparatively small an area! Thus while Dr. Grill lived in Gracechurch Street, his son-in-law and publisher, George Keith, was at the "Bible and Crown" hard by. Other friends, who were also booksellers, were found in Mr. Ward of the "King's Head," in Little Britain, and Mr. Whiteridge, of Castle Alley, near the Royal Exchange. The age seems to have been a more social one than our own, and that may have been because people had more leisure. Everybody of any importance had perforce to belong to some club or coterie; and, despite his shyness in conversation, the presence of Dr. Gill was necessary to make

complete the circle of the club whose members met at the Gloucestershire Coffee-house. Then there was the weekly dinner which Mr. Thomas Watson, of Cripplegate, gave regularly on Tuesdays to Nonconformist ministers of every denomination. The members of the church also had a grand dinner at Christmas, when the wants of the poor were the appropriate topic of conversation. In his later days Dr. Gill lived at Camberwell; but though his strength was well maintained, and he could till the last read the smallest print without glasses, he survived long enough to see the congregation to which he ministered decline. The people, who valued his ministry as greatly as ever, would have engaged an assistant; but he persistently objected to such an arrangement. "Christ gave pastors, but not co-pastors," he said; and that was an intimation that nothing more was to be said on so distasteful a subject. In the middle of the eighteenth century psalmody in Nonconformist chapels appears to have been in a very primitive condition; and while £4 a year was considered a good salary for a pew-opener, a mere precentor had to be content with an annual stipend of forty shillings. It is hardly to be wondered at that, in such a case, persons with musical ears were able to detect flaws in the singing. One worthy woman, in particular, was moved to ask that some improvements might be introduced, and to effect her purpose she boldly waited on the commentator himself. When he had listened to her well-founded complaints respecting the precentor's shortcomings, Dr. Grill asked, "What tunes would you like, good woman?" "Why, sir, I should very much like David's tunes," responded the old lady. "Well, if you will get David's tunes for us, we will try to sing them," replied the doctor. As a pastor and preacher, the good doctor met with experiences such as might have happened to Mr. Spurgeon himself a century later. There was a man who, after sermon, would meet the pastor at the foot of the pulpit stairs with the question, "Is this preaching?" or, "Is this the great Dr. Grill?" The doctor was not one to be very much irritated by such annoyances; but on one occasion he said rather brusquely, "Go up and do better!" Those were also the days when even Baptist ministers wore the white bands, which imparted to them a very ecclesiastical appearance. A lady at one time became so profoundly impressed with the length of the doctor's bibs, that soon afterwards she called at his residence, armed with a pair of scissors, and asked to be allowed to shorten them. Consent was readily given; but when the bands were reduced to the approved length the doctor remarked, "Now, my good sister, you must do me a good turn also." Consent being given, the pastor went on, "You have something about you which is a great deal too long," and having borrowed the scissors to use as he pleased, he added, with grim emphasis, "Come, then, good sister, put out your tongue!"

Dr. Gill died in October, 1771, and was buried in Bunhill Fields. Many funeral sermons on his life and work were published. Toplady, who was well acquainted with him, regarded him as the greatest divine of his age, and not merely the leading man of the Baptist body. When a successor had to be elected to the great commentator, the choice of the majority of the people fell on John Rippon, then a student at Bristol College, and twenty years old. A body of members seceded, but, as the pastor moved that they should have a sum of £300 voted to them to aid them in building a chapel, an excellent spirit prevailed. In time the seceders may have discovered their mistake; for the church they had left prospered.

Dr. Rippon had neither the gifts nor the acquirements of his predecessor, but his character commanded respect, and he was a man of great industry. The church and congregation grew in numbers and in wealth; and the high position the pastor was supposed to occupy caused his

opinion to carry great weight in all denominational councils. In a degenerate age discipline appears to have been well maintained; and such diversions as theatre-going, card-playing, dancing, etc., were rigorously proscribed. The members were expected to avoid even such a place as Vauxhall Gardens—then a very fashionable recreation-ground. Nor might enthusiasts presume to teach religion without receiving proper license. One excellent characteristic of the well-to-do people was their liberality to the poor; for not only were these liberally dealt with in general, but Dr. Rippon, in the year 1803, founded the almshouses which on being rebuilt were afterwards endowed by Mr. Spurgeon with a sum of £5,000. The old chapel had to be enlarged in 1792, and the fact that at that time a collection on a special occasion would amount to £40 or £50 shows the comfortable circumstances of the congregation.

Though not possessing talents of the first order, Dr. Rippon showed some literary ambition. His compilation of hymns was for long exceedingly popular, and the copyright was equivalent to a large estate. Among his unpublished works is a full history of Bunhill Fields burial-grounds, the MS. of which is still preserved. The pastorate of Dr. Rippon was one of the longest on record; it extended through the sixty-three years ending with 1836. He was over eighty when the first stone of New Park Street Chapel was laid in the spring of 1832, and he was present at the opening some months later, although he is supposed to have outlived his usefulness. The compulsory turning-out of the people from the old sanctuary at Carter Lane to seek a home in a damp, low-lying locality like New Park Street, was a genuine disaster. The site was a most out-of-the-way place for a chapel, and the disadvantages attending it were so many that Mr. Spurgeon might well find the congregation seemingly on the verge of extinction when, twenty years later, he first visited the uninviting locality. When the builders of the present London Bridge necessarily swept away many buildings, there was naturally a keen competition for other sites, and New Park Street was probably chosen by the builders of the new chapel because the land was cheap and was near the old river.

Dr. Rippon was succeeded in the pastorate by the present Dr. Joseph Angus, of Regent's Park College, who at that time was a youth only twenty-one years of age—the time-honoured custom of the church in choosing a very young pastor, when one had to be selected, being still maintained. He was a native of Newcastle, and after attending the Grammar School in that town he studied successively at Stepney College and the University of Edinburgh. It was while at New Park Street that Mr. Angus produced his prize essay on "Church Establishments." This was in reply to the views of Dr. Chalmers on the same subject, set forth by the Edinburgh Professor in lectures delivered in London. Dr. Angus resigned his charge in 1840 to accept the secretaryship of the Baptist Missionary Society. From 1841 to 1850 the pastorate was held by Mr. James Smith, who had been stationed at Cheltenham, and who again returned to that town. He was a good preacher and the author of a large number of printed works. The air of London did not suit him; but though he at last acted on medical advice and sought a purer air, he died in 1861, at the comparatively early age of fifty-nine. He was succeeded by Mr. William Walters, of Preston, who afterwards removed to Birmingham, and who had only recently resigned when Mr. Spurgeon was invited to occupy the vacant pulpit.

It will be seen from this outline that the church and congregation of which Mr. Spurgeon was invited to accept the pastorate was just about two hundred years old when the young preacher left Waterbeach. He was proud of his predecessors, and in his early days, more particularly, he would

refer at times to Dr. Gill with great satisfaction. It will be observed that the election of a new pastor, when the need arose, nearly always occasioned a division; but the seceders soon saw that the fears which prompted their action were groundless. It was also a singular thing that the pastors should successively have been so often chosen at or about the age of twenty, to be retained till death. Probably no other congregation in the country could show a record in which only two pastors were elected during the space of one hundred and seventeen years. Thus Dr. Gill occupied the pastorate in 1719, and his successor, Dr. Rippon, held on until 1836. The next longest pastorate was that of Mr. Spurgeon himself, which extended to almost thirty-eight years. When Dr. Gill arrived in London the Dissenters were troubled by disputes concerning the Trinity. As the eighteenth century advanced many congregations drifted from their old moorings of orthodox belief; but these Baptists of Southwark went on unaffected by the passing storms.

Chapter 16: First Month's In London

Chapter 16.

First Months In London

Beginning of the Work in London—The First Printed Sermon—Spurgeon's Relations with his Brother Ministers—Paxton Hood's Opinion—Mr. Spurgeon's Style—Popularising the Gospel—Resolve to enlarge New Park Street Chapel—An American Divine's Estimate—Mr. Spurgeon and the Pastor of Helensburgh.

Mr. Spurgeon's great work in London was now fairly begun. After a few weeks it was seen that the six months' probation agreed upon would be needless, and hence an invitation to the pastorate was given and accepted. Some time necessarily had to elapse before the great outlying world became aware of the presence of a pulpit phenomenon in a back street of Southwark; the news spread, nevertheless, for thus early the young preacher's sermons began to be sent abroad in large numbers by means of the printing-press. The earliest printed sermon I have discovered is No. 2,234 of The Penny Pulpit, entitled "Harvest Time," and preached at New Park Street on August 20, 1854. It seems that the numbers, as they appeared at irregular intervals, at once commanded a large circle of readers, and this was the reason that, in the first week of 1855, the regular weekly issue was commenced. Not only did hearers in the pews perceive a novelty in the preacher's manner, there was a novelty about the style as the sermon appeared in print which captivated the reader. From the first, Mr. Spurgeon well understood that the heart had to be touched if any good was to be done. As illustrative of his style at this time take this passage from one of the earliest published sermons, "A View of God's Glory":—

"I can say no more concerning God's goodness. But this is not all that Moses saw. If you look to the words which follow my text, you will see that God said, 'I will make all My goodness pass before thee.' But there was something more. No one attribute of God sets God out to perfection; there must always be another. He said, 'I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.' There is another attribute of God. There is His sovereignty. God's goodness without His sovereignty does not completely set forth His nature. I think of the man who, when he was dying, called me to see him. He said, 'I am going to heaven.' 'Well,' I replied, 'what makes you think you are going there?—for you never thought of it before.' Said he, 'God is good.' 'Yes,' I answered, 'but God is just.' 'No,' said he, 'God is merciful and good.' Now that poor creature was dying and being lost for ever, for he had not a right conception of God. He had only one idea of God—that God is good; but that is not enough. If you only see one attribute, you have only half a God. God is good, and He is a sovereign and doeth what He pleases; and though good to all in the sense of benevolence, He is not obliged to be good to any. 'I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and show mercy to whom I will show mercy.' Do not you be alarmed, my friends, because I am going to preach about sovereignty. I know some people, when they hear about sovereignty, say, 'Oh, we are going to have some terrible high doctrine!' Well, if it is in the Bible, that is enough for you. Is not that all you want to know? If God says, 'I will be

gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy,' it is not for you to say it is high doctrine. Who told you it is high doctrine? It is good doctrine. What right have you to call one doctrine high and one low? Would you like me to have a Bible with 'H' against high and 'L' against low, so that I could leave the high doctrine out and please you? My Bible has no mark of that kind; it says, 'I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.' There is Divine sovereignty. I believe some are afraid to say anything about this great doctrine, lest they should offend some of their people; but, my friends, it is true, and you shall hear it. God is a sovereign. He was a sovereign ere He made this world. He lived alone, and this was in His mind, 'Shall I make anything, or shall I not? I have a right to make creatures or not to make any.' He resolved that He would fashion a world. When He made it, He had a right to form the world in what size and shape He pleased; and He had a right, if He chose, to leave the globe untenanted by a single creature. When He had resolved to make man, He had a right to make him whatever kind of creature He liked. If He wished to make him a worm or a serpent, He had a right to do it. When He made him He had a right to put any command on him that He pleased; and God had a right to say to Adam, 'Thou shall not touch that forbidden tree.' And when Adam offended, God had a right to punish him and all the race for ever in the bottomless pit. God is so far sovereign that He has a right, if He likes, to save anyone in this chapel, or to crush all who are here. He has a right to take us all to heaven, if He pleases, or to destroy us. He has a right to do just as He pleases with us. We are as much in His hands as prisoners in the hands of her Majesty when they are condemned for a capital offence against the law of the land; yea, as much as clay in the hands of the potter. This is what He asserted when He said, 'I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.' This stirs up your carnal pride, does it not? Men want to be somebody. They do not like to lie down before God and have it preached to them that God can do just as He wills with them. Ah! you may hate it, but it is what the Scripture tells us. Surely it is self-evident that God may do as He will with His own. We all like to do as we will with our own property. God has said that if you go to His throne He will hear you; but He has a right not to do it if He likes. He has a right to do just as He pleases. If He chose to let you go on in the error of your ways, that is His right; and if He says, as He does, 'Come unto Me all ye that are weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' it is His right to do so. That is the high and awful doctrine of Divine sovereignty."

Mr. Spurgeon was so thoroughly well acquainted with human nature that he knew just what humanity wanted; and he preached the Gospel with a freedom and a fulness which had not been out-rivalled since the eighteenth century revival preachers. At the same time, he was most remarkably situated, quite apart from his popularity. In the year 1854 no Baptist weekly newspaper existed in the British Isles, and the idea of attempting to found such an organ was regarded as being somewhat Utopian. There were several Nonconformist journals, however, each conducted with great ability; but so far as my own investigation has gone, the editors did not consider that the youthful innovator was worthy of much recognition. Mr. Spurgeon's friend of after years, the late Dr. John Campbell, was then reigning at Bolt Court as chief of The British Banner; but from New Year's Day to December 31 of that memorable year the name of Spurgeon has not been discovered in the paper. The various denominational gatherings were, of course, held in due course—those of the Baptists, as well as of the Independents, being pretty fully reported; but the shadow of the pastor of New Park Street Chapel cannot be traced. He was shunned by many of his brethren who ought to have accorded him the heartiest of welcomes; and then it very naturally

followed that he shunned them in return. The treatment which Mr. Spurgeon received from his brethren in the ministry at this time struck the late Mr. Paxton Hood as being remarkable. "Shall we say 'brethren in the ministry'?" said Mr. Hood, who had the sense to see where the shoe pinched. He had strong doubts whether they really were brethren of Mr. Spurgeon in the Scriptural sense; for he was obliged to add: "We understand they have pretty generally agreed to regard him as a black sheep. His character is good—unexceptionable; his doctrines have no dangerous heresy in them; still he is tabooed.... No; usually the ministers have not admired his advent; the tens of thousands of persons who flock to hear the youth preach his strong, nervous Gospel do not at all conciliate them—perhaps rather exasperate them." In point of fact, the prejudice against this youthful innovator was far stronger than people at this distance of time can realise. It was illustrated in a painful, and yet somewhat comical, way at a country anniversary about this time. One of the most eminent of the London ministers was engaged to preach in the evening; but on hearing that Mr. Spurgeon was to take the morning service the great man at once declined to risk having his reputation tarnished by association with him. Jealousy of another's success is always a symptom of a mean mind, and it seems to be especially mean when entertained towards one who successfully preaches the Gospel. If the elder ministers were jealous of Mr. Spurgeon, however, there was plenty to stimulate their envy. Others had from time to time come to London to be successful in their chosen work; but no such popularity as was now manifesting itself had been known during the centuries which had elapsed since the primitive age. We find it spoken of as "a kind of madness, and a mania, most extraordinary in itself, but the more so because it is certainly difficult to discover on what the excitement is based." Probably the people themselves could have given a more satisfactory explanation than the professional critics.

There was nothing which Mr. Paxton Hood liked better than hearing first one and then another of the great preachers of his day, whether in London or in the provinces. About this time he was naturally attracted by Spurgeon, and being unable to afford any time on a Sunday, he made his way to New Park Street Chapel on a Thursday evening. The time for commencing was seven o'clock, but the doors were opened at half-past six, and to make sure of a place, the expectant hearer took care to be one of the crowd which assembled before the doors were opened. Though this was only a week-night service, the people thronged the building, so that at a quarter to seven the pews were not merely crowded, but those unable to obtain seats were standing in the aisles. Mr. Hood also tells us that, "of course, on the Sabbath the crowd is far greater—the crush at the doors sometimes fearful." Thus popular at home, the preacher seemed to be, if possible, still more popular in other parts of London or in the provinces. If he preached in any one of the largest sanctuaries that existed, such, for example, as Finsbury Chapel, the admission had to be by ticket; but this was at a somewhat later period. In provincial towns the desire to hear Spurgeon was even more striking. Such was the popular curiosity that people would leave their work, or they would attend at any unseasonable hours, in order to see and hear for themselves the pulpit phenomenon from Southwark. When he first visited Bristol, it was commonly reported that people listened with wonder; and that if a building in the western city capable of accommodating ten thousand persons could have been secured, every seat would have been occupied. People began to endeavour to account for his popularity. He was thought to owe something to his enemies as well as his friends. Hence, we find it said, "He is flattered by a hurricane of acrimonious remark and abuse, and perhaps owes his popularity in no small degree to this sweeping condemnation." One of his characteristics was that he could hold his own, and sometimes he paid back his detractors in their

own coin with interest. Mr. Hood's sketch of the Park Street pastor in his early days is drawn with a good deal of discrimination:—

"One thing is certain, Spurgeon's back is broad, and his skin is thick; he can, we fancy, bear a good deal, and bear a good deal without wincing.... He is the topic and theme of remark now in every part of England, and severe as some of his castigators are, he returns their castigations frequently with a careless, downright, hearty goodwill. Beyond a doubt the lad is impudent, very impudent; were he not, he could not, at such an age, be where he is, or what he is. We were greatly amazed, as we stood at his chapel doors waiting to enter, to see him, as he came and passed along to the vestry, repeatedly lift his hat and bow again and again to his waiting auditors: there was so much audacious, good-natured simplicity, both in the act itself and in the face of the actor, that we could not help smiling right heartily. It was evident he was not indisposed to appropriate to himself a considerable amount of personal homage. His face is not coarse, but there is no refinement in it; it is a square face; his forehead is square; we were wishing, albeit we are not phrenologists, that it had evidenced a little more benevolence of character. But there is a good-nature in the face—something which looks, even on so youthful a countenance, like bonhomie; certainly it does not look earnest, nor does earnestness, in the highest sense, belong to his individuality. That he is in earnest we do not for a moment doubt; but at present we may doubt whether his earnestness has within it deep capabilities. He may preach after the manner of Peter, but he cannot doubt and suffer like Thomas, nor flame like Paul, nor love like John."

The Old Manse and Meeting House Stambourne

The Old Chapel at Waterbeach

Those old days of nearly forty years ago, when Mr. Spurgeon had just opened his career in London, have been represented as the age of young men; but then men of extraordinary capacity commonly begin their life-work early. It has been shown how this happened in the case of Mr. Spurgeon's predecessors in the pastorate; and at the date in question, people recalled to mind how such admirable preachers as John Angell James, Thomas Spencer, of Liverpool, and William Jay, had all accepted pastorates at an age when others are commonly at college. Thus readiness to work at an exceptionally early age showed the possession of exceptional talents; and some thought that in Mr. Spurgeon's case his impudence alone was a talent. In illustration of this Mr. Hood has a piquant anecdote:—

"Mr. Spurgeon is characterised rather by celerity than intensity—nimbleness rather than insight. He adroitly seizes all things, and adapts and arranges them to suit his purpose. What he is able to receive, he digests well. He gave a most impudent answer the other day to a London minister who came to hear him preach on a weekday morning in one of the large chapels of London. It is probable that there was a good deal of impudence in the brother to whom he spoke; for ministers can be impudent, and some of them, when they like, insolent. 'I can't make it out,' said the minister, 'when you study, brother Spurgeon. When do you make your sermons?' 'Oh,' Spurgeon is reported to have replied, 'I am always studying; I am sucking in something from everything; if you were to ask me home to dine with you, I should suck a sermon out of you.'"

There were those who talked about the young preacher's models; but it was evident to more shrewd observers that he was too much of a cosmopolitan to slavishly follow any mere human

standards, although, without doubt, that fine standard of good English, the Authorised Version of the Bible, had greatly influenced his style. To suppose that either Jay or Robert Hall was his chief master was absurd. Paxton Hood professed to have made the discovery that Spurgeon was "not at all qualified to shine in the brilliant intellectual firmament" in which Mr. Hall had had his place; but would anyone now deny that the young pastor of New Park Street was by far the greater genius? To say that he had some of the best traits of Hervey, Berridge, and Rowland Hill might be true; but what was chiefly true was that this man knew how to speak to the common people in plain but forcible language. It was well said, "The popularity of Mr. Spurgeon is to be traced greatly to his homeliness of manner. The people love to see that when it is real and not assumed; and how little we have of it!" The time had come when the Gospel needed to be popularised; and in Mr. Spurgeon the man was found to do it. He cared nothing for the mere flowers of rhetoric in which the representatives of the old school he was superseding so greatly delighted; but illustrations gathered fresh from nature, or appropriated by him during his contact with the world, had a rare charm for him, and they had a still greater charm for the crowds he addressed. The people had found what they wanted, and Mr. Spurgeon's unique popularity was the best proof of how they rejoiced in what they had found. When observers of this remarkable success—so unexampled in all respects—asked of one another whether it would last, whether such a man would wear during many years, the unwavering faith and easy naturalness of the young preacher should have checked any misgiving. As the year 1854 went on, even the war abroad and the alarming ravages of pestilence in London could not hinder ever-increasing attention being given to the ministrations of the pastor of New Park Street Chapel. The newspapers at last began to notice him, while still more conclusive evidence of his popularity was seen in artistic caricatures. The majority of those who ventured on making prophecies lived long enough to find themselves mistaken; but Mr. Paxton Hood very sagaciously gauged the situation:—

"Our preacher's fulness and readiness is to our minds a guarantee that he will wear, and not wear out. His present amazing popularity will, of course, subside, but he will still be amazingly followed, and what he is now, we prophesy, will on the whole remain. For polished diction we shall not look to him; for the long and stately argument we shall not look to him; for the original and profound thought we shall not look to him; for the clear and lucid criticism we shall not look to him; but for bold, convincing statements of Evangelical truth, for a faithful grappling with convictions, for happy and pertinent illustrations, for graphic description, and for searching common-sense, we shall look, and we believe we shall seldom look in vain. In a word, he preaches not to metaphysicians or logicians; neither to poets nor to savants; to masters of erudition or masters of rhetoric; he preaches to men. Fastidiousness holds up its hands horrified. The Intelligence of the Age is quite shocked. If Oxford should hear of him, and condescend to listen, it will musingly compliment Dissent by saying it's just what it thought of the horrid thing. The young B.A. of the London University will regard him as a dreadful apparition, and will hasten into his study to compose an elaborate essay for the rising watering-place of Small-tooth-comb, 'On the Foolishness of Preaching.' The religious beau, who would wish to pass muster among Christians if he may be allowed his cigar, his glass, and his seat midway between the chapel pew and the chair of the scorner, will look into Park Street, but pronounce the discourse decidedly very vulgar. The Christian Wasp, the organ of the large and influential body of Arminian Rationalists, will purchase one of the preacher's sermons in The Penny Pulpit, and construct an elaborate review to prove that looking at God as we look at the sun, through a logical telescope, is the best test of religious

life and truth; and that as man is free to be good whenever he likes, Spurgeon is shockingly wrong because he intimates that man is as free to fly to God as a stone to the sun. Meantime, our preacher will pursue his way, we trust, entangling himself with none of their criticisms, but saying the word in all plainness which God shall give him to utter."

Whatever people might say about their pastor, however, and whether critics were severe or generous, the difficulty of the good deacons at New Park Street was no longer associated with empty pews, but with the crowds which, at night especially, when the gas was alight, made the heat of the chapel terribly oppressive. The pastor, who was such a lover of fresh, pure air, might seek temporary relief by putting his stick through a pane of glass; but, if possible, something else would have to be done. The site of the chapel made it possible for an enlargement to be carried out; and before the young preacher had been many months in his new pastorate, funds for carrying out this enterprise were being collected. It may have occurred to some discerning people even thus early that the mere enlargement of an old chapel would never meet the requirements of the case; and that a chapel larger than any that had ever before been erected would have to be provided. The phenomenon was the more unaccountable because there were people, passing for shrewd observers, who did not discover in the preacher what they would have regarded as necessary qualifications for popularity. One American writer who attempted to depict Mr. Spurgeon as he was at this time says:—"He was unpractised in either the art of oratory or of preaching, his public efforts having consisted of addresses before Sunday-schools, and a very brief but successful pastorate over an obscure Baptist Church at Waterbeach. In personal appearance he was not prepossessing; in style he was plain, practical, simple; in manner, rude, bold, egotistical, approaching to the bigoted; in theology, a deep-dyed Calvinist; in Church relations, an uncompromising Baptist. We could scarcely imagine a more unpromising list of qualifications, or rather disqualifications, for public favour."

One of the first to recognise and acknowledge the great abilities of Mr. Spurgeon is said to have been the late Mr. John Anderson, who was pastor of the Free Church at Helensburgh; and it was out of compliment to that friend that Mr. Spurgeon's house in Nightingale Lane, Clapham, was called after the name of the Scottish town. Mr. Anderson's opinion was that all would have to yield Mr. Spurgeon the honour of being the chief preacher of the day. A warm friendship soon afterwards sprang up between the two pastors, as will be shown; the Scotch divine loved to meet his friend in London; and Mr. Spurgeon would occasionally be found in after years conducting a service on the lawn in front of the Free Church Manse at Helensburgh. Scotland appears to have been holiday-ground which was always appreciated; and though they were not hasty in making their decision, the Scottish people at last became among the most devoted of his admirers. In after years, however, what were called holidays in the North were little other than preaching tours.

Chapter 17: Mr. Sprugeon's First Printed Sermon

Chapter 17.

Mr. Spurgeon's First Printed Sermon

National Difficulties—Spurgeon's unwavering Faith—Detractors' false Stories—A Service at New Park Street Chapel—A Harvest Discourse.

Although the summer of the year 1854 appears to have been a trying time in many respects, with unwavering faith in God the pastor of New Park Street Chapel went on his way, apparently unaffected by the public trials which arose from pestilence and war, an oppressively high income-tax, dear bread, and an increase of pauperism. If he had a special mission to accomplish, he would be specially protected while carrying it out. To preach like Spurgeon did at this time, and in the intervals of preaching to devote hours to the visitation of the plague-stricken members of the church, who had a first claim on his regard, had the appearance of genuine heroism. Here, at all events, was a God-called minister of the Gospel. In the meantime, in London itself by day, in the suburbs of an evening after business hours, and in villages and towns of the more distant provinces, what a talk there was concerning this young man's work, and of the daring, original way in which he did it. The present writer was then living in Somersetshire; and he remembers on a certain day the late Mr. Sutton, of Watchet—a veteran who had served with honour in the mission field of India—coming to his father and commencing a conversation about Spurgeon; and, having read the printed sermons, Mr. Sutton added, "But he can never keep on like this!" Mr. Paxton Hood calls attention to the fact that at this time the discourses were very unequal. This was inevitable; for no preacher, public speaker, or writer can at all times maintain one level uniform standard of excellence.

Nothing was more striking than the way in which early detractors had to change their tone. Thus the late Dr. Binney was one who at first regarded his younger neighbour with dislike, and there is reason for thinking that he was the "eminent London minister," mentioned by Mr. Hood, who refused to become associated at a country anniversary with the young man from New Park Street. It was not long, however, before Dr. Binney, while addressing some students, had to confess: "I myself have enjoyed some amount of popularity; I have always been able to draw together a congregation; but in the person of Mr. Spurgeon we see a young man, be he who he may, and come whence he will, who at twenty-four hours' notice can command a congregation of twenty thousand people. Now, I have never been able to do that, and I never knew of anyone else who could do it." The stories which soon began to be circulated about Mr. Spurgeon were, of course, numerous; the majority were more or less amusing; but the drawback was that so many of these personal tit-bits were untrue. Many years ago, a friend of the late pastor showed how these idle tales were circulated and often garnished by those who told them. "I was for a time at a well-known health resort on the south coast. At the table d'hôte I sat next to a young married lady, who was, alas! consumptive, and of that temperament which is so common in such cases, très spirituelle, and very learned and accomplished. You may be sure she never lacked auditors for her lively

conversation. At dessert one day she was 'telling stories,' in the juvenile and literal sense of the phrase, about yourself. I let her go on for some time until I thought the fun was getting a little too fast, and then I said: 'I hope, Mrs. ------, you do not believe the stories you are detailing, because I assure you I heard nearly all of them in my childhood before Mr. Spurgeon was born, and that most of them were attributed to Rowland Hill—doubtless with equal lack of authenticity.' She looked me calmly in the face, with a very comical expression, and replied: 'Oh, Mr. ------, we never ask whether such stories are true; it is quite sufficient if we find them amusing.' 'Well,' I said, 'so long as that is understood all round, by all means keep on.'" This was one of the penalties of popularity to which Mr. Spurgeon submitted with as much grace as could have been expected under the circumstances.

Having thus taken notice of so many things connected with the preacher, or with his contemporaries and the times, I will now suppose that the reader is about to accompany me to New Park Street Chapel, where we shall hear the young preacher for ourselves. It is Sunday, August 20, and, despite the summer weather which is tempting people abroad to hear the popular preacher, our minds do not escape the depressing influences of the times. Parliament having just been prorogued, the London season is coming to an end. The scourge, no doubt, chiefly affects what are called the lower orders; but in one instance, at least, when Lord Jocelyn actually died in Lord Palmerston's drawing-room, it has rudely stalked into the world of fashion itself. The armies in the Crimea are also finding it a more destructive foe than the Russians, for thousands of the French and hundreds of the English have died of it. To escape forthwith into the country, instead of seeking out the damp, low-lying back street in Southwark where Mr. Spurgeon will preach, might seem to be the wiser thing to do; but we will, for this once, at least, go with the crowd. The preacher strikes you as being somewhat pale and even younger-looking than you had anticipated, but there is nothing about him which will add to the depression consequent upon the sombre nature of the times. On the contrary, many a troubled soul will on this morning find the New Park Street sanctuary just such a quiet resting-place as they desire. In any case, that appears to be the young pastor's wish; he will endeavour to raise the people to something higher, rather than depress them by talking about dark topics. You notice that the hymns are of the old-fashioned land, and are selected from Dr. Rippon's book; the reading of Scripture is animated, and you are struck with the freshness of the exposition with which it is accompanied. The prayer is remarkable for its fervour and naturalness, reminding you of a truthful child speaking to his father.

Then you are in a state of expectancy for the sermon; and you are pleased to find that the preacher has been studying a seasonable subject, but of the brighter kind. In the country around Colchester and Stambourne the farmers and their labourers have been gathering in the wheat, barley, and oats; and the sweet Essex fields have been such a contrast to the London cholera-stricken streets that the youth in the pulpit has been refreshing his mind by dwelling upon their charms. Turn with him to 1Sa 12:17, and you have the text: "Is it not wheat harvest to-day?" Now listen well, and you will not go away wondering what it is that makes Mr. Spurgeon so popular:—

"I shall not notice the connection, but I shall simply take these words as a motto; and my sermon will be founded upon a harvest-field. I shall rather use the harvest for my text than any passage that I find here. 'Is it not wheat harvest to-day?' I suppose the dwellers in cities think less of times and seasons than dwellers in the country. Men who were born, trained up, nourished, and nurtured

among corn-fields, harvests, sowings, and reapings, are more likely to notice such things than you who are always engaged in mercantile pursuits, and think less of these things than rustics do. But I suppose if it is almost necessary that you should less regard the 'harvest' than others, it ought not to be carried to too great an extent. Let us not be forgetful of 'times and seasons.' There is much to be learnt from them, and I would refresh your memories this morning by a harvest-field. What a wondrous temple this world is; for in truth it is a temple of God's building, wherein men ought to worship Him. What a wondrous temple it is to a mind spiritually enlightened, which can bring to bear upon it the resources of intellect and the illuminations of God's Holy Spirit! There is not a single flower in it that does not teach us a lesson, there is not a single wave, or blast of thunder, that has not some lesson to teach to us, the sons of men. This world is a great temple, and as, if you walk in an Egyptian temple, you know that every mark and every figure in the temple has a meaning, so when you walk this world you must believe that everything about you has a meaning. It is no fanciful idea that there are 'sermons in stones,' for there really are sermons in stones; and this world is intended to teach us by everything that we see. Happy is the man who only has the mind and has the spirit to get these lessons from nature. Flowers, what are they? They are but the thoughts of God solidified—God's beautiful thoughts put into shape. Storms, what are they? They are God's terrible thoughts written out that we may read them. Thunders, what are they? They are God's powerful emotions just opened out that man may hear them. The world is just the materialising of God's thoughts; for the world is a thought in God's eye. He made it first from a thought that came from His own mighty mind, and everything in the majestic temple that He has made has a meaning." The preacher then shows that nature is a temple which had its four evangelists, these, of course, being the four seasons. These follow one another, Spring leading the way; and what have these to say to man on the earth?

"We look, and we behold that by the magic touch of Spring, insects which seemed to be dead begin to awaken, and seeds that were buried in the dust begin to lift up their radiant forms. What says Spring? It utters its voice, it says to man, 'Though thou sleepest, thou shalt rise again; there is a world in which, in a more glorious state, thou shalt exist; thou art but a seed now, and thou shalt be buried in the dust, and in a little while thou shalt arise.' Spring utters that part of its evangel. Then comes Summer. Summer says to man, 'Behold the goodness of a merciful Creator; He makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, He sprinkleth the earth with flowers, He scattereth it with those gems of creation, He maketh it blossom like Eden, and bring forth like the garden of the Lord.' Summer utters that; then comes Autumn. We shall hear its message this morning. It passes, and, fourth, comes Winter, crowned with a coronal of ice, and it tells us that there are times of trouble for man; it points to the fruits that we have stored up in autumn, and it says to us, 'Man, take heed that thou store up something for thyself, something against the day of wrath; lay up for thyself the fruits of autumn, that thou mayest be able to feed on them in winter. And when the old year expires its death knell tells us that man must die; and when the year has finished its evangelistic mission, there comes another to preach the same lesson again." The preacher will not enlarge on each of this captivating train; time will only allow of his devoting attention to the golden-tressed Autumn, which had come forth to ask the question, "Is it not wheat harvest to-day?" It was a time to consider the harvest and to learn something from it. There were joyful harvests to be spoken of, and that of the field was one of them:—

"We cannot forget the harvest of the field. It is not meet that these things should be forgotten; we ought not to let the fields be covered with corn, and to have their treasures stored away in the barns, and all the while to remain forgetful of God's mercy. Ingratitude, that worst of ills, is one of those vipers which makes its nest in the heart of man, and the adder never can be slain until Divine grace comes there and sprinkles the blood of the cross upon man's heart. All vipers die when the blood of Christ is upon them. Let us just lead you for a moment to a harvest-field. You shall see there a most luxurious harvest, the heavy ears bending down almost to touch the ground, as much as to say, 'From the ground I came, I owe myself to the ground, to that I bow my head, just as the good Christian does when he is full of years. He holds his head down the more fruit he has upon him.' You see the stalks with their heads hanging down because they are ripe. And it is goodly and precious to see these things. Now just suppose the contrary. If this year the ears had been blighted and withered, if they had been like the second ears that Pharaoh saw, very lean and very scanty, what would have become of us? In peace we might have speculated on large supplies from Russia to make up the deficiency; now, in times of war, when nothing can come, what would become of us? We may conjecture, we may imagine, but I do not know that we are able to come to the truth; we can only say, 'Blessed be God, we have not yet to reckon on what would have been; but God seeing one door closed has opened another.' Seeing that we might not get supplies from those rich fields in the south of Russia, He has opened another door in our own land. 'Thou art My own favoured island,' says He, 'I have loved thee, England, with a special love; thou art My favoured one. and the enemy shall not crush thee; and lest thou should starve, because provisions are cut off, I will give thee thy barns full at home, and thy fields shall be covered, that thou mayest laugh thine enemy to scorn, and say to him, "Thou thoughtest thou couldest starve us and make us afraid; but He who feeds the ravens has fed His people, and has not deserted His favoured land."' There is not one person here who is uninterested in this matter. Some say the poor ought to be thankful that there is abundance of bread. So ought the rich. There is nothing which happens to one member of society which does not affect all. The ranks lean upon one another; if there is scarcity in the lower ranks, it falls upon the next, and the next, and even the Queen upon her throne feels in some degree the scarcity when God is pleased to send it. It affects all men. Let none say, 'Whatever the price of corn may he, I can live'; but rather bless God who has given you more than enough. Tour prayer ought to be, 'Give us this day our daily bread'; and remember whatever wealth you have you must attribute your daily mercies as much to God as if you lived from hand to mouth; and sometimes that is a blessed way of living—when God gives His children the hand-basket portion instead of sending it in a mass. Bless God that He has sent an abundant harvest! Oh, fearful one, lift up thy head, and thou discontented one be abased, and let thy discontent be no more known. The Jews always had a feast of the Tabernacles when the harvest time came. In the country they always have a harvest home, and why should not we? I want you all to have one this day. Rejoice! rejoice! rejoice! for the harvest is come. 'Is it not wheat harvest to-day?' Poor, desponding soul, let all your doubts and fears be gone. 'Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure.' That is one joyful harvest."

These passages undoubtedly show the young preacher at his best at this period in his history. He next goes on to describe that joyful harvest which it is within the power of every Christian to gather in:—

"In one sense he is a seed sown by God which is to grow, and ripen, and germinate till the great harvest time. In another sense, every Christian is a sower sent into the world to sow good seed, and to sow good seed only. I do not say that Christian men never sow any other seed than good seed. Sometimes, in unguarded moments, they take garlic into their hands instead of wheat; and we may sow tares instead of corn. Christians sometimes make mistakes, and God sometimes suffers His people to fall so that they sow sins; but the Christian never reaps his sins; Christ reaps them for him. He often has to have a decoction made of the bitter leaves of sin, but he never reaps the fruit of it. Christ has borne the punishment. Yet bear in mind, my brethren, if you and I sin against God, God will take our sin, and He will get an essence from it that will be bitter to our taste: though He does not make us eat the fruits, yet still He will make us grieve and sorrow over our crimes. But the Christian, as I have said, should be employed in sowing good seed, and as such he shall have a glorious harvest. In some sense or other the Christian must be sowing good seed. If God calls him to the ministry, he is a seed-sower; if God calls him to the Sabbath-school, he is a seed-sower; whatever his office, he is a sower of seed. Here I stand, Sabbath after Sabbath, and on week-days, too, and sow seed broadcast all over this immense field; I cannot tell where my seed goes. Some are like barren ground, and they object to the seed that I sow. Let them—I have no objection that any man should do so. I am only responsible to God, whose servant I am. There are others, and my seed falls upon them and brings forth a little fruit; but by-and-by, when the sun is up, because of persecution, they wither away and they die. But I hope there are many here who are like the good ground that God has prepared, and when I scatter the seed abroad it falls on good ground and brings forth fruit to an abundant harvest. Ah! the minister has a joyful harvest, even in this world, when he sees souls converted. I have had a harvest time when I have led the sheep down to the washing of baptism, when I have seen God's people coming out from the mass of the world, and telling what the Lord has done for their souls—when God's children are edified and built up it is worth living for, and worth dying ten thousand deaths for to be the means of saving one soul. What a joyous harvest it is when God gives us converted ones by tens and hundreds, and adds to His Church abundantly such as shall be saved! Now, I am like a farmer just at this season of the year. I have got a good deal of wheat down, and I want to get it into the barn, for fear the rain comes and spoils it. I believe I have got a great many here—good, pious, Christian persons—but they will persist in standing out in the field. I want to get them into the barns. They are good people, but they do not like to make a profession and join the church. I want to get them into my Master's granary, and to see Christians added to the church. I see some holding down their heads and saying, 'He means me.' So I do. You ought before this to have joined Christ's Church! and unless you are fit to be gathered into Christ's little garner here on earth, you have no right to anticipate being gathered into that great garner which is in heaven.

"Every Christian has his harvest. The Sabbath-school teacher has his harvest. He goes and he toils and ploughs very stony ground often, but he shall have his harvest. Oh, poor labouring Sabbath-school teacher, hast thou seen no fruit yet? Dost thou say, 'Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' Cheer up, my brother, thou dost labour in a good cause, there must be some to do thy work. Hast thou seen no children converted? Well, fear not, you cannot expect to see the seed spring up very early, but remember—

"'Though seed lie buried long in dust, It shan't deceive your hope; The precious grain can ne'er be lost, For God insures the crop.'

Go on sowing still, and thou shalt have a harvest when thou shalt see children converted. I have known some Sabbath-school teachers who could count a dozen, or twenty, or thirty children who have one after another come to join the church and know the Lord Jesus Christ. But if you should not live to see it on earth, remember you are only accountable for your labour and not for your success. Sow still, toil on! 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it again after many days,' for God will not allow His word to be wasted; 'It shall not return unto Him void, it shall accomplish that which He pleases.' But there is a poor mother who has been often sad. She has got a son or a daughter, and she has been always praying that God might convert their souls. Mother, thy son is an ungainly boy still; he grieves thy heart; still the hot tears scald thy cheeks on account of him. And thou, father, thou hast reproved him often; he is a wayward son, and he is still running the downward road. Cease not to pray! Oh, my brethren and sisters who are parents, you shall have a harvest. There was a boy once—a very sinful child—who hearkened not to the counsel of his parents; but his mother prayed for him, and now he stands to preach to this congregation every Sabbath. And when his mother thinks of her first-born preaching the gospel, she reaps a glorious harvest that makes her a glad woman. Now, fathers and mothers, such may be your case. However bad your children are at present, still press toward the throne of grace and you shall have a harvest. What thinkest thou, mother? Wouldest thou not rejoice to see thy son a minister of the Gospel? thy daughter teaching and assisting in the cause of God? God will not suffer thee to pray and thy prayers be unheeded. Young man, thy mother has been wrestling for thee a long time, and she has not won thy soul yet. What thinkest thou? thou defraudest thy mother of her harvest! If she had a little patch of ground hard by her cottage, where she had sown some wheat, wouldest thou go and burn it? If she had a choice flower in her garden, wouldest thou go and trample it under foot? Thou art going in the ways of the reprobate, thou art defrauding thy mother and father of their harvest. Perhaps there are some parents who are weeping over their sons and daughters who are hardened and unconverted. God turn their hearts! for bitter is the doom of that man who goes to hell over the road that is washed by his mother's tears, stumbles over his father's reproofs, and tramples on those tilings which God has put in his way—his mother's prayers and his father's sighs. God help that man who dares to do such a thing as that! And it is wondrous grace if He does help him.

"You shall have a harvest, whatever you are doing. I trust you are all doing something. If I cannot mention what your peculiar engagement is, I trust you are all serving God in some way; and you shall assuredly have a harvest wherever you are scattering your seed. But suppose the worst—if you should never live to see the harvest in this world, you shall have a harvest when you get to heaven. If you live and die a disappointed man, you shall not be disappointed in the next world. I think how surprised some of God's people will be when they get to heaven. They will see their Master, and He will give them a crown. 'Lord, what is that crown for?' 'That crown is because thou didst give a cup of cold water to one of My disciples.' 'What! a crown for a cup of cold water?' 'Yes,' says the Master, 'that is how I pay My servants. First 1 give them grace to give that cup of water, and then having given them grace, I will give them a crown.' 'Wonders of grace to God belong.' He that soweth liberally shall reap liberally, and he that soweth grudgingly shall reap sparingly. Ah, if there could be grief in heaven, I think it would be the grief of some Christians who had sown so very little. After all, how very little the most of us ever sow? I sow but very little compared with what I might. How little any of yon sow. Just add up how much you give to God in the year. I am afraid it would not come to a farthing per cent. Remember, you reap according to what you sow. Oh, my

friends, what surprise some of you will feel when God pays you for sowing one single grain. The soil of heaven is rich in the extreme. If a farmer had such ground as there is in heaven, he would say, 'I must sow a great many acres of land,' and so let us strive; for the more we sow the more we shall reap in heaven. Yet remember it is all of grace, and not of debt."

Having noticed these happy harvests—that of the field and that of the Christian—the preacher had another of a joyful kind to dwell upon—that of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself:—

"Christ had His sowing times. What bitter sowing times were they! Christ was one who went out bearing precious seed. Oh, I picture Christ sowing the world. He sowed it with tears; He sowed it with drops of blood; He sowed it with sighs; He sowed it with agony of heart; and at last He sowed Himself in the ground, to be the seed of a glorious crop. What a sowing-time His was! He sowed in tears, in poverty, in sympathy, in grief, in agony, in woes, in suffering, and in death. He shall have a harvest, too. Blessings on His name, Jehovah swears it; the everlasting predestination of the Almighty has settled that Christ shall have a harvest. He has sown, and He shall reap; He has scattered, and He shall win His prize. 'He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.' My friends, Christ has begun to reap His harvest. Tea, every soul that is converted is part of His reward; everyone that comes to the Lord is a part of it. Every soul that is brought out of the miry clay and set on the King's highway is a part of Christ's crop. But He is going to reap more yet. There is another harvest coming in the latter day, when He shall reap armsful at a time, and gather the sheaves into His garner. Now, men, come to Christ in ones and twos and threes; but then they shall come in flocks, so that the Church shall say, 'Who are these that come in as doves to their windows?'

"There shall be a greater harvest-time when time shall be no more. Turn to the fourteenth chapter of Revelation, and the thirteenth verse—'And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.' They do not go before them and win them heaven. 'And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud One sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Thy sickle and reap: for the time is come for Thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. 'And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.' That was Christ's harvest. Observe but one particular. When Christ comes to reap His field, He comes with a crown on. Oh! see that Crowned Reaper on His throne! There are nations gathered together—

"'They come, they come, the ransom'd tribes, Where'er they rest or roam;

They heard His voice in distant lands, And hastened to their home.'

There they stand, one great army before God. Then comes the Crowned Reaper from His throne; He takes His sharp sickle, and see Him reap sheaf after sheaf, and He carries them up to the heavenly garner. Let us ask the question of ourselves, whether we shall be among the reaped ones—the wheat of the Lord. Notice, again, that there was first a harvest, and then a vintage. The harvest is the righteous; the vintage is the wicked. When the wicked are gathered, an angel gathers them; but Christ will not trust an angel to reap the righteous. 'He that sat on the throne thrust in His sickle.' Oh, my soul, when thou comest to die, Christ will Himself come after thee;

when thou art to be cut down, He that sits upon the throne will cut thee down with a very sharp sickle, in order that He may do it as easily as possible. He will be the reaper Himself; no reaper will be allowed to gather Christ's saints in, but Christ the King of saints. Oh, will it not be a joyful harvest when all the chosen race, every one of them, shall be gathered in? There is a little shrivelled grain of wheat there that has been growing somewhere on the headland, and that will be there. There are a great many who have been hanging down their heads, heavy with grain, and they will be there, too. They will be all gathered in.

"'His honour is engaged to save The meanest of His sheep;

All that His heavenly Father gave His hands securely keep.'

"But now we are obliged to turn to the three sad harvests. Alas! alas! the world was once like an Eolian harp; every wind that blew upon it gave forth melody; now the strings are all unstrung, and they are full of discord, so that when we have the strains of joy we must have the deep loss of grief to come after it."

Then follow references to what the preacher calls three sad harvests—the harvest of death, the harvest that will have to he reaped by the wicked, and the harvest of the wrath of God. It is probable that some things are put in a way different from what would have been the case twenty or thirty years later; but the mode of expression is eminently characteristic of Mr. Spurgeon's youth, and of the first year of his ministry in London:—

"The first sad harvest is the harvest of death. We are all living, and what for? For the grave. I have sometimes sat me down and had a reverie like this: I have thought—Man, what is he? He grows, he grows, till he comes to his prime, and when he is forty-five, if God spare him, perhaps he has then gained the prime of life. What does he do then? He continues where he is a little while, and then he goes down the hill; and if he keeps on living, what is it for? To die. But there are many chances to one, as the world has it, that he will not live to be seventy. He dies very early. Do not we all live to die? But none shall die till they are ripe. Death never reaps his corn green; he never cuts his corn till it is ripe. The wicked die, but they are always ripe for hell when they die; the righteous die, but they are always ripe for heaven when they die. That poor thief there, who had not believed in Jesus perhaps an hour before he died, he was as ripe as a seventy years' saint. The saint is always ready for glory whenever death, the reaper, comes, and the wicked are always ripe for hell whenever God pleases to send for them. Oh, that great reaper! he sweeps through the earth, and mows his hundreds and thousands down. It is all still; death makes no noise about his movements, and he treads with velvet footfall over the earth—that ceaseless mower, none can resist him. He is irresistible, and he mows, and mows, and cuts them down. Sometimes he stops and whets his scythe; he dips his scythe in blood, and then he mows us down with war; then he takes his whetstone of cholera, and mows down more than ever. Still he cries, 'More! more! more!' Ceaseless that work keeps on! Wondrous mower! Wondrous reaper! Oh, when thou comest to reap me I cannot resist thee, for I must fall like others; when thou comest I shall have nothing to say to thee. Like a blade of corn I must stand motionless, and thou must cut me down! But, oh! may I be prepared for thy scythe! May the Lord stand by me, and comfort me and cheer me; and may I find that death is an angel of life—that death is the portal of heaven; that it is the outward porch of the great temple of eternity; that it is the vestibule of glory!

"There is a second sad harvest, and that is the harvest that the wicked man has to reap. Thus saith the voice of inspiration, 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' Now, there is a harvest that every wicked man has to reap in this world. No man ever sins against his body without reaping a harvest for it. The young man says, 'I have sinned with impunity.' Stay, thou young man; go thou to that hospital and see the beings writhing in their disease. See that staggering, bloated wretch, and I tell thee stay thy hand, lest thou become like him. Wisdom bids thee stop, for thy steps lead down to hell. If thou 'enterest into the house of the strange woman' thou shall reap a harvest. There is a harvest that every man reaps if he sins against his fellows. The man who sins against his fellow-creatures shall reap a harvest. Some men walk through the world like knights with spurs on their heels, and think they may tread on whom they please; but they shall find their mistake. He who sins against others sins against himself; that is nature. It is a law in nature that a man cannot hurt his fellows without hurting himself. Now you, who cause grief to other minds, do not think the grief will end there; you will have to reap a harvest even here. Again, a man cannot sin against his estate without reaping the effects of it. The miserly wretch who hoards up his gold, he sins against his gold. It becomes cankered, and from those golden sovereigns he will have to reap a harvest; yes, that miserly wretch, sitting up at night and straining his weary eyes to count his gold, that man reaps his harvest. And so does the young spendthrift. He will reap his harvest when all his treasure is exhausted. It is said of the prodigal that 'no man gave unto him'—none of those that he used to entertain—and so the prodigal shall find it. No man shall give anything unto him. Ah! but the worst harvest will be that of those who sin against the Church of Christ. I would not that a man should sin against his body; I would not that a man should sin against his estate; I would not that a man should sin against his fellows; but, most of all, I would not have him touch Christ's Church. He that touches one of God's people touches the apple of His eye. When I have read of some people finding fault with the servants of the Lord, I have thought within myself, 'I would not do so. It is the greatest insult to a man to speak ill of his children.' You speak ill of God's children, and you will be rewarded for it in everlasting punishment. There is not a single one of God's family that God does not love, and if you touch one of them He will have vengeance on you. Nothing puts a man on his mettle like touching his children; and if you touch God's Church you will have the direst revenge of all. The hottest flames of hell are for those who touch God's children. Go on, sinner, laugh at religion if thou pleasest; but know that it is the blackest of sin in all the catalogue of crime. God will forgive anything sooner than that; and though that is not unpardonable, yet if unrepented of, it will meet the greatest punishment. God cannot bear that His elect should be touched, and if you do so it is the greatest crime you can commit.

"Now we must conclude the third sad harvest; and that is the harvest of Almighty wrath, when the wicked at last are gathered in. In the fourteenth chapter of the Revelation you will see that God commanded the angel to gather the grapes, and they were all put in the winepress together, and after that the angel came and trod them down until the blood ran out, so that it was up to the horses' bridles for the space of one hundred and twenty miles. Wonderful figure to express the wrath of God! Suppose, then, some great winepress in which our bodies are put like grapes; and suppose some mighty giant comes and treads us all under foot until the blood runs out; that is the idea—that the wicked shall be cast together, and an angel shall crush them under foot until the blood runs out up to the horses' bridles. May God grant of His sovereign mercy that you and I may never reap such a harvest as that; that God may never reap us in that fearful harvest; but rather that we may be written amongst the saints of the Lord!" In finishing up his subject, the preacher

gave a word to those genuine Christians who would be sure to reap such a harvest as they desired if they fainted not:—

"Sow on, brother; sow on, sister; and in due time thou shalt reap an abundant harvest. Let me tell you one thing before you go away, if the seed thou hast sown a long while has never come up. I was told once, 'When you sow seeds in your garden, put them in a little water over-night; they will grow all the better for it.' So, my brother, if thou hast been sowing thy seeds, put them in tears, and it will make thy seed germinate the better. 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.' Steep your seed in tears, and then put it into the ground, and you shall reap in joy. No bird can devour that seed; no bird can hold it in its mouth, no worm can eat it, for worms never eat seeds that are sown in tears. Go thy way, and when thou weepest most, then it is that thou sowest best. When most cast down, thou art doing best. If thou comest to the prayer-meeting, and hast not a word to say, keep on praying, do not give it up; for thou often prayest best when thou thinkest thou prayest worst. Go on, and in due season, by God's mighty grace, you shall reap if you faint not."

Chapter 18: mr. Spurgeon And The Strict Baptists

Chapter 18.

Mr. Spurgeon And The Strict Baptists

Interest of Friends at Cambridge—Mr. George Apthorpe—Mr. T. W. Medhurst's Recollections—Mr. Spurgeon's First Platform Speech in London—Further Accounts of the Cholera—Death of Mr. Josiah Denham—Mr. Spurgeon's Address at the Grave-side—The Strict Calvinistic Baptists—James Wells—Charles Waters Banks—Questions as to the Character of Mr. Spurgeon's Teaching—Extracts from Early Sermons—"A very Questionable Personage"—The New Park Street Pastor portrayed.

The friends at Cambridge continued to feel the keenest interest in the progress of the young preacher who had gone out from their midst. When he took charge of the congregation at Waterbeach the fact had been duly recorded in the church records; and when he set out for London he was followed by the prayers and good wishes of many friends. The day before he finally left Cambridge he told Mr. George Apthorpe of his plans for the future, and added that he did not intend to study harder in London than he had done in the country. By that he simply meant that there would be no mere showing off in the metropolis; and that the needs of Londoners being identical with those of country people, he would continue to do as he had done—to preach the Gospel to the best of his ability, still looking for Divine help in the service. As one of the earliest friends of the great preacher, Mr. Apthorpe has many sunny memories of him, and he treasures many letters which he received from time to time. It is a singular fact that when the publication of the New Park Street discourses began in London, the booksellers of the University town did not deign to traffic in them. For a long time such readers as desired to possess the numbers had to make their purchases at the grocery establishment of Mr. Apthorpe, who naturally felt more than ordinary satisfaction in thus acting as the Cambridge publisher of his former companion in the St. Andrew's Street Sunday-school. In course of time the booksellers included Spurgeon's sermons in their ordinary stock; and when it was no longer unfashionable to read such productions many purchasers were found for them.

There are still a few persons remaining who have vivid recollections of what took place in 1854. Among these is Mr. T. W. Medhurst, now settled in the pastorate at Cardiff, who believes that he was privileged to hear Mr. Spurgeon's first platform speech in London. On a certain day in the early part of the year in question, and even before Mr. Spurgeon was actually chosen pastor of New Park Street, an anniversary meeting of the Sunday-school at Maze Pond Chapel was held, Mr. Spurgeon being among the speakers. Then Mr. Medhurst saw and heard his future friend for the first time. Sufficient impression was made for the questions to go round, "Who is he?" "Where does he hail from?" And the answer came from those who did not know very much about the matter, "He is a young man from Waterbeach, who is supplying at New Park Street not far away."

"Before he was really elected to the pastorate of the church in New Park Street, I heard him make what was probably his first platform speech in London, at Maze Pond, the occasion being the annual meeting of the Sunday-school. The grandfather of Mr. Archibald G. Brown was in the chair; so you see the relationship of the two churches, originally one, had promise of continuity. No doubt Mr. William Olney introduced him to us, and knew he would help the cause. What a stripling he then was! What an impression he made! It was then that he related the difficulty he felt when a child as to how the apple got through the narrow neck of the bottle, and then the application, 'Oh then you must put it in while it is a little one.' And again at about the same period he preached a sermon in the same chapel one Sunday afternoon for one of the societies, when my mother pronounced judgment on him and said, 'He will be a second Whitefield!' The minister of Maze Pond, the Rev. John Aldis, at once foresaw for him a very distinguished career, and was the first amongst the London ministers who took him by the hand, and Mr. Spurgeon never forgot it. For he was not so generally well received by his brethren. As to what was said, that is better forgotten, for nearly all of them came round to him at last. But at a devotional meeting, where Mr. Spurgeon had been invited to be present, a London pastor prayed for our 'young friend who had so much to learn, and so much to unlearn.' The narrator of this told me, however, that it did not at all affect him, nor did he betray the least feeling of annoyance. The importance of a united diaconate was never made more palpable than in Mr. Spurgeon's settlement at New Park Street. They were mostly men of middle age, and with much experience of the exigencies of church life. Had it been otherwise, how different might have been the pastor's career! 'Tis true there was one opponent who would not give in to the last, and his attitude necessitated the services being continued in the old place even after the Tabernacle was built, and it was not till his death that the building could be disposed of."

Some references have already been made to the alarming prospect in the summer of 1854, occasioned by war and pestilence. Writing on this same subject early in the autumn, Mr. Spurgeon's early London friend, the late Charles Waters Banks, draws a dark picture of the surroundings of a South London pastor, although there was the cheering fact of an abundant harvest:—"The scenes around us have been of the most solemn character. We could not walk the streets but we saw the doctors driving hither and thither—hearses, mourning coaches, and funeral processions, at almost every turn; and the unhappy tidings constantly coming of one and another suddenly removed from this world of sorrow and of sin. These are indeed heart-aching days for the fallen sons of men; our faces have turned pale; our spirits have trembled."

Mr. Banks himself suffered from an attack of cholera; and when here and there a friend died the national trouble seemed to come home to the individual heart. Among those who died suddenly was one of the first of the steadfast friends who stood by Mr. Spurgeon on his first coming to London—Mr. Josiah Denham, of Unicorn Yard Chapel, who had greatly profited by his ministrations at New Park Street. Mr. Denham was, in life, a great benefactor of the poor, although little was known of what he did among them. He died on September 1, and the funeral took place on the 5th at Nunhead Cemetery. Several ministers took part in the funeral services, but the most interesting feature was the eloquent address at the grave-side by Mr. Spurgeon. This has long since been forgotten, and will now be read with new interest. It was as follows:—

"Sleep on, my brother, sleep on; for so He giveth His beloved sleep! Though thy bed be dark and cold, thou shalt not be alone; for thy dust is guarded by angels. Though thou art covered by the

earth, thou shalt hear the trump of the archangel; thou shalt throw aside thy cerements, and in an incorruptible body thou shalt awake from thy long sleep. Oh, my friends, let us die with him; for to the believer death is the consummation of life; it is the close of the conflict; the sheathing of the sword. Sleep on, my brother, sleep on! The battle is fought, and thy work is done!

"But dost thou sleep? Doth thy spirit slumber? Nay! nay! Thy body sleeps, but thou art far away from that cold clay. Methinks I hear thy voice beyond the clear sky. Methought I heard thee! Tea, thou art there, my brother—thou art there! Thy voice comes down to me like sweet music. I hear thee say, 'I have washed my robe, and made it white in the blood of the Lamb.'

"Oh, can I weep for thee? Dare I wish thee to return? No, thou glorified one! I shall come to thee, but I cannot wish thee back again. Yet I must weep for thee; as of old the weeping" Jeremiah penned the lamentations over a slain Josiah, so would I mourn over thee, my brother! A Josiah indeed! Could benevolence have kept thee alive, thou hadst not died. Could religion have warded off the death-shaft, thou wouldst not lie there. But these avail not to avert the hour of death. With all thy loveliness and kindness thou wast a mortal, and mortals must die. Oh, tenderly beloved of thy wife, she could not save thee from the tomb! Nor can the mingled tears of sons, and brethren, and friends, restore thy form to life. But the word of the Omnipotent shall do it. The voice of Jesus shall arouse thy sleeping body. As a sinner thou hast died; but, accepted in the Beloved, thou shalt live.

"Oh, thou hast no righteousness of thy own; but thou hast an infinitely better one. He who loved thee with an everlasting love has clothed thee in a spotless robe of righteousness, and through His merits thou art received within the pearly gates. Farewell, my brother, till the resurrection morning!

"Now, my fellow-mourners, there is much to mitigate your woe; much to cause you joy; the dark cloud has a silver lining: 'Ye sorrow not as those without hope.' Follow the track which he pursued—the footsteps of Jesus—and may you, an unbroken circle, meet around the throne." When Mr. Spurgeon settled in London there was one other preacher on the south side of the Thames who had an extensive following, and whose chapel, better known as the Surrey Tabernacle, was thronged at every service. I refer to the late James Wells, a pulpit genius of great powers, who, notwithstanding some prejudices, and an impetuosity which led him to make some mistakes, is still remembered as a chief apostle of the nineteenth century by members of his denomination. He was a Strict Calvinistic Baptist, he was regarded as being more extreme in his views than the pastor of To this "Veritas" replied a month later:—"In regard to Mr. Spurgeon, I am not sufficiently acquainted with his line of doctrine to make any particular comment upon his amalgamation with this or the other sect. But in reference to Mr. Wells, whose views of truth I love and cherish, I must confess it as my honest opinion, that I cannot see why his preaching the Gospel of God's free grace to Wesleyans should prompt us to believe any better things of them than has been represented. Neither do I see it mitigates his principles, or renders him in fault as an ambassador of the living God. He is by no Scripture authority commanded to contract his labours, or limit them among any one class."

New Park Street; but at the outset of Mr. Spurgeon's London career, it seems to have been a question with many whether he would not eventually cast in his lot with this body. How he fraternised with them is seen by his friendship with Mr. Charles Waters Banks, by his visits to Unicorn Yard Chapel, by his taking part in the funeral of Mr. Denham, and by the assistance soon

afterwards given to The Christian Cabinet weekly paper, which had a Strict Baptist for its editor. Thus it happened that Mr. Spurgeon's early critics viewed him from two separate standpoints, one being that of the extreme Calvinists, to some of whom the young preacher was a mere legalist adventurer; the other, that of those who were in the via media of Baxter, if they were not Arminians outright, and to these Mr. Spurgeon's talk about the predestination of sovereign grace was distasteful. Mention has been made of the way in which other London ministers held aloof from the New Park Street pastor—the chief exceptions being Dr. Alexander Fletcher, and Paxton Hood; it may now prove interesting for the reader to learn how he was regarded by the more pronounced Calvinists. The fact of Mr. Spurgeon's amazing success was candidly admitted. "But then very solemn questions arise," said the monthly organ of the Strict party. These "solemn questions" turned out to be of a very searching kind, as, for example, "What is he doing? Whose servant is he? What proof does he give that, instrumentally, his is a heart-searching, a Christ-exalting, a truth-unfolding, a sinner-converting, a Church-feeding, a soul-saving ministry?" In starting such questions, and in endeavouring to give what he wished to be accepted as an impartial answer to them, the editor of the magazine referred to had to write with excessive caution, well knowing that his constituency was divided in opinion in regard to Mr. Spurgeon's claims to be recognised as a duly qualified preacher of the Gospel. The editor himself was favourably disposed towards Mr. Spurgeon; but knowing that his individual testimony would go but a very little way with his hard-headed subscribers if unsupported by the opinions of others, he was glad to be able to show that believers as sound in the faith as himself saw some good—at all events a promise of good—in the youth from Waterbeach. One genial comrade wrote to him in this reassuring strain:—

"I went last night to hear Mr. Spurgeon at Park Street, and after much squeezing got into a seat. It appeared to me that a very great number, after ineffectual attempts to gain ingress, went away again without being able to hear him. He preached from these words: 'He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.' And, much to my satisfaction, he delivered a short, pithy, and, to me, powerful epitome of the grand and fundamental doctrines of the Bible; powerfully proving, under the head concerning Christ's satisfaction, that if but one of His elect body, the Church, could possibly be missing at last, He could not be satisfied.

"God has wonderfully gifted this stripling; he has a powerful voice; an easy and abundant flow of matter. In fact, from the impression I was under, upon the whole, I could not help concluding that this young man is destined of the Lord to be a very useful and laborious servant of Christ. He speaks as one having authority, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees of our day. There are some of my friends who regard his youth as an obstacle to their well receiving him; but, surely, God is able to work by means of a David or a Timothy as effectually as by more aged and experienced instruments; and a very few years' time will remove this objection. To all appearance, however, a course of very great usefulness is laid out for this youthful champion; and if he does somewhat closely—but not too closely—insist upon fruits corresponding with a profession of the Gospel, we must not call this legality, when we know him to be sound in the main; indeed, I think this is what the acknowledged ministers of truth, in our time, have long neglected to enforce."

Having explained in what a Divine call to the Christian ministry consists, the editor thought he saw in Spurgeon evidences of having received such a call. In youth he had been preserved from straying into paths of vicious worldliness, and in that respect showed a favourable contrast to many others who had become acceptable preachers of the Word. Mr. Spurgeon was believed to

be "as great a lover of free grace and of real Calvinism as any man;" but he was discouraged by those who were too bigoted to accept the truth unless it were expressed in a certain style of phraseology. The Moderates, on the other hand, bit their tongues with rage at what they called his higher doctrines. The most effective way of testing the preacher was to appeal to his teaching, however. Extracts were given from the eloquent discourse on the harvest, while a number of sentences were selected from a powerful sermon on "The Testimony of Christ, and the Christian's Inwrought Evidence of the Truth of that Testimony." As these passages will show how Mr. Spurgeon's utterances at this time commended him to the more charitable of the Strict section, and also how surprising his knowledge of theology was for his years, they may be given in this place:—

"When Christ spake, He always spake directly from Himself. All the rest spake that which they had received from God. They had to tarry till the winged cherub brought the live coal, they had to gird on the ephod and the curious girdle with its Urim and Thummin; they must stand listening till the voice saith, 'Son of man, I have a message for thee.' They were but instruments blown by the breath of God, and giving sounds only at His pleasure; but Christ was a fountain of living water—He opened His mouth and the truth gushed forth, and it all came directly from Himself. In this, as a faithful witness, He was superior to every other."

It was then shown that the testimony of Christ was uniform, and that could not be said of any other teacher.

"Look at Noah, he was a very good testifier to the truth, except once, when he was intoxicated; he was a sorry testifier to the truth then. David was a testifier to the truth; but he sinned against God and put Uriah to death. The same might be said of Isaac; and if you go through the whole list of holy men you will find some fault in them, and we shall be obliged to say they were very good testifiers certainly, but their testimony is not uniform. There is a plague-spot which sin has left upon them all; there was something to show that man is nothing but an earthen vessel after all. But Christ's testimony was uniform. There never was a time when He contradicted Himself; there never was an instance in which it could be said, 'What you have said you now contradict.'" When the Strict Calvinistic critic comes to examine what Mr. Spurgeon had to say about the testimony of Christ in the believer's own experience, he has to confess to being "a little disappointed," for the subject was "hardly touched." It might be that he was keeping the subject back for some special occasion; but in any case, he was urged to be faithful—"Oh, thou valiant little pastor of Park Street! for Christ's sake, and for the sake of poor, tried, and tempted souls, we pray thee hold not back from us a full and faithful declaration of God's gracious dealings with thine own soul!" At the same time, it was not to be supposed that the young preacher never referred to himself: he had done so in a taking way, and probably a promise of better things to come was discerned, e.g.:—

"Oh, beloved, that is the best confirmation of Gospel truths which every Christian carries about with him. I lore Butler's 'Analogy'; it is a very powerful book. I love Paley's 'Evidences.' But I never need them myself for my own use. I do not want any proof that the Bible is true. Why? Because it is confirmed in me. There is a witness which dwells in me which makes me bid defiance to all infidelity, so that I can say—

"'Should all the forms that men devise Assault my soul with treacherous art, I'll call them vanity and lies, And bind the Gospel to my heart.'

I do not care to read books opposed to the Bible; I never want to wade through mire for the sake of washing myself afterwards. When I am asked to read an heretical book, I think of good John Newton. Dr. Taylor, of Norwich, said to him, 'Have you read my "Key to the Romans"?' 'I have turned it over,' said Newton. 'You have turned it over!' said the Doctor. 'And is this the treatment a book must meet with which has cost me so many years' hard study? You ought to have read it carefully, and weighed deliberately what comes forward on so serious a subject!' 'Hold!' said Newton, 'you have cut me out employment for a life as long as Methuselah's. My life is too short to be spent in contradictions of my religion. If the first page tells me the man is undermining truths, it is enough for me. If I find the first mouthful of a joint tainted, I do not want to eat it through to be convinced I ought to send it away.' Having the truth confirmed in us, we can laugh all arguments to scorn; we are plated in a sheet of mail when we have the witness within us of God's truth. All the men in this world cannot make us alter one single iota of what God has written within us. Ah, brethren and sisters, we want to have the truth confirmed in us. Let me tell you a few things that will do this. First, the very fact of our conversion tends to confirm us in the truth. 'Oh,' says the Christian, 'do not tell me there is no power in religion, for I have felt it. I was thoughtless like others; I laughed religion to scorn and those who attended to it; my language was, "Let us eat, drink, and enjoy the sunshine of life"; but now, through Christ Jesus, I find the Bible a honeycomb, which hardly needs to be pressed to let the drops of honey run out; it is so sweet and precious to my taste that I wish I could sit down and feast on my Bible for ever.' What has made this alteration? That is how the Christian reasons. He says, 'There must be a power in grace, otherwise I never should be so changed as I am; there must be truth in the Christian religion, otherwise this change never would have come over me.'

"Some men have ridiculed religion and its followers; and yet Divine grace has been so mighty that these very men have become converted and felt the new birth. Such men cannot be argued out of true religion. You may stand and talk to them from dewy morn to setting eve, but you can never get them to believe that there is not truth in God's Word. They have the truth confirmed in them.

"Then, again, another thing confirms the Christian in the truth, and that is when God answers his prayers. I think that this is one of the strongest confirmations of truth when we find God hears us. Now I speak to you on this point of things which I have tasted and handled. The wicked man will not believe this; he will say, 'Ah, go and tell those who know no better.' I say I have proved the power of prayer a hundred times, because I have gone to God and asked Him for mercies, and have had them. 'Ah,' say some, 'it is only just in the common course of Providence.' Common course of Providence! It is a blessed course of Providence! If you had been in my position you would not have said that; I have seen it just as if God had rent the heavens, and put His hand out and said, 'There, my child, is the mercy.' It has come so plainly out of the way that I could not call it a common course of Providence. Sometimes I have been depressed and downcast, and even out of heart, at coming to stand before the multitude; and I have said, 'What shall I do? I could fly anywhere rather than come here any more!' I have asked God to bless me, and send me words to say; and then I have felt filled to the brim, so that I could come before this congregation or any other. Is that a common course of Providence? It is a special Providence—a special answer to prayer. And there may be some here who can turn to the pages of their diary and see there God's hand plainly interposing. We can say to the Infidel, 'Begone! The truth is confirmed in us; and so confirmed that nothing can drive us out of it.'

"You have the truth confirmed in you, my dear friends, when you have found great support in times of affliction and tribulation. Some of you have passed through trouble, for one can never expect a congregation which is free from it. Some of you have been tried and have been brought very low. And cannot you say with David, 'I was brought low, and the Lord helped me'? Can you not think how well you bore that last trouble? When you lost that child, you thought that you could not bear it so well as you did; but you said, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' Many of you have loved ones under the sod—your mother, father, husband, or wife. You thought your heart would break when you lost your parents; but is not the promise true, 'If thy father or mother forsake thee, the Lord will take thee up'? He told thee, woman, that He would be a father to thy children; and hast thou not found it so? Canst thou not say, 'Not one good thing has failed of all the Lord hath promised'? That is the best confirmation of the truth of God. Sometimes persons come to me in the vestry and they want me to confirm the truth outside of them. I cannot do that; I want them to have the truth confirmed in them. They say, 'How do you know the Bible is true?' 'Oh,' I say, 'I never have to ask such a question as that now, because it is confirmed in me. The Bishop has confirmed me—I mean the Bishop of souls, for I never was confirmed by any other—and so confirmed in me the truth that no one can confirm me out of it."

This, and much besides, was regarded by certain observers as being all very good as far as it went; but it was not sufficient to satisfy them. Probably without quite realising the plain fact, they too much despised the New Park Street pastor's youth. Elderly and experienced Christians found that they could not readily submit to be taught in the deep things of God by a divine who was only twenty years old. There were also some who thought that at times Mr. Spurgeon said things which "fell with an ill grace" from the lips of one so young. The answer was, that a preacher free from imperfections would be altogether contrary to the common rule; and it was not doubted that if this youth was spared he would develop into a servant of God of great usefulness and far-reaching influence.

There was, however, a more select coterie of extreme Calvinists to whom any recognition of Gospel teaching outside of their own denomination savoured of apostasy from the truth. One critic of this school asked even of Dr. Cumming, "Who, taught of God, ever once thought his ministry to be that of life and freedom in the Gospel and new covenant sense of the word?" The same writer naturally regarded Mr. Spurgeon as "another very questionable personage"; and as this person's views were representative of one section of opponents, who turned from the young preacher as from a false prophet during the first months of his ministry in London, some passing notice may be taken of them. When the organ of the High Calvinists came out as an apologist for Mr. Spurgeon, there was "unbounded astonishment in one part of the camp." The article was thought to be an oversight committed through excess of good nature, although the belief was also current that "canting professors" had had something to do with the business. If the magazine was about "to change masters, let it do so at once, and the living in Jerusalem will have done with it." Here is a pen-and-ink sketch of Mr. Spurgeon in 1854, drawn from life by the "Job" to whom we have already referred:—

"It is, then, in the first place, clear that he has been from his childhood a very industrious and ardent reader of books—especially those of a theological kind; and that he has united with his theological researches books of classic and of scientific caste; and has thus possessed himself of every kind of information, which by the law of association he can deal out at pleasure; and these

acquirements by reading are united in Mr. Spurgeon with good speaking gifts. The laws of oratory have been well studied, and he suits his action to his words. This mode of public speaking was, in the theatres of ancient Greece, carried to such an extent that one person had to speak the words and another had to perform the gestures, and suit, with every variety of face and form, the movement to the subject in hand. Mr. Spurgeon has caught the idea, only with this difference, that he performs both parts himself.

"Mr. Spurgeon is too well acquainted with Elisha Coles not to see in the Bible the sovereignty of God; and too well acquainted with the writings of Toplady and Tucker not to see in the Bible the doctrine of predestination and an overruling Providence; and too well versed in the subtleties of the late Dr. Chalmers not to philosophise upon rolling planets and methodically moving particles of earth and water, each particle having its ordained sphere. But in addition to these he appears to be a well-disposed person: kind, benevolent, courteous, full of goodwill to his fellow-creatures, endearing in his manners, social—a kind of person whom it would seem almost a cruelty to dislike. The same may be with equal truth said both of Dr. Pusey and of Cardinal Wiseman."

Having thus depicted the more pleasing traits in the New Park Street pastor's character, the critic is too conscientious to shrink from completing the portraiture. How characteristic of such a writer is the following passage:—

"But then it becomes us to beware, not only of the rough garment of a mock and 'arrogant humility,' but also of Amalekite-measured and delicate steps, and also of the soft raiment of refined and studied courtesy (Mat 11:8), and fascinating smile, with 'Surely the bitterness of death is past' (1Sa 15:32). But Samuel had too much honesty about him to be thus deceived. We must, then, beware of words that are softer than butter and smoother than oil (Psa 55:21). Not one of the Reformers appears to have been of this amiable caste; but these creature-refinements pass with thousands for religion, and tens of thousands are deluded thereby. It was by great, very great, politeness that the serpent beguiled Eve; and, unhappily, her posterity love to have it so; so true it is that Satan is not only a prince of darkness, but transformed also as an angel of light, and shall deceive, if it were possible, even the very elect." But according to common belief, Mr. Spurgeon was a converted man, one who had undergone a change of heart. "Heaven grant that it may be so, for the young man's sake and for that of others also!" adds the writer already quoted; "but I have—most solemnly have—my doubts as to the Divine reality of his conversion. I do not say—it is not for me to say—that he is not a regenerated man; but this I do know, there are conversions which are not of God." By this it was meant that it was possible to have some knowledge of Christian faith and of practice, and yet not to be regenerated in a Scriptural sense. What were the paths marked out by the prophets and the apostles? "I believe Mr. Spurgeon well capable of talking about those paths; but I cannot see that he is walking therein," we find it remarked. Hence, such a ministry was put down as being "most awfully deceptive," although it might be "morally and socially beneficial to some people." What Mr. Spurgeon was at that time it was believed he would still continue to be. "His orbit may seem to be eccentric, but he will go intellectually shining on, throwing out his cometary attractions, crossing the orbits of all the others, seeming friendly with all yet belonging to none." The attraction of the preacher for the multitude consisted in a fine voice, and a capacity to use in the pulpit the materials which he so industriously collected in his study. In that respect he was a rebuke to such as were idle, and who, while pluming themselves on being sound in the faith, were tempted to think that hard work could be dispensed with. At the time this

discussion among the High Calvinists as to whether the pastor of New Park Street Chapel was worthy of their recognition as a preacher of the Gospel, created much excitement among the members of the Strict Baptist denomination. The chief assailant, some of whose strictures have been here quoted, appears to have been himself a minister in an influential position; but Mr. Spurgeon took no notice of the attack. In after years, he had many friends among the body which The Earthen Vessel represented; but I am not aware that his relationship to the denomination itself was ever of that exceptionally cordial kind which, when he first came to London, some thought would turn out to be the case.

Chapter 19: Work And Progress In 1855

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Work And Progress In 1855

Opening of the year 1855—Commencement of The New Park Street Pulpit—Sermon for the London Association—Enlargement of the Chapel—Services at Exeter Hall—Caricatures—A Pen-and-ink Sketch—False Anecdotes—Mr. Spurgeon at Tottenham—Reopening of New Park Street Chapel—Large Sale of the Sermons—Birthday Celebration—The Christian Cabinet—The Mission of the Cheap Press—Visit to Scotland—In the Highlands—In "Danger on the Clyde—A Friend's Reminiscences of New Park Street.

Although the year 1854 had closed in gloom, people were looking hopefully into the future when the New Year opened. Things could not be expected to be worse than they had been, and the probability was that there would be an improvement. As regarded Mr. Spurgeon, he was now able to consider himself thoroughly established in London. So far was his popularity from waning, that it had continued to grow, and promised to become greater than ever during the year which was then opening. The appetite of sermon-readers throughout the country had been sufficiently whetted by the samples of the young pastor's discourses which had already been printed; and, accordingly, it was now determined to publish regularly, as a weekly periodical, The New Park Street Pulpit. The desire to undertake such an enterprise did not originate with Mr. Spurgeon himself; but Mr. Joseph Passmore, who was then a young man engaged in the printing and publishing business, saw the golden opportunity which offered itself, and resolved to take advantage of it. Mr. Passmore was associated with the New Park Street Church and congregation, and his family was related to that of the late Dr. Rippon. The young printer and the young preacher passed some time together on Mr. Spurgeon's memorable first Sunday in London, and thus a lifelong friendship was commenced. If the weekly publication of the sermons was likely to become a successful undertaking, there would be no objection in Mr. Spurgeon's mind to a trial being made. Mr. Passmore and Mr. Alabaster, his partner, were both trustworthy men whose characters naturally inspired him with confidence. On the opening Sunday of the year Mr. Spurgeon preached at New Park Street on the Immutability of God, the sermon being founded on Mal 3:6 —"I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." The discourse is throughout quite in the preacher's early style, and, notwithstanding that the doctrines of his later days were identical with those he taught at the outset of his career, the phraseology is here and there not altogether such as Mr. Spurgeon would afterwards have used. Probably Milton's imagery—in the passages he had loved to recite to his pupils at Cambridge—had still great fascination for him. The High Calvinists must have found much in the sermon that was reassuring from their peculiar standpoint. In proof of the doctrine of election, John Newton's story relating to a worthy woman, who had something to say on the subject, was retold. "Ah, sir," said this dame of Old London to the rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, "the Lord must have loved me before I was born, or else He would not have seen anything in me to love afterwards." The discourse at the evening service, which preceded the

administration of the Lord's Supper, was founded on 1Co 11:24 —"This do in remembrance of Me."

During that same week, on Wednesday afternoon, January 10, Mr. Spurgeon preached at New Park Street on behalf of the London Baptist Association, and among the congregation some well-known London ministers might have been observed. In one pew, some time before the service commenced, was Thomas Binney, of the Weigh-House Chapel, and a few minutes later John De Kewer Williams, of Tottenham, took a place beside the City pastor. The sermon was founded on 2Co 10:4 —"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal." Mr. Williams, who still retains a vivid recollection of the occasion, especially remembers what he calls "the intensely graphic way in which the young preacher described how the strongholds of Satan should be taken by storm and destroyed." It was remarked in the course of the sermon that "the Baptists are the elect of the elect," which made it clear that, young as he was, the preacher was thoroughly persuaded in his own mind. Here is an extract from this discourse relating to the opposite doctrines of Antinomianism and Arminianism:—

"I dread Arminianism (and my church and my people equally do), and every Christian ought to dread Antinomianism. I tremble sometimes when I think how much of its spirit there is amongst us. I think that Antinomianism differs from Arminianism in this—Arminianism is an enemy of truth altogether, and is entirely a system of error, but Antinomianism is the abuse of truth. It is the taking the stones of the sanctuary to build a house for Belial. It is building upon the truth of Jesus the wood, hay, and stubble of carnal man's imaginings. Arminianism is false from top to bottom, but this Antinomianism is true at the foundation, and on this basis are built up inferences so abominable, so horrifying, that, well might St. Paul say, at the mention of one of them, 'God forbid!' 'What! shall I continue in sin, that grace may abound?' What! shall I despise God's holy law because I cannot perfectly fulfil it? What! shall I make an excuse for myself because of the corruption of my heart? What! shall I say I am never to strive after nearness to perfection because I feel I cannot, in the present state, get quite up to it? What! shall I sit myself down in sloth, and sing 'Jehovah Jireh,' and imagine that because God will bring about His awful decrees and work out His gracious purposes I am to sit down and wait for them, without using the means God has appointed for the obtaining of the purposed and promised blessings? Let it be far from us; yea, let us abhor it. It is a 'deep ditch, and he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall into it.' God deliver us from it! Oh that Antinomianism!—which administers opiates to the ungodly; which brings men together in the house of God, and tells them that if they are lost it is not their fault; lulls them off to sleep, lets them go to hell blindfold, with the conviction that if they are to be damned they shall be damned. Horrible beyond expression! You and I, each of us, must be united in a holy league, as much against Antinomianism as Arminianism. We shall have our hands full if we attempt to do anything against either of these things, but God help us and we yet shall overcome and wave the palm branch of victory." This striking sermon, the tea-meeting which followed, and the crowded public meeting of the evening, marked a new era in the history of what was then called the London Association of Baptist Churches. The denominational organ thus contrasted the old times with the new:—

"Whatever reason may be assigned for the fact, it is certain that an Association meeting in London is very different from one in the country. Perhaps the ministers and members of the several churches meet so often that an annual gathering is no novelty; perhaps the walk through London

streets, or the jolt in an omnibus or cab, has fewer attractions than the Whitsuntide jaunt by railroad or pleasant country lane; or perhaps the thing has escaped due attention amid the throng of metropolitan claims—but certain it is, that the London Particular Baptist Association, holding as it does, from a sense of duty, a meeting every year, has only given generally the impression of being a somewhat dull affair. Indeed, it is not enlivening either to preacher or hearer to find one's self in New Park Street Chapel with a congregation of seventy people on a January weekday afternoon! This year, we are bound to say, all was different. The popularity of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, the recently-settled pastor at New Park Street, attracted a crowded audience on the afternoon of the 10th instant. The metropolitan churches of the denomination appeared for the most part well represented, the only noticeable exception being the absence of several leading ministers, owing, as was explained, to the Quarterly Mission Committee being holden, by some mischance which will probably not occur again, upon the same day. The preacher treated with much earnestness on the 'strongholds' of the Evil One that we are called to subdue, and on 'the weapons of our warfare,' which are 'mighty through God' to the task. The vigour and originality of the sermon, we cannot forbear remarking, sufficiently accounted to us for the popularity of the youthful preacher, and indicated powers which, with due culture, may by the Divine blessing greatly and usefully serve the Church in days to come." At that time older preachers saw something to admire, and in a sense to envy, in what they called Mr. Spurgeon's assurance. Thus, as Mr. Williams remarks, "Although he must have seen Mr. Binney among the congregation, he was apparently not in the slightest degree disconcerted." The fact was, as the present writer can himself testify, the youthful pastor was in some measure troubled at his own unparalleled popularity, and dreaded the crowd far more than he did any individuals, however celebrated they might be. By this time the managers at New Park Street had decided that something must be done with the old chapel in order to provide some additional accommodation for the ever-increasing crowds. The site admitted of some enlargement of the building being carried out; and funds having been collected for this enterprise, the congregation removed to Exeter Hall—then a comparatively new building only two or three years older than the preacher who was to conduct the services in its great room.

It was quite a new departure for a congregation to hire such a building as this for ordinary services; and on the first day of meeting—Sunday, February 11—large numbers were attracted by curiosity. Hitherto, Exeter Hall had seemed to belong to the Sacred Harmonic Society on the one hand, and to the conveners of May meetings on the other; for a preacher to arise who could crowd its benches and even its aisles to the last standing-place, was altogether a novel experience. What was the meaning of the Strand being partially blocked soon after ten on Sunday mornings by a well-dressed crowd of people carrying Bibles and Rippon's Selection of Hymns? The inconvenience was caused by a young man from New Park Street, whom people seemed determined to hear at any hazard. The question went round from one to the other, "Who is he?" and the answer was, "He is a stripling from Waterbeach." One thing after another leaked out about this young Spurgeon. It was soon told abroad that he was the son of an Independent minister, that he had turned Baptist, and that he was an uncompromising Calvinist. The Press, in the main, appears to have been fair and generous. Thus, one of the ablest and most respectable of the London evening papers gave this notice:—

"The circumstances under which this gentleman has recently come before the public are curious, and demand a passing notice. Some months since he became minister of New Park Street Chapel, and it was soon found that the building, capacious as it was, was far too small to accommodate the crowds of persons who flocked to hear the young and eloquent Divine. In this state of affairs, there was no alternative but to enlarge the chapel; and while this process was going on, Exeter Hall was engaged for him. For some weeks past he has been preaching there every Sunday morning and evening; but he has filled the great hall just as easily as he filled New Park Street Chapel. A traveller along the Strand, about six o'clock on a Sunday evening, would wonder what could be the meaning of a crowd which literally stopped the progress of public vehicles, and sent unhappy pedestrians round the by-streets, in utter hopelessness of getting along the wide thoroughfare. Since the days of Whitefield—whose honoured name seems to be in danger of being thrown into the shade by this new candidate for pulpit honours—so thorough a religious furore has never existed. Mr. Spurgeon is likely to become a great preacher; at present his fervid and impassioned eloquence sometimes leads him astray, and mars the beauty of his singularly happy style."

About the same time, The Glasgow News had something to say concerning a popular minister in London and "the green-eyed monster," as follows:—

"To the horror of some pious rival, New Park Street Chapel has become rapidly crowded, so that the congregation has had to resort to Exeter Hall till their chapel is enlarged. Even Exeter Hall is found too small to accommodate the crowds which go to see and hear the youthful and now renowned Rev. C. H. Spurgeon. Someone, who, we suspect, could give a beggarly account of empty benches, has written to some of the newspapers, holding up this successful rival to scorn because he does not preach and pray-to his satisfaction—that is, we presume, in the usual jog-trot, sleepy fashion. Young Spurgeon must, therefore, be held up to contempt in the columns of such papers as choose to lend themselves to these purposes. We have seen gentlemen who have worshipped in his crowded congregation, and who state that the services are conducted with strict propriety, and that there is nothing in the service to offend even 'ears polite.' They assure us that his discourses are replete with substantial matters, and that they are couched in language vigorous and appropriate. He pays no attention to the dogmas of schools, and chooses to express his views in language of his own, which is free from the stereotyped phraseology of the pulpit; but there is no expression used unworthy of the subject, and none which judges of theology would repudiate. A number of letters have appeared in his vindication, and to these the names of highly respectable parties are attached. It were well for rivals to mind their own business, as a young man of such energy as Mr. Spurgeon is not to be put down by envious rivals. Like other young preachers, he has his peculiarities; but these are often the indications of a genius which ripens into a brilliant maturity." The name and doings of the youthful pastor thus soon became a theme of common talk outside of what is conventionally known as the religious world. The caricaturists set themselves to work. In one production, which was sufficiently popular in its day, the New Park Street pastor was depicted as Mr. Brimstone; and in order that no mistake might he made, another contemporary celebrity, Mr. Treacle, had his portrait given in the same drawing. Another picture was "Catch-'em-alive-O," Mr. Spurgeon's preaching being thus compared with the stick-fast fly-papers then in use. Meanwhile, busy tongues, pens, and pencils contributed to increase a popularity which was already unexampled. A pen-and-ink sketch of the preacher at this time

says:—

"A young man, in the twenty-first year of his age, has just appeared under this name, among our metropolitan preachers, and is creating a great sensation in the religious world. He had only been a few weeks settled as minister of Park Street Chapel, Southwark, before that commodious place was filled to overflowing, while hundreds at each service went away who were unable to effect an entrance. The result was that it was agreed to enlarge the chapel, and that the youthful minister should preach in the large room of Exeter Hall for eight Sundays, until the reopening of his own place of worship. It will easily be believed how great must be the popularity of this almost boyish preacher, when we mention that yesterday, both morning and evening, the large hall, capable of containing from 4,000 to 5,000 persons, was filled in every part. Mr. Spurgeon belongs to the Baptist denomination, in which his father is a minister in the neighbourhood of Cambridge. He is short in stature, and somewhat thickly built, which, with an exceedingly broad, massive face, gives him the appearance of one of twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age, instead of twenty-one. His doctrines are of the Calvinist school. He is a young man, we are told, of extensive information, especially on theological subjects, and of a highly cultivated mind. There can be no doubt that he possesses superior talents, while, in some of his happier flights, he rises to a high order of pulpit oratory. It is in pathos that he excels, though he does not himself seem to be aware of the fact. But for some drawbacks in the young Divine, we should anticipate great usefulness from him, because he not only possesses qualities peculiarly adapted to attract and rivet the attention of the masses, but he makes faithful and powerful appeals to the consciences of the unconverted. In the spirit of sincere friendship we would impress upon him the indispensable necessity of relinquishing those theatrical attitudes into which he is in the habit of throwing himself. In Exeter Hall yesterday, instead of confining himself to the little spot converted into a sort of pulpit for him, he walked about on the platform just as if he had been treading the boards of Drury Lane Theatre, while performing some exciting tragedy. We hope, however, that in these respects he will improve. It is with that view we give him our friendly counsels. He is quite an original preacher, and therefore will always draw large congregations, and, consequently, may be eminently made the means of doing great good to classes of persons who might never otherwise be brought within the sound of a faithfully preached Gospel. He has evidently made George Whitefield his model; and, like that unparalleled preacher, that prince of pulpit orators, is very fond of striking apostrophes. Like him, too, he has a powerful voice, which would, at times, be more pleasing, and not less impressive, were it not raised to so high a pitch."

It was admitted by Mr. Spurgeon's friends at this time that a man who had taken such a position as he had done was open to criticism. A magazine which consistently defended him remarked:—

"The pulpit and the forum alike invite attention, and challenge criticism; and so long as this test is legitimately and truthfully applied, no public character, if right-hearted, will shrink from its decisions. But if the criticism be made the vehicle of calumny, and if the censors of the Press, instead of employing their pens in commending excellencies, or in censuring and correcting faults, however severely, if fairly done, seek by detraction and falsehood to damage the reputation and lessen the usefulness of those whose efforts they decry, then do they degrade an otherwise honourable occupation into that of a dirty and despicable slanderer. Several of Mr. Spurgeon's critics, we regret to say, have thus disgraced themselves." The London correspondent of The Ipswich Express wrote a description of one of the services at New Park Street at this time, and

besides making out that all the discourses were "redolent of bad taste, vulgar, and theatrical," gave a poor account of the preacher generally. Then came certain apocryphal anecdotes, one especially about a great number of worked slippers being received from young ladies. The editor of the Ipswich paper appears to have freely admitted letters in defence of the pastor, and correspondents indignantly denied what was false, while they gave evidence of truthfulness and zeal which was unanswerable. The story of the slippers was a well-worn fable which any shrewd journalist should have avoided. After all, fact was stranger than fiction in the case of Mr. Spurgeon; for as one friend, who had very generally attended the services, said:—

"The foot of the young pastor never trod the floor of schools or the halls of colleges; he boasts no birth, and has no pride of ancestry; but still, spite of this, his people increase, his church enlarges, his hearers become more numerous, and his ministrations are made more extensively useful; and now that he is placed upon a lofty eminence which he has 'won by the consistency of his character, the power of his preaching, the pure piety of his ministerial life, and the earnestness of his pastoral labours, the shafts of calumny and envy are showered on him thick and fast. So let it be; 'Thrice armed is he who hath his quarrel just,' and I trust Mr. Spurgeon will live to outlive it all."

While standing forth as a defender of Mr. Spurgeon, a certain provincial minister urged other friends to be more sober in their estimate of the preacher:—

"He neither possesses nor lays claim to such gigantic powers of mind as some have enthusiastically asserted. His greatness is his usefulness.... The extravagant encomiums bestowed upon him by some of his injudicious friends are as little approved by Mr. Spurgeon as the envenomed shafts of calumny hurled at him by unchristian assailants are effective for the purpose intended. Of the animus by which the latter are influenced, as well as of the success they are likely to realise, the fables of Old Father Æsop may serve strikingly to illustrate. The fox may contemn the grapes because they happen to be beyond his altitude, and the empoisoned fangs of the asp will only be damaged by the object on which it wreaks its envious rage." The writer of this letter recommended Mr. Spurgeon's opponents to leave off detraction, and to try instead to imitate their gifted brother in his "laborious and incessant efforts both as a pastor and an evangelist."

Sincere friends were sometimes candidly critical in these early days, however; and by way of illustration take this utterance:—

"We have it not in our hearts to criticise that which, on the whole, is so very excellent, and which, too, was meant only to benefit the souls of our fellow-immortals; else it would be very easy to discover and to direct attention to faults both as to style and taste. That they should exist to any extent is a great pity, as it is very evident if these defects were regarded by Mr. Spurgeon as matters of very great importance, he has only to exercise his own better judgment to render his discourses worthy the popularity he has so suddenly and, we think, also most justly acquired.

"We understand he has entered into an engagement with a publishing house of high respectability to prepare for publication a volume of sermons, for the copyright of which, rumour states, he is to receive a very extraordinary sum. Let Mr. Spurgeon follow his own intuitions, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and he will speedily falsify the uncharitable predictions of envious and prejudiced critics; and thus, from a sacred afflatus, and the promptings of his own genius, he will not fail to take his place in the foremost rank of pulpit orators. May God long preserve him to the Church,

and enable him to continue such utterances as those which are given forth in the Exeter Hall sermons."*

Some of the things said of Mr. Spurgeon in those days are not a little astonishing when read in the light of his subsequent career. To many the young preacher's popularity was quite an ephemeral thing, and only a very short time would be needed to finish up what was sensational in his adventurous course. To such people it was very much like a display of fireworks; the rocket might go up like a stream of fire, but the stick must inevitably come down in smoke and darkness. The preacher would find his level—the dull level of mediocrity—when his too ardent followers ceased like sheep to follow one another. At one service in a provincial town, a church official hoped that such a discourse as that by Mr. Spurgeon, who had just preached in the chapel, would not be accepted as a sample of the average preaching of the denominational ministers. For a time, even Mr. Binney looked upon Spurgeon as a young man who went up and down the country preaching in an incoherent manner. To others, he was an adventurer who talked more nonsense than truth, a man whose acquaintance with theology was no greater than his knowledge of English grammar. Then, what piquant anecdotes were told about him!—anecdotes that had done duty for more than one generation of eccentric ministers. Thus, it was said that to give expression to his satisfaction at the death of an obnoxious deacon, the pastor preached a funeral sermon for the worthy gentleman founded on the words, "And the beggar died." He was also reported to have slid down the pulpit balustrade to illustrate the ease of backsliding, and then to have sought to clamber up to emphasise the difficulty of recovery. What chiefly gave offence, however, was the new method of preaching which the Essex youth had introduced. Instead of humbly learning from his betters, Spurgeon, with his simple Saxon, was even presuming to teach them how the thing ought to be done. To many it appeared as though native impudence could not further go. The fact was, that a time of transition had come, and it was impossible to check the progress of events. The ill-success of the Russian war, and the intense sufferings of the allied armies in the Crimea, were teaching the people a lesson which they might be slow to learn, but which would be wholesome in the end. The abolition of the compulsory stamp on newspapers was also giving an impetus to the general diffusion of knowledge, especially as the paper duty would be sure to follow. More interest was also being shown in popular education. These things made it evident that such a pulpit phenomenon as the young pastor of New Park Street had appeared at an opportune time; but whether that was so or not, no adverse criticism, specious warning as regarded what was proper or improper, or even violent detraction, could stop the crowd from following one to whom they had taken a fancy. Much more was being effected than appeared on the surface to ordinary observers. Mr. Spurgeon had not only caught the popular ear to give the people the Gospel, he was sweeping away many things which had become sufficiently obsolete to be a hindrance rather than a help to ardent evangelists; and others would soon reap the good fruits of his wisdom and courage. If the late Rowland Hill looked on his large round chapel with satisfaction because Satan could not find a corner to hide in, was it not equally commendable in Spurgeon to be the first man who thought it a shame that the devil should have all the largest places in London and elsewhere? The Rev. Mark Guy Pearse has remarked on this subject:—

"If to-day we gather in St. James's Hall without prejudice or loss of sanctity, let us thankfully remember the bold hand that first opened the door of such places for such purposes. And if to-day preaching is no more 'as dying man to dying men,' but rather as living man to living men, who have

got to get their living, and need all the grace of God to do it honestly and well, it is largely due to the courage and sanctified common sense of this blessed man." That was something to do; but Mr. Spurgeon could never have enjoyed the popularity he did from the first if it had not been for his character. Commanding as his talents were, his character became his chief passport to public favour. Hence the eminent Wesleyan preacher was able to add:—

"I cannot refrain from adding my testimony to the memory of this servant of God—a man greatly beloved. There is none living to whom I owe so much as to him. I have never taken up one of his sermons without finding my soul quickly aglow with love and praise. If, when I am dull and cast down, I begin to read something of his, it is to me what the harp of David was to the troubled soul of old. Many a time I have come to my work kindled with hope and ringing with praise, because God had spoken to me by the printed word of His servant. I loved and honoured him. To me he was another Luther—the same sturdy faith, the same fearless defiance, the same ready humour, the same love of all things bright and pure, the same simplicity and self-forgetfulness."

Mr. De Kewer Williams, who now ministers at Hackney, but who in 1855 was stationed at Tottenham, is able to tell some interesting things about the days when Mr. Spurgeon was commencing his ministry in London. During the summer of 1855 the young pastor preached for Mr. Williams in the then new Tottenham and Edmonton Chapel from the words, "To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." The congregation was a very full one, and among those who came were one or two Plymouth Brethren, who after the service remarked, "That young man will require great grace." "Just so; we all require it, if we did but know it," replied Mr. Williams. Not very long afterwards, the young pastor visited the Baptists of Tottenham, and during the sermon referred to various preachers and their ways in his own characteristic manner. He did more, however; for without knowing it he "took off" the excellent minister of the church in a way which must have not a little astonished the audience. The text on that occasion was, "Never man spake like this man"; and the advice given to preachers themselves was of a kind not likely to be forgotten by any who heard it. "What is the use of preaching the Gospel if people do not come to hear it?" was asked. It was then added, "I would preach in a red coat, or in any way, rather than have an empty chapel." Some time afterwards a sermon was preached at Deptford from the words, "We have seen the Lord"; and the people were asked if they had ever told Thomas such a thing as that. "There is a stuck-uppishness among us English people that prevents one man speaking to another on this all-important subject," said Mr. Spurgeon. "When I first joined a church I thought that Christian people must he brothers. I attended the Communion twice, but no one spoke to me; and I found out that numbers of fellow-Christians were brethren, but not brothers exactly." It was on this occasion that Mr. Williams met Mr. Spurgeon in the vestry with some others, and a certain Congregational minister, on joining the company, asked the latter if he would give a sermon at a chapel at Islington. The gentleman who asked this favour was incautious enough to add, "If you could come on Sunday it would be of most service to us, and I could take your place." We are told that "Mr. Spurgeon looked surprised" on hearing this novel proposition, but he at once gave a turn to the conversation and got out of the difficulty without giving any offence. He said, "You know, Mr. ------, if the devil were announced to give a discourse, and did not appear, but the archangel Gabriel, happening to be there, discoursed instead of him, the audience would not like it, because they did not come to hear him, you know." On Thursday, the last day of May, New Park Street Chapel was reopened after what was called "extensive enlargement." Mr.

Sherman, the ex-pastor of Surrey Chapel, preached in the morning, and Mr. Spurgeon himself in the evening, when large numbers had to be turned away from the doors unable to obtain admission. On the first Sunday in June, 1855, therefore, pastor and people were again found assembling in Southwark; but, although New Park Street Chapel would accommodate about three hundred more hearers, the difficulty of dealing with the crowd was practically as great as before. To preach at Exeter Hall twice a week for about four months must have had the effect of making the preacher better known among the élite of society, however; and ramblers from the West-end would now be found crossing the Thames in still greater numbers to hear the youthful prodigy in Southwark. Pastor and congregation must now have been more than ever impressed with the fact that a new chapel would have to be provided. The sermons, which were by this time published regularly, stimulated the expression of opinion for and against the preacher which had begun in the previous summer. Despite the fact that he was a High Calvinist himself, Mr. Spurgeon's most violent detractors still appear to have been found among the more extreme members of that denomination. Hence we find a leader of that sect, who was more favourably disposed to the young preacher, warning his followers that they might possibly be found fighting against God in opposing him. "Therefore, brethren, be careful," he said. "Let us remember, also, that infidel Reasoners, Jesuits, Mormonites, and hosts of open enemies, are working hard to deceive men, to lead them on to the gates of death, and to cast contempt upon the glorious Gospel."

While people were disputing about the merits of Mr. Spurgeon, some writers protested against new preachers of Arminian sentiments being admitted into pulpits in which Calvinistic doctrines were preached. One of Mr. Wells's followers who went to New Park Street received somewhat of a severe shock when he found that Mr. Sherman, of Surrey Chapel, was actually held in favour by Mr. Spurgeon. "Still, I would by no means condemn the stripling," he charitably remarks. "He is young, soldier-like, full of zeal for his adorable Lord, and apparently desirous to spread abroad His mighty acts." The pastor of New Park Street was not the only one who indulged in such pulpit "matrimonial connections," however; and it was insisted by those who were disposed to deal fairly all round that people who dwelt in glass houses should not throw stones. "I have thought, for some time past, that many of those men who are so very forward in pointing out what they call errors in Mr. Spurgeon, are far more faulty than he is," says the writer just quoted; "and that it is (do pardon me for so saying) nothing but envy which makes them so spiteful as they are against the young man—his pulpit talents being so great. I should not wonder, if those gentlemen were narrowly watched in their preaching, that we should at times, at least, be shocked at their unsound sentiments" Still, although some might be found to be well disposed towards him, a large proportion of the High Calvinistic section ardently joined in the cry concerning Mr. Spurgeon, "It is a second-hand ministry, deeply tainted with an Arminian spirit." That the judgment of the public was different was proved by the increasing desire to hear the preacher, and by the large sale which his Exeter Hall discourses commanded when collected into a volume. Soon after the return to the enlarged chapel at New Park Street, or on the 19th of June, Mr. Spurgeon completed his twenty-first year, and this was celebrated by a special service, the sermon entitled "Pictures of Life" being published at twopence, accompanied with the first portrait of the young pastor that was ever engraved. The sale was large, but it is only with difficulty that a copy can now be obtained. The birthday discourse is founded on Jas 4:14 —"What is your life?" The opening refers to the swiftness of existence on earth. To the youth entering upon the world, life might seem to be long, but to the aged who were finishing their course, it was ever short. It was a span when compared

with the ages of the universe, or a drop when compared to the ocean. Then follows this characteristic passage:—

"Life is swift. If you would picture life you must turn to the Bible, and this evening we will walk through the Bible-gallery of old paintings. You will find its swiftness spoken of in the book of Job, where we are furnished with three illustrations. In the ninth chapter and at the twenty-fifth verse we find, 'Now my days are swifter than a post.' We are most of us acquainted with the swiftness of post-conveyance. I have sometimes, on emergency, taken post-horses where there has been no railway, and have been amused and pleased with the rapidity of my journey. But since, in this ancient book, there can be no allusion to modern posts, we must turn to the manners and customs of the East, and in so doing we find that the ancient monarchs astonished their subjects by the amazing rapidity with which they received intelligence. By well-ordered arrangements, swift horses and constant relays, they were able to attain a speed which, although trifling in these days, was in those slower ages a marvel of marvels; so that to an Eastern, one of the greatest ideas of swiftness was that of a post. Well doth Job say our life is like a post. We ride one year until it is worn out, but there comes another just as swift, and we are borne by it, and it is gone, and another year serves us for a steed; post-house after post-house we pass, as birthdays successively arrive; we loiter not, but vaulting at a leap from one year to another, still we hurry onward, onward, onward still. My life is like a post; and not like the slow waggon that drags along the road with tiresome wheels, but, like a post, it attains the greatest speed."

Other illustrations of the swiftness of life were given, after which something was said about its uncertainty. What was life other than a vapour? In speaking of its changes, the preacher compared it to a pilgrimage, as the patriarch Jacob had done in his day.

"That hoary-headed patriarch, when he was asked by Pharaoh what was his age, replied, 'The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years. Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage!' He calls life a pilgrimage. A pilgrim sets out in the morning, and he has to journey many a day before he gets to the shrine which he seeks. What varied scenes the traveller will behold on his way. Sometimes he will be on the mountains, anon he will descend into the valleys; here he will be where the brooks shine like silver, where the birds warble, where the air is balmy, and the trees are green, and luscious fruits hang down to gratify his taste; anon he will find himself in the arid desert, where no life is found, and no sound is heard, except the screech of the wild eagle in the air, where he finds no rest for the sole of his foot—the burning sky above him, and the hot sand beneath him—no roof-tree and no house to rest himself; at another time he finds himself in a sweet oasis, resting himself by the wells of water, and plucking fruit from palm-trees. One moment he walks between the rocks in some narrow gorge, where all is darkness; at another time he ascends the hill Mizar; now he descends into the valley of Baca; anon he climbs the hill of Bashan, 'a high hill is the hill Bashan'; and yet again going into a den of leopards, he suffers trial and affliction. Such is life—ever changing. Who can tell what may come next? To-day it is fair, the next day there may be the thundering storm; to-day I may want for nothing, to-morrow I may be like Jacob, with nothing but a stone for my pillow, and the heavens for my curtains. But what a happy thought it is; though we know not where the road winds, we know where it ends. It is the straightest way to heaven to go round about. Israel's forty years' wanderings were, after all, the nearest path to Canaan. We may have to go through trial and affliction; the pilgrimage may be a

tiresome one, but it is safe; we cannot trace the river upon which we are sailing, but we know it ends in floods of bliss at last. We cannot track the roads, but we know that they all meet in the great metropolis of heaven, in the centre of God's universe. God help us to pursue the true pilgrimage of a pious life!" As regards the changes of life, the words of David are quoted—"We spend our years as a tale that is told"; and then occurs a passage which gives some of the preacher's own experience:—

"Now David understood about tales that were told; 1 daresay he had been annoyed by them sometimes. There are in the East professed story-tellers, who amuse their hearers by inventing tales such as those in that foolish book, the 'Arabian Nights.' When I was foolish enough to read that book, I remember sometimes you were with fairies, sometimes with genii, sometimes in palaces, anon you went down into caverns. All sorts of things are conglomerated into what they call a tale. Now, says David, 'we spend our years as a tale that is told.' You know there is nothing so wonderful as the history of the odds and ends of human life. Sometimes it is a merry rhyme, sometimes a prosy subject; sometimes you ascend to the sublime, soon you descend to the ridiculous. No man can write the whole of his biography; I suppose if the history of a man's thoughts and words could be written, scarce the world itself would contain the words that should be written, so wonderful is the tale that is told. Our lives are all singular, and must to ourselves seem strange, of which much might be said. Our life is 'as a tale that is told.'" The discourse closed with some allusions to the end of life, the words of Samuel being quoted—"Water that is spilt upon the ground, and cannot be gathered up again":—

"Man is like a great icicle, which the sun of time is constantly thawing, and which is soon to be water spilt upon the ground that cannot be gathered up. Who can recall the departed spirit, or inflate the lungs with a new breath of life? Who can put vitality into the heart, and restore the soul from Hades? None. It cannot be gathered up. The place shall know it no more for ever. But here a sweet thought charms us. This water cannot be lost, but it shall descend into the soil to filter through the Rock of Ages, at last to spring up a pure fountain in heaven, cleansed, purified, and made clear as crystal. How terrible if, on the other hand, it should percolate the black earth of sin, and hang in horrid drops in the dark caverns of destruction!"

It was also during this year that Mr. Spurgeon once more took up the pen, which he may not have felt encouraged to use as an author since his little essay on "Antichrist and her Brood" had failed to win Mr. Arthur Morley's prize. This time he came out as a journalist, The Christian Cabinet, to which he lent his aid weekly for nearly a whole year, being the first penny paper of the kind ever published in England. "Although on the one hand the Press was so mighty an agent for diffusing light," we find it remarked, "it has also proved too often a means of spreading darkness and error, and it was to check in some measure the growth of this evil that Mr. Banks bent all his powers in starting The Christian Cabinet and other religious papers, which he fondly hoped would counteract the influence of more doubtful literature." The late Charles Waters Banks became pastor of the ancient congregation at Unicorn Yard, Tooley Street, in the same year that Mr. Spurgeon settled in London. Mr. Banks was a very able man; he looked upon the mission of the Press with genuine enthusiasm; and although he belonged to the High Calvinists, he entertained the most profound respect for Mr. Spurgeon. The young pastor never went over to the denomination of his more elderly friend, but as regarded aggressive Christian work, both were heartily agreed. Mr. Banks was an advocate of open-air preaching and of general mission work; but to certain professors of

the more extreme type, all such enterprise savoured of legalism. One such was somewhat shocked when in New Park Street Chapel he heard some allusions to what it was proposed to do for the surrounding neighbourhood in the way of Christian work. That of course stamped the pastor as a man whose tendencies were towards legalism. Nevertheless, through good report and evil report, the work went bravely forward. In the summer of Mr. Spurgeon's second year in London, he and his people undertook Home Mission service in earnest, the chief centre being the Southwark Mission

Hall, opened in connection with the chapel. An effort like this naturally looked like something savouring of legalism to persons who held extreme views; but Mr. Banks sympathised with such enterprises quite as heartily as Mr. Spurgeon did himself. In July, 1855, Mr. Spurgeon took a journey to the North, and visited Scotland for the first time. He appears to have called at various great towns on the road. On a Sunday morning at Bradford he preached in the Music Hall to a congregation which included a thousand more persons than could have been got into Exeter Hall; but quite as many went away unable to gain admission as were admitted. In the evening the excitement rose still higher; the streets around the music-hall were thronged, while the great building itself was so closely packed that the preacher was scarcely able to move about sufficiently while giving his sermon. A similar experience was passed through at Stockton-on-Tees. At Edinburgh there were great crowds at Queen Street Hall, although the heavy rain would probably have damped the ardour of many if the attraction had been any other preacher. At Glasgow there were, if possible, still greater crowds; and in that commercial metropolis of Scotland the newspapers devoted much space to reports of the sermons and to articles on the preacher. The Glasgow Examiner acquitted itself creditably while endeavouring to give an impartial estimate of Mr. Spurgeon's methods and genius. People might put him down as an empiric because he had courage enough to leave the old-time routine to beat out a path for himself; but such daring had been characteristic of the greatest reformers ever known, from the Apostle Paul down to the sixteenth-century veterans Luther and Knox. It was not necessarily a mark of originality or of exceptional talent to leave the beaten track; but it might be advisable to do so:—

"Routine in religious services is extremely liable to beget a listless, lukewarm compliance with prescribed forms, while the spirit or animus gradually subsides. The preacher speaks his usual time; the people sit patiently enough perhaps; a few may even listen; the usual number of verses are sung and the business of the day is over; there is generally no more about it. No one can deny that this is neither more nor less than a simple statement of the real state of matters in the majority of our churches at the present day. Should the preacher sharpen his intellect with a sprinkling of snuff, let fall his handkerchief on the Psalm-book, or give one thump louder than usual with the fist ecclesiastic, that will be noted, remembered, and commented on, while there is all but total oblivion of the subject and the nature of the discussion. To break up this deadening process, to shake the dry bones and make them live, ought to be the great aim of the preacher of the present day; but it is not everyone who can do it. Affectation of manner or style won't do it; talent, we may say genius, of a peculiar nature is required; and we have no hesitation in saying that Mr. Spurgeon possesses the requisites in an unusual degree."

Nevertheless, it seemed to be quite a legitimate thing for sensible persons to regard with some misgiving certain of the "un-canonical expressions of this young preacher"; and even if they found themselves calling him a quack or an empiric they were to be excused; for had not common report

spoken of this youth's unsystematic training and native boldness? Still, there was something in him, the success of his ministry was a fact "that could not be stifled with a sneer." Why was he so successful?

"It could not be any novelty in the theme itself, as there were thousands of preachers and millions of books and tracts dilating on it before Mr. Spurgeon made his appearance; it could not be any new doctrine, for this was the same as John Calvin, and preached by all the evangelical denominations around him; neither could it be his youth, as there are in the churches of Britain scores of preachers as young as he is; neither could it be the few outré sentences that were scattered through the discourses, for there are many in London who say stranger and odder things than any that he has yet uttered."

Reference is then made to the character of the average congregations which Mr. Spurgeon drew together; and these are set down as "fair examples of the respectable church-going community, perfectly capable of judging rationally on all subjects that engross public attention." Looking back on those days, and remembering what kind of a figure Mr. Spurgeon made in the world at that remarkable period in his history, I do not regard such an estimate of his influence as being in any wise a correct one. The striking thing about the young preacher in the early years of his unique career was the fact that his influence extended far beyond "the respectable church-going community." "The profound, the ignorant, and the illiterate, the light-hearted and frivolous young people of the metropolis," were not only the exceptions among the many who heard the Gospel from his lips, the classes who seem to be outside of the church altogether were attracted in large numbers. The youth from Waterbeach became a phenomenon to such as well as to more sober-minded people. His name became a household word in the by-streets of working-class neighbourhoods; and people who were strangers at public worship went to "hear Spurgeon" just as they would have gone after any other novelty. In this respect Glasgow did not differ from London; for the immense audiences which are reported to have been spell-bound at the services were really made up of all classes and ages, as was the case in England, and proper account should have been taken of such a speaking fact. It is acknowledged that his later sermons were better than those which had gone before. What, then, was the secret of such uncommon success? The Glasgow Examiner gave these reasons:—

"In the first place, there is about him that hearty, open, English frankness which has no hesitation in giving full and free utterance to its opinions, loves, and dislikes. There is the ready, acute perception which never fails to bring out fresh and striking illustrations from any text on which the attention is directed. Again, there is an extensive acquaintance with literature, which, by the aid of a retentive memory, can at a moment's notice furnish the speaker with choice and appropriate material. And lastly, there is a power of voice, and volubility of utterance, which enable him to get on with great care, and at the same time to give powerful effect to his sentiments. We may have heard many preachers who could reason more correctly and profoundly, who displayed more classical elegance and polish, but we have not heard one who can more powerfully arrest the attention, and carry the sympathies of an audience along with him." The critic dealt with the discourses as he found them, and it was thought that if readers who looked through the reports did the same, they would see little in them to which they would take exception. Still, he was too original in his method to please everybody:—

"Those who think that preaching the Gospel is the harping on one or two cardinal points, or the repetition of some favourite dogma in language strictly ecclesiastical, must be offended with the freedom, independence, and variety of the preacher's style and thoughts. Instead of limiting himself to commonplace illustrations, he opens his eyes on nature, on science, on society, and gathers from them all that he reckons suitable to illumine his subject. Instead of confining himself to the language of the schools, and of divines and theologians, he ransacks all the stores of literature, and reckons not a sentence disqualified to take a place in his discourse because it was coined or used by a Shakespeare, a Scott, a Johnson, or even a Burns. Language hitherto reckoned fit only for plays, novels, and songs is seized by this preacher, and oftentimes most ingeniously and aptly brought into his discussions. We do not inquire whether in every case the sentiments and language are appropriate, but refer to the fact that such is his independence that he, with equal freedom, selects from sacred writers; and such is his miraculous power of assimilation, that what would come from others as a motley, incoherent mass, becomes in his hand unique, complete, and beautiful." The arrangement of his discourses was thought to be good, although he used no notes; and although he made much of doctrines, such teaching—that of an ordinary Calvinist—was thought to be essential. Mr. Spurgeon's prayers had been described as "irreverent, presumptuous, and blasphemous"; but nothing of the kind had been noticed by his Glasgow critic. "On the contrary, they were correct, appropriate, and beautiful. He certainly has not followed the usual pulpit style, but has opened his eyes on the state of society in all its forms and phases, and adapted his confessions, and petitions, and thanksgivings. He confesses the peculiar sins of the times, as well as the inherent and changeless depravity of man's nature; the sins of the parlour, of the counting-house, and public assembly; the sins of individuals, families, and nations. He offers petitions for various classes and characters—for the profligate and careless, for the old, the young, and for little children; petitions for churches, for nations, for the world, all in a somewhat novel manner. While he gives thanks for special blessings, and employs language which none but the genuine believer can appropriate, and which even he must sometimes acknowledge with hesitancy, he forgets not the common benefits which all share, and the common blessings with which all are crowned."

Hence the keen observers of Glasgow, with whom the young preacher now came in contact for the first time, were not able to detect any of the "undue familiarities" or the "daring impieties" with which some others had charged him. They thus learned what many others learned in time, that the Spurgeon of the newspapers and the Spurgeon of real life were not always identical. Instead of all the objectionable things which had been so industriously reported concerning the preacher, the truth now turned out to be that he was characterised by "an earnestness, an unction, a fluency, and an urgency, which are but too seldom imitated." The reading of the Scriptures with the exposition was thought to be quite as good as the preaching, the attention given to tone and emphasis being especially observable. There were those who preferred to have the Bible read without running comments; but even to such there would be nothing objectionable in Mr. Spurgeon's methods. His preaching is then described:—

"Some preachers owe much to their personnel in the pulpit. Before they open their mouths, there is something about them which causes a sort of awe and respect to creep over the audience. The appearance of this preacher may be said to be interesting rather than commanding. He is quite a youth, and his countenance boyish. He is under, rather than over, the middle size, and has few or

none of the physical advantages of the orator in his appearance. But what he lacks in appearance he has in reality. Soon as he commences to speak, tones of richest melody are heard. A voice full, sweet, and musical falls on every ear, and awakens agreeable emotions in every soul in which there is a sympathy for sounds. That most excellent of voices is under perfect control, and can whisper or thunder at the wish of its possessor. And there is poetry in every feature and every movement, as well as music in the voice. The countenance speaks—the entire form sympathises. The action is in complete unison with the sentiments, and the eye listens scarcely less than the ear to the sweetly flowing oratory. But among the thirty thousand English preachers, and the three thousand Scotch ones, there are many sweet voices as well as this, and many who have studied the art of speaking with the greatest assiduity, and yet they fail to attract an audience. Mr. Spurgeon is more than a 'voice crying'; he has rare powers of observation, recollection, assimilation, and creation. His field of observation is wide and varied. He seems to have opened his eyes to nature in all its varieties, to science in all its discoveries, and to literature in all its departments. Everything which the eye of man can look upon, or the ear hear, seems to have made an indelible impression on his mental powers. The impression is not only distinctly made, but ineradicably maintained. Every mountain, every valley, every book, every sentence, which has once come in his way, becomes for ever fixed in his recollection. And not only fixed, but becomes the material on which marvellous powers of assimilation vigorously operate. Out of the forms of beauty which his eyes see, other still lovelier forms are created. The loveliest natural landscape is adorned with additional beauty by the aid of a refined and chastened fancy. The thoughts that have come floating down the long bygone ages are placed in the crucible of his mind, and, purged of the objectionable, come out bearing his own image and superscription. There is evidently in him great power of assimilative genius, and occasional indications of even a higher order of genius—even that which creates fresh and new forms of beauty which bear the distinct mark of his own mind."

Glasgow was the preacher's headquarters during this visit to the North, and the largest congregations ever gathered in the Scottish commercial metropolis are said to have been drawn together at this time. On Sunday, July 15, morning service took place in Dr. Patterson's church, Hope Street, and that of the evening in Dr. Wardlaw's chapel in West George Street. Mr. Spurgeon was greatly charmed with the scenery of Scotland as he proceeded on his way. He went northward to Perth, Dunkeld, and Aberfeldy; and while viewing the rocks at the last-named place he is said to have clapped his hands for joy at such a manifestation of the power of God. He did not succeed in awakening any of the Highland enthusiasm, however. At Aberfeldy the bellman went round to summon a congregation in characteristic fashion. "Your auld playmate and auld acquaintance, Shony Carstairs, wants to see you all at the Independent Chapel at seven o'clock, to hear my dear friend, the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, preach. Mind, he has come five hundred miles to tell you something for your good, and the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon and myself expect you all to come and give us a hearty shake hands." There was plenty of snuff-taking during the sermon, and immediately the benediction was pronounced there was a rush for the door, when the popular preacher and his friend, Shony Carstairs, had the building to themselves.

What seems also to have struck observers at this time was the fact that the young preacher had not been unduly lifted up by his success. With such vast crowds at his feet, anxious to listen to what he had to say, there was some danger of others being led to the footstool of God in penitence

without the preacher himself partaking of the same spirit. Perhaps it was well for him at that early date that he had violent detractors as well as enthusiastic admirers. The two extremes of opinion were continually finding expression in the public journals. It was therefore remarked, "He has been denounced as mean in stature, inexpressive in countenance, and contemptible in intellect. On the same day his personnel has been extolled as attractive, his intellectual power tremendous, and his oratory overwhelming. He has heard voices innumerable denouncing him, and voices innumerable admiring him. Many a pen has been dipped in gall by jealous rivals, and many a pen in honey by generous critics." The result seems to have been that the preacher did not think of himself too highly or too lowly. He was conscious of his own power; but while he knew that he was not so mean a mediocrity as numbers insisted, he seems to have had no temptation to exalt himself. Thus early he was without doubt a wonderful example of the power of the grace of God to keep a man from sinking down into a state of pride. There are those who think that in after-life Mr. Spurgeon's frequent illnesses were a kind of necessary thorn in the flesh to keep him humble; but in the halcyon days of youth, when his health was perfect, there seems to have been no danger of his falling into that condition of pride which would have destroyed his usefulness. Even thus early, if he did not do so in all cases, he frequently refused fees for preaching.

Before he returned home from this tour, Mr. Spurgeon was at one time in danger of drowning on the Clyde. "I crossed the Clyde in a ferry," he remarked himself; "the man who had the management of the boat had taken 'a wee drap of the cratur,' and was not able to manage it at all, and had put twenty-six persons into a boat that ought to have contained far less. I have been informed by one or two ladies that report was current that I was thrown into the water and fished up by the hair of my head. Now, that was not so. We were simply in danger, but by a little management and expostulation, which was resented by oaths and curses, we came safe to land." A trip was made to Lake Windermere in the course of this excursion. In every town visited immense crowds were attracted, the climax being reached at Glasgow, when on one occasion twenty thousand persons were said to have been unable to gain admission to one service. In his early days Mr. Spurgeon would occasionally see a contrast to this awakening of the congregation of a whole city. He did not always have an overflowing audience; but that did not happen on account of want of popularity, it rather came about because he was too popular. Thus, when he visited Enfield, the then little chapel at Chaseside was nearly empty because people stayed away in order to avoid the crush which was supposed to be inevitable. There was also one elderly dame living near who stayed away on principle, because she could not conscientiously encourage the young man's vanity. A correspondent of The Freeman, who remembers Mr. Spurgeon as he was at New Park Street during the first months of work in London, says the congregation was then "mainly a juvenile audience," as the preacher had not yet been "quite 'received' by the church at large." The impression produced is vividly remembered. "The pulpit was then the old-fashioned one, entered by a staircase from the vestry, the door being closed behind, as was the fashion at an. early period," it is remarked; and it is added that "his action was much too lively to be confined to the limits of the pulpit, and he occasionally sat upon the side of it as one would do on the bulwark of a ship." His success appears to have silenced those students who maintained that sermons needed to be read. On one occasion, in preaching from Ecc 9:4, "For a living dog is better than a dead lion," he remarked, "Now, if I had said this I should be accused of coarseness and vulgarity." The lessons or conclusions he drew from his subject are said to have been always serious and practical. "The Emperor of Russia was then lying dead, and I remarked to him what

use he might have made by the comparison," says this early friend. "'Why didn't you tell me?' he replied with energy; of course my only answer was that I was not previously, let into the secret of the discourse." Another early sermon, which is said to have produced a deep impression, was founded on Lev 19:19, "Neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee." Many of these discourses which were thus memorable, and are even still remembered, were never printed. On a certain weekday afternoon he preached for a Baptist society from 1Co 14:8, "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" He then said some trenchant things against Arminianism; and it was on this occasion that the late Dr. Binney made the remark which was long remembered, "He is the most impudent young rascal I ever heard in my life." There were staid persons who gave the preacher some very proper advice. "Take care, you are a very young man." Mr. Spurgeon's reply was, "Who were the great sinners, the old or the young, as given in Holy Writ? There were Noah, Lot, David, etc.; therefore, I say, 'Take care, old man.'"

One rule observed at this time, that is, not to attempt to answer adverse critics, was adhered to throughout life; and this, no doubt, preserved Spurgeon from much irritation. Perhaps, however, some little trouble might have been taken in contradicting erroneous statements or anecdotes, but even these were allowed to go on their way unchallenged. Many things which had thus no foundation in truth may have been accepted as fact. Thus, for years it was circulated in Mr. Spurgeon's "Life," issued by his own publishers, that there had been only four pastors at Stambourne in two hundred years; and the four was not corrected into eight until "Memories of Stambourne" appeared. In the course of some interesting reminiscences of Mr. Spurgeon in The Christian Union of New York, Dr. Wayland Hoyt makes some references to the great preacher's early days, which may be given in this place:—

"With Mr. Spurgeon religion was never in the least anything put on. It was always a steady and pervasive influence and colour, flushing everything. I never met a man who was so absolutely free from cant. I never met a man whose tongue so thoroughly refused to run over the routine and usual religious phrases. In everything he said and in everything he did there was the completest naturalness. I was walking with him in the woods one day just outside of London, and, as we strolled under the shadow of the summer foliage, we came upon a log lying athwart the path. 'Come,' said he, as naturally as one would say it were he hungry and bread were put before him, 'come, let us pray.' And, kneeling beside the log, he lifted his soul to the Lord in the most loving, outpouring, and yet reverent prayer. Then, rising from his knees as naturally, he went strolling on, talking about this and that. The prayer was no parenthesis interjected. It was something that belonged as much to the habit of his mind as breathing did to the habit of his body.... Mr. Spurgeon was a man of the most singular ability of self-marshalling and self-control. In this respect he always reminded me of Mr. Beecher. He seemed to be absolutely sure of himself for any moment, for any occasion.... His pulpit preparations were always just before each service. He once said to me that if he were appointed to preach on some great occasion six months beforehand, he should not think at all of preparation for the duty until just as the time struck—he would occupy himself about other things. This surprising power of quick self-control and marshalling of powers gave him a perpetual consciousness of ease. He had never the fear that he would not be equal to the time. He knew that when the moment came he would be ready; so, instead of being strained and anxious, his mind was in a beautiful openness for whatever might flow in upon it. And yet,

especially in his earlier years, after his preparation had been made, and just as he was about to confront the throngs he knew were gathering to listen to him, he used to have the most fearful nervous anxiety, almost convulsions. He told me once that for years and years in his early ministry he never preached but that he had had beforehand the most straining time of vomiting. His stomach was able to retain absolutely nothing. In later years he vanquished this nervous tendency. Nothing was more delightful about Mr. Spurgeon than his evident childlike faith. That God should do great things for him through him, seemed to him to be as much expected as that a mother should meet the necessities of her child. He had been telling me once about the amount of money he must disburse in order to sustain his various enterprises. We stopped talking for a little, and I sat looking at him. He was as unconcerned as is a little child holding its mother's hand. There were no lines upon his brow, there was no shadow of anxiety upon his face, only the large, good-natured English smile. I was thinking of the orphans he must feed, the old Christian women he must care for, the professors' salaries in his Pastors' College he must pay, the students he must supply with teaching, many of them with bread and clothing, since they were too poor to buy these for themselves. I said to him in a kind of wonder, 'How can you be so easy-minded? Do not these responsibilities come upon you sometimes with a kind of crushing weight?' He looked at me with a sort of holy amazement, and answered, 'No; the Lord is a good banker. I trust Him. He has never failed me. Why should I be anxious?"' In his young days, as in his maturer years, Mr. Spurgeon won favour by having about him no airs of the "great man"; and the attention he would show to the poor of "the household of faith" was all along characteristic. When out preaching, I have heard of his choosing to go and drink tea with very poor people whom he happened to know, rather than be entertained at the mansion where he was expected. When he visited Ponders End as a very young man, he passed much of the time between the services with a bedridden aged Christian in South Street, with whom he sat and conversed while his congregation was being regaled at a tea-meeting. Such things more than answered the adverse criticisms to which he was subjected.

Chapter 20: Mr. Spurgeon's First Printed Sermon

Chapter 20.

Mr. Spurgeon's Calvinism A Service at Unicorn Yard Chapel—A Centre of High Calvinism—Extracts from the Sermon-Extension of Mission Work at New Park Street—Opening of a Ragged School.

Soon af ter his return from Scotland in the year 1855, Mr. Spurgeon preached a memorable sermon at the old chapel in Unicorn Yard, Tooley Street, on behalf of the Ministers' Relief Society. This charitable agency had been formed not very long before by Mr. Charles Waters Banks, who was then pastor of a church which met in a chapel in Crosby Row. Mr. Banks soon afterwards removed to what he called his Old Vicarage in Unicorn Yard. He had a great love for this place, and we find him speaking of the old sanctuary in a truly affectionate manner. Mr. Banks succeeded in interesting his friend Spurgeon in the work of what he had called the Gospel Ministers' Relief Society. As pastor of the church in New Park Street, Mr. Spurgeon was already a member of the Particular Baptist Fund, which his predecessor Benjamin Stinton had founded in 1717, and he would be expected to make a collection annually for that institution. He nevertheless appears to have had a strong liking for the supplementary agency which his friend and neighbour had founded. Accordingly, on Wednesday evening, August 29, the young pastor might have been seen walking along Tooley Street towards Unicorn Yard. He was probably in better spirits than he would have been a year before, for the work to which he had set his hand seemed to be going bravely forward; and while the national outlook was less disheartening, Mr. Spurgeon himself was more firmly established as the most prominent preacher of the age. The war with Russia still went wearily on; but some occasional success had elated the French, and the Queen and Prince Albert had just returned from their eight days' visit to the French Emperor at Paris, where some brilliant pageants had been witnessed. The sermon preached on the occasion referred to was entitled, "Christ's Prayer for His People," and the text was John 17:20 —"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word." The sermon itself is very characteristic of Mr. Spurgeon's early style, and as such the passages which follow will be acceptable to all who are interested in the preacher's early progress in London. It will be noticed that the distinguishing doctrines of Calvinism are strongly insisted upon. To those who were not fully in sympathy with them, these sentiments, so boldly expressed, would, no doubt, be sufficiently distasteful; but to the High Calvinists, who regarded James Wells and Charles Waters Banks as representative apostles of sound doctrine, the question must have suggested itself whether Mr. Spurgeon was not really being drawn into closer sympathy with the stricter denomination. In the introduction the preacher dwelt on Christ's peculiar love for His people:—

"In the very opening of this subject one feels inexpressibly delighted to see the wondrous love of our Saviour towards His people. He here promises that He will intercede for everyone of them before His Father's throne. He declares that He not only prays for 'these'—that is, the elect who are called out from the ruins of the fall—but that this intercession also arises for those who are yet

uncalled, unconverted, and unregenerated. Mark the depth of His affection—He spends all His time continually in interceding for His people. I marvel at the condescension of Jesus Christ—that His people's name is ever on His lips. When we consider that, notwithstanding all His exceeding grace and affection towards them, they transgress and rebel, it appears wonderful that He should mention their names, or that He should regard their persons. But when we remember that day by day in that land where there is no night, He who stands before His Father's throne bears perpetually on His breast their names deep-cut in the precious jewels and stones of the breastplate, and always with outspread hands pleads for them, we cannot but admire His love for them, and feel a deep veneration for that grace which makes Him declare—'For Zion's sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.'

"You must note here also the peculiar knowledge which our Saviour, Jesus Christ, has of all His people, as well as His particular love for them; for He says He prays for those who are yet uncalled. Now, none of us who have faith in God, none of those called and led to believe in Jesus, are unknown to Him. He knows His redeemed as well in one condition as another. He knows which of two drunkards shall turn and become one of His family. There are none so sunk into the depths of sin and wickedness that, if they are His by the covenant of His grace, do not even now share His intercession. He knows His beloved when there is no mark to know them by. He discerns His sheep when to other people they seem like wolves and goats. He recognises His family when they are black as the tents of Kedar, and He knows they shall be fair as the curtains of Solomon. He knows His children when they do not know themselves; when they fancy they are lost beyond rescue, or when they foolishly conceive that they can save themselves. Tea, and when all hope fails them, when it seems that the Lord does not know them, and the Gospel does not know them—when no Christian knows them, and the minister can give them no comfort, Christ knows them even then, for still it is written, 'I pray for them'—I pray not for the world, I pray also for those whom Thou hast given Me out of the world; who have not believed yet; but who shall believe through the word of those who are already called.

"Another thought before we pass to the subject; for we like to suggest a few of these thoughts just to start with, as they are in the text. The other thought is this—mark how Jesus loves all His people with the same affection. Ho could not pray for those few who in His lifetime had believed, without suddenly (to speak after the manner of men) recollecting that these were but a handful; and, therefore, He stirs Himself up, and says, 'My Father, neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe'; as much as to say, These are not My especial favourites because they are converted so early; I do not love these better than others—I pray for those also who shall be called. I pray as much for one of My people as for another. It is well said by one of the Apostles, 'There is no difference'; and verily, beloved, there is no difference in the affection of God towards His children. There is an elect out of the elect, I will acknowledge, as to gifts and standing, and as to the labour which they may accomplish in this world; but there is no election out of the elect as to a deeper extent of love. They are all loved alike; they are all written in the same book of eternal love and life. They were all purchased with the selfsame precious blood of the Saviour. One was not purchased with His foot, another with His hand, but all with His very heart's blood. They are all justified with the same righteousness, all sanctified by the same Spirit, and they shall all enter into the same heaven. I am not sure that there will be any difference in degrees of glory; one star may

differ from another star in its peculiar colour and form, but not in brightness or in lustre; they shall all shine alike as stars for ever and ever. They are all saved by the same grace; loved by the same love; heirs of the same inheritance; and Jesus Christ puts them altogether when He says—'Neither pray I for those alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word'!" The first point insisted on is, that God loved His people before they believed. Christ would never pray for those He did not love; and thus such prayers were different from those of the hypocrite. There were too many hypocritical prayers, and they were not worth picking up in the street; they were even wicked. That God loved His people before they were in a state of grace was shown to be a Scripture doctrine, although many talked against it. If men came to God, it was owing entirely to grace. All this brought out the Calvinistic belief of the preacher, so that when, in the second place, he explained the use of a Gospel ministry, he had to take some notice of the objections which would be urged against his teaching:—

"Now, then, the second thing—the use of a Gospel ministry? Now, many captious and cavilling persons will object—'You may say that God loves His people, and, therefore, they will be saved; then what is the good of your preaching?' Then what is the good of preaching! When I say that God loves a multitude that no man can number, a countless host of the race of men, do you ask me what is the good of preaching? What is the good of preaching! To fetch these diamonds of the Lord out of the dunghill; to go down to the depths, as the diver does, to fetch up God's pearls from the place where they are lying. What is the good of preaching? To cut down the good corn and gather it into the garner. What is the good of preaching? To fetch out God's elect from the ruins of the fall, and make them stand on the rock Christ Jesus, and see their standing sure. Ah, ye who ask what is the benefit of preaching, because God has ordained some to salvation, we ask you whether it would not be a most foolish thing to say, because there is to be a harvest, what is the good of sowing? There is to be a harvest, what is the use of reaping? The very reason why we do sow and reap is, because we feel assured there is to be a harvest. And if, indeed, I believed that there was not a number who must be saved, I could not come into this pulpit again. Only once make me think that no one is certain to be saved, and I do not care to preach. But now I know that a countless number must be saved, I am confident that He shall 'see His seed; He shall prolong His days': I know that if there is much to dispirit me in the ministry, and I see but little effects, yet He 'shall keep all that the Father has given to Him'; and this makes me preach. I am not among those who say—'Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?' at present; but if I could say that, nevertheless, I know they will be saved, and that would comfort and cheer me, and make me go on again. I come into this chapel to-night with the assurance that God has some child of His in this place not yet called; and I feel confident that He will call someone by the use of the ministry, and why not by me? I know there are not a few souls whom God has given me through my ministry, and not hundreds, but thousands. I have seen some hundreds of those who profess to have been brought to God through my preaching in Park Street and elsewhere. And with that confidence I must go on. I know that Jesus must have a 'seed,' His people must increase, and it is the very purpose of the ministry to seek them out and bring them into God's fold. Our Saviour tells us the use of the ministry is, that they may 'believe on Me through their word!' There is one peculiarity about this. It says, 'They shall believe on Me through their word. Have you never heard people call out about running after men? They say, 'You are all running after such a man!' What, then, would you have them run after a woman? You say, 'The people go after one particular man!' Who else shall they go after? Some persons may say,

'Ah, I went to so-and-so, and the people there love their minister too much—oh, it is worshipping a man.' Ah, that is very dreadful, no doubt. But then it is not so. There is very little love towards our fellow-creatures anywhere, and so far as ministers being in danger of being ruined by love, it very seldom falls to their lot. Very generally they get quite as many kicks as anything else; and if they do get too much love in any particular place, they get too much of the reverse somewhere else. If we get a little sweet, somebody else is sure to put in much that is bitter. Is it not singular that the Holy Ghost should say—'that they may believe on Me through their word'? Now, do God's people believe through the word of the ministry? We know it is written, 'We do not receive it as the word of man, but as, in truth, the word of God.' Our faith does not stand in the word of man, but in the word of God. We do not rest on any man, yet it is through their word—that is, through the word of the Apostles, through the word of every faithful minister. I take it, the Gospel is the minister's own word when he speaks from experience and manifestation. What is in the Bible is God's word; what God speaks to me by experience becomes my word as well as God's. And it is then their word, when ministers come into the pulpit with the word in their hearts. I think a minister is not only called to preach what he finds in the Bible—the mere naked doctrine—but what he has experienced in his own heart—what he has tasted, and felt, and handled. If he does this, he will be greatly in danger of being charged as an egotist. He will use too many 'I's' very likely. Well, he cannot preach John Smith's experience, or anybody else's experience; he can only preach his own, and then he will have to say 'I.' But if he does not preach experimentally what he has felt himself, it will not be 'that they may believe on Me through their word.' When we speak that which we know, and testify that we have seen and felt; if we say we know the Saviour will pardon sinners because He has pardoned us, then it is not only God's word, but our word. If I say to a child of God—'Go, and cast thy burden on the Lord, and thou wilt find relief,' and I say 'I have done so,' then it is not only God's word, but my word. When he has proved the Saviour's word by experience, then it becomes the minister's word, as also when he has it manifested to him by the Holy Spirit. Some people say that these manifestations are all nonsense. I have heard many object to applied texts. Such men do not understand much about the real law of piety, or else they would see texts manifested to them at one time which they had never seen before. I know many of my ministering brethren who now testify that they have sometimes taken a text and tried to break it. They have smitten it with a sledge-hammer, but they could not get an atom off it; and they have had to throw it aside. But another time, my friends, when that same text comes before us, though it seemed hard as granite when we took it up in our hands before, it now crumbles and breaks in pieces. Why? Because God's Holy Spirit shines upon it now, and He did not do so before. And we might have continued hitting it till we broke the head of our hammer, and not a scrap would come off it; but the manifestation afterwards reveals the text; and most texts are to be learnt so. It is not by sitting down in deep thought often that you get at the meaning. It is by leaving it until in some hallowed hour of high spiritual intercourse we get into the very secret chamber where the meaning of the text lies. In some solemn moment we dive down into the very depths where the meaning of the text is hidden. God teaches us the meaning, and then it becomes our word. It is ours by application; and we believe, my brethren, that sinners will be converted to God only by preaching the Gospel we find in our hearts, 'known and read of all men!' That they also may believe on Me through their word!

"Let us then come into our pulpits with this determination (I speak to my brethren in the ministry), that by the help of God we will bring our own experience to bear upon it. We will sometimes talk of

ourselves, and not be ashamed of it, for whatever the Lord our God saith unto us, not only in His word, but by experience, and by His Spirit, that we speak to the people."

Notwithstanding all, however, God could do without ministers if He chose. When it was insisted that ministers were necessary, it was speaking of them as concerning men, and after the manner of men. The preacher continued:—

"With God ministers are not necessary. He could do without them. I thought to-day as I walked along, 'God could do without me.' I thought of many men who were preaching, and I thought, 'God could do without them; strike them all away, and God could do without them.' I thought of some members of my church, dear to me, who seem to be pillars of it, and I thought, 'What could I do without them?' And then the thought came across my mind, 'God could do without them.' The people of God would still be saved just as well without them if God so pleased. God is enough in Himself, without the addition of any one of His preachers. When He made angels it was not because He wanted them. He could have accomplished His will without the wing of a flaming seraph, and without the voice of a glorious cherub. When He made the stars it was not because He needed them. He was light Himself without the light of sun, stars, or moon. When He made man it was not because He wanted man, it was because He would make him, and for no other reason. There was no necessity for it. He would be the same eternal God were all His creatures dead; and if He were to blot out those lines of wisdom and grace written in the universe, He would be just as glorious and great as ever. And especially in the Gospel ministry God can do without His servants. But this being a dispensation of means, He is not a God acting without means. God does not do without them, though He could if He would. God elected His people without ministers; He did not want any ministers to help Him in that. He redeemed His people without ministers. What great divine could have helped Christ to redeem His people? Tea more, He can, if He please, call His people without ministers; for we know how some have become the subject of grace by the reading of the Word without the assistance of the ministry, and some in the Sabbath school have received the words of eternal life. This should make our pride subside at once. I know it is a great honour, and should comfort us much, to know that God is making use of us; but He could, if He pleased, well enough accomplish His ends and purposes without you and without me. If to-morrow we were laid low in our coffins, and if our people should go out weeping because their pastor was dead, God has other men whom He could raise up; or, if He did not choose to raise other men up, He could perfect His ends without us. And, possibly, there is a time coming when Gospel ministers shall not be wanted; when men shall need no man to say to his brother, 'Know the Lord, for all shall know Him, from the least even to the greatest.' There may be happy days coming, 'when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea'; and when there shall be no need of the messengers upon the mountains to 'make glad the city of our God'; when the sunshine of the Lord shall supplant our poor farthing rushlight, and when Jesus shall 'come in His glory, and all His holy angels with Him'; and we shall have too much to do to stand and admire Him, without standing up to men to preach concerning Him who is present in their midst." The orator went on to show that God would never do without ministers; that so long as there were a people to he gathered in, according to the elective grace of God, there would be those abroad who would gather them in. He then proceeded to say some trenchant things about the true and the false "successors of the apostles":—

"Christ says in the text, 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.' Someone may object and say, 'Yes, but their word signifies the word of the apostles.' Then another person might say, 'Are you the successors of the apostles?' There has been a vast deal of fudge in these days about 'the successors of the apostles.' We have people who pretend to be the successors of the apostles. There are the Roman Catholics; they are the successors of the apostles. But, I think, if Peter and Paul were to come and see their successors, they would think there was a mighty difference between themselves and them. By way of parable, suppose the Virgin Mary, Peter, and Paul should come one Sunday and go to a cathedral; well, when they entered, the Virgin heard them singing something to her honour, and praise, and glory; she jogged Peter, and said, 'What are these people after? they are worshipping me. 'My Son said to me, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" He never worshipped me,' she said; 'let us turn out of this.' They stopped a little longer, and they heard one of them say that the apostle Peter was the head of the Church, and his successor, the Pope, was therefore the head. Peter jogged the Virgin Mary and said, 'What a lie that is; I was never head of the Church at all. Did I not fall into sin? I head of the Church! A pretty head I was.' Soon afterwards Paul heard them preaching justification by works. 'Come out,' said he, 'there is no Gospel here; I preached justification by faith without works, and they are preaching justification by works'; and so, upon that, they all three of them went out. By-and-by they came to a place where they heard them singing, 'Glory, honour, praise, and power be unto the Lamb that sitteth on the throne'; and they heard them speak of those who were 'kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' 'Ah,' said Peter, 'this is the place, and here I will stay.' Those are the successors of the apostles who are like the apostles. Are those the successors of the apostles who take our money from us by force to pay for their religion? Are those the successors of the apostles who go to brother so-and-so's house and take away his table, and his spoon, and his candlestick to pay rates for a religion he does not believe in? I should like to read about a church-rate in Corinth, or about the apostle Paul distraining upon some man in Jerusalem. Such men successors of the apostles! They may be in godliness—for holy men are sometimes very much mistaken—but they are not like the apostles. I say again, those who are like the apostles are their successors; not men who are ashamed to speak to anybody else, because they think they are above them; not those who cannot speak plain words. Oh! have we not some ministers to understand whom you need take a dictionary always to chapel with you? Do you call them the successors of the apostles? Tour judgment answers 'No.' A downright honest man, who speaks what can be understood, who declares God's Gospel in unmeasured terms, as God would have him speak it, he is a successor of the apostles; and it is through their word (the apostles' word, and the successors of the apostles) that men are to be saved. Successors of the apostles! I am as much a successor of the apostles as the Bishop of Bath, the Bishop of London, or the bishop of anywhere else, and perhaps more so. We are all bishops who are called of God, ordained by the Most High. We trace our ordination to the hands of the Almighty, who has put His hands on our head. There will always be successors. The ministry shall never cease till the latest period of time. Never has there been a spiritual night so dark when there have been no stars to illumine it; never a sky so beclouded that the sun could not shine through it. There have always been some lights; and until the latest hour there shall always be some who are girded with the strength of the Omnipotent, and made strong in the mighty God Jehovah; who shall testify their words, which is, after all, God's word, that thereby men shall be saved.

"Now, my dear brothers and sisters, having directed your attention to the fact that we are quite sure God will always have a ministry and always use it; and since a ministry under God is necessary, though He could do without them, what should we do for them? I will tell you what some people say—starve them. Some people have a notion that a minister cannot preach experimental godliness, if he has anything more than £1 a week; and supposing he should have enough to keep himself just the same as his people, he will get ruined—of course he will! He is subject to infirmities like other people, and, therefore, he will naturally get proud. Money in the pocket of a man who sits in a pew is all very just and right; but if it was in the hands of his minister, it would make him worldly; and, therefore, some people try to starve him. I do not say it is so here, or with my people, but it is so in many country villages. Unfortunately, there are many farmers who could afford to give ranch to the cause of God, who, while their servant Betty sits in the gallery, and pays her shilling a quarter for her pew, the master only pays a shilling a quarter, too. The poor girl, renting a pew at a few shillings a year, gives as much to the cause of God as the rich man who has his thousands. He says, 'I pay my pew rent'; but how much is that pew rent? And there are many ministers among the Baptists who do not get much above £30 a year. They manage to make both ends meet, but how they do it I do not know. They have to keep a shop. And then, on Sunday, many will go away and say, 'It was a very poor sermon; there was not much in it; our minister could not have studied it.' How could he, while he had to stand behind the counter? But Christ's ministers give themselves to the work, because they feel they must preach; and they would rather preach on dry bread than be silent. Now, we have formed this Society, just to help them. I can assure you, if any one of our dear friends stood in the position I have occupied for a single year, when you came to cast up your income, if you felt any benevolence, you would have a very little left; indeed, you would have nothing left if you listened to the claims made upon you. Talk about Baptist ministers being overpaid! I am sure they are worse paid than bricklayers' labourers.

"When the Emperor of Russia sent an ambassador here, he used to have a fine house, and everything else. I do not ask for such grandeur for God's ambassadors; but I ask a decent maintenance; and when they have it not, I think we should do something to help them.

"Now, one other thought. If God sends ministers into the world to preach His Gospel, how ill does it become us to hurt them—'He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of Mine eye.' I have always felt very careful about touching a child of God. You know there is nothing puts a man so much on his mettle as to touch his children. I have seen a father calm and placid, and very gentle—someone has touched his children, the father flashed into his face at once. Do what you like; touch my property, or my house, and I may be vexed; but touch my child, and then my fury comes up at once. He cannot stand that. Oh, my friends, a heavy responsibility rests on the heads of some, even of God's people, if you view it in that light. Touch God's people; touch God's chosen; touch God's favourites; touch God's darlings! Oh, let us take heed! We had better suffer one to pass who professes to be a child of God and is not, than that we should treat harshly or unkindly any of those who really are His. And, I think, if there is any difference in the case of gospel ministers, this has a special force. We should, above all, seek not to injure their character by spreading evil reports about them. They will have enough of that from the wicked world. But we had need be tender of them, and plant a hedge around them to protect them in every way. They are the standard-bearers of Christendom; and if the standard-bearer falls, what a disgrace it brings on

everything! We ought to stand by them; pray for them, plead with God for them that He will hold up their hands; for there is very little sympathy and very little kindness in this world."

These extracts will sufficiently show in what light Mr. Spurgeon regarded preaching and preachers. To help this cause ever afforded him keenest pleasure; and many a time has his heart been gladdened by a liberal collection at the Metropolitan Tabernacle for the Particular Baptist Fund.

Reference has already been made to the home mission work undertaken at New Park Street. The day school and missions were in Guildford Street, where larger and convenient premises for the purpose were obtained. In August an excursion of four hundred persons to Rosherville came off, by which a sum of £44 was realised; and on the 9th of November there was a public tea-meeting, at which Mr. Spurgeon presided. Dr. A. Fletcher and others gave addresses; but next to the young pastor himself, the late Judge Payne seems to have been a chief attraction. Just at that time there was a vacancy in the representation of Southwark, and very naturally "the philanthropic barrister," as we find him called, made capital out of that fact. "It had caused much talk, and the question was, who should succeed to the honourable position of M.P.? He thought their chairman (Mr. Spurgeon) was an M.P. already; for he was a Man of Principle, Made on Purpose, to Move the People; a Magnificent Preacher, Marvellously Patient, and Mightily Persevering." Mr. Payne went on to speak of four classes of preachers—"the freezing, the teasing, the pleasing, and the squeezing." Then what about causes and effects? In the pastor he detected juvenility, capability, versatility, and true humility; the effects of which, as seen on that Lord Mayor's day, were "A stirring call, an opening ball, a social greeting, and a glorious meeting." The fact that Mr. Spurgeon thus early engaged in aggressive mission work shows him to have been in hearty sympathy with the ragged-school crusade, of which at that time Lord Shaftesbury was the distinguished leader. Though more squalid than it is now, London had then more novelties to arrest the attention of explorers, and the low-lying quarters on the south side of the Thames had many relics of olden times which have since, in numbers of instances, been improved away. Mint Street, one of the old sanctuaries in which criminals had been wont to retreat, was still one of the notorious plague-spots of London. There the first case of cholera in the terrible outbreak of 1832 had occurred. The Mint was still what one writer had called it—"the land of death, through which the pestilence stalked, like a destroying angel, in the deep shadows of the night, and the open noon of day." Despite its squalidness at the time of Mr. Spurgeon's coming to London, however, the district was one of singular interest. The houses remained just as they had been built two or more centuries before. "There is a smell of past ages about these ancient courts," remarked one writer of the period. "The timber of these old houses looks bleached and dead, and the very brickwork seems to have been never new. In them you find wide, hollow-sounding, decayed staircases, that lead into great ruinous rooms, where echoes are only awakened by the shrieking and running of large black-eyed rats, which eat through the solid floors, through the wainscot, and live and die without being startled by a human voice." The people who inhabited the lower apartments of some of these antique dwellings seemed to be peculiar to their district; and if you had seen them standing at the entrances of their courts to enjoy a view of the outer world of the main thoroughfare, you would not have included them among "the working classes," or with any class at all apart from themselves. Such was the home mission field which in those days may be said to have been attached to the New Park Street Chapel, though others also worked in it. One of the most curious places of its kind in London was the famous Farm House of the Mint, which, as a common lodging-house, had

two hundred beds in its forty rooms. In the great kitchen preachers from Surrey Chapel held services. In the case of Mr. Spurgeon and his people, work similar to that inaugurated at the Guildford Street Hall grew on their hands, until the Metropolitan Tabernacle was surrounded by many such stations. Although times have altered, some of these are still really of the old ragged-school type—such, for example, as the station at Lansdowne Place, in the vicinity of the notorious Kent Street, in the rear of St. George's Church.

Chapter 24

VOLUME TWO

Chapter 25

Surrey Gardens

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Old Surrey Gardens Music Hall

Surrey Gardens Memorial Hall

Chapter 21: Mr Spurgeon and the Patriot

Chapter 21.

Mr. Spurgeon And The Patriot An Extended Review of the Preacher's Life and Work—Characteristics—High Qualities and Shortcomings—A Watch-Night Service at New Park Street Chapel.

The oldest of the London Nonconformist newspapers, The Patriot, appears to have been the first to give any extended notice of Mr. Spurgeon as a preacher, and, on the whole, the opinions expressed of the young pastor were generous and encouraging. The review of his life and work which appeared in the fall of 1855, soon after the visit to Scotland, would fill four columns of The Times.

Some biographical facts having been given, special reference was made to the temptation to infidelity noticed by the preacher himself at Exeter Hall. A very generous estimate is then given of his preaching:—

"We found him neither extravagant nor extraordinary. His voice is clear and musical; his language was plain; his style flowing, yet terse; his method lucid and orderly; his matter sound and suitable; his tone and spirit cordial; his remarks always pithy and pungent, sometimes familiar and colloquial, yet never light or coarse, much less profane. Judging from this single sermon, we supposed that he would become a plain, faithful, forcible, and affectionate preacher of the Gospel in the form called Calvinistic; and our judgment was the more favourable because, while there was a solidity beyond his years, we detected little of the wild luxuriance naturally characteristic of very young preachers." The weekly numbers of The New Park Street Pulpit were now being very widely diffused; and The Patriot reviewer admitted that after a perusal of some of these his opinion of the preacher had become "somewhat modified." In a number of printed discourses, the characteristics of the preacher showed him to be even a more extraordinary man than had at first been supposed; but, at the same time, he was not quite so far removed "from extravagance" as had been thought. This was not mentioned "with a view to criticism," however; for "there would be little use in pointing out the faults and errors of a public speaker so absolutely independent of opinion." According to his own confession, Mr. Spurgeon was not over-scrupulous about the means he used for doing good. He had told the people of Scotland that they did not understand him—"Why, bless your hearts, I would preach standing on my head, if I thought I could convert your souls, rather than preach on my feet. I am not very particular about how I preach." Then "that ranting fellow," as some called him, had said, "My motto is Cedo Nulli—I yield to none. I have not courted any man's love; I asked no man to attend my ministry; I preach what I like, when I like, and as I like." He refused to be bound by any rules of art, so that while he was evidently free from conceit, the critic had to take such a preacher as he found him, and to value him for what he was. This was fair; but the critic may possibly have made a mistake in too readily accepting Mr. Spurgeon's own too humble estimate of himself—an estimate which in some measure may have accounted for the opinion getting abroad that he had burst upon the world without education or proper equipment for

his lifework. "Recollect who I am, and what I am," he had said: "a child having little education, little learning, ability, or talent." Without the Spirit of God he declared himself to be unable to speak. "I have not those gifts which qualify men to speak; I need an afflatus from on high; otherwise, I stand like other men, and have nought to say." He would not have spoken like this at a later date, and when it was spoken, it was probably misunderstood. Despite his own lowly opinion of himself, The Patriot detected his originality:—

"From whatever cause it springs, whether from force of native character, or from a vigour superinduced upon that basis by the grace of God, there is that in Mr. Spurgeon's reported sermons which marks him a superior man. Models of different styles of preaching are so numerous, that originality must be of rare occurrence; but he appears to be an original genius. To the pith of Jay and the plainness of -Rowland Hill, he adds much of the familiarity, not to say the coarseness, of the Huntingtonian order of ultra-Calvinistic preachers. 'It has been my privilege,' he says, 'to give more prominence in the religious world to those old doctrines of the Gospel.' But the traits referred to present themselves in shapes and with accompaniments which forbid the notion of imitation, and favour the opinion of a peculiar bent. Neither in the style and structure, nor in handling, is there appearance of art, study, or elaboration. Yet each discourse has a beginning, a middle, and an end; and the subject is duly introduced and stated, divided and discussed, enforced and applied. But all is done without effort, with the ease and freedom of common conversation, and with the artlessness, but also with the force, of spontaneous expression. 'This,' he says, 'I am sure of: I tell you all I know, and speak right on. I am no orator, but just tell you what springs up from my heart.' 'Speak, my heart!' he exclaims in another place, 'for heart-thoughts are the best thoughts.'" In his early days, Mr. Spurgeon was persistently accused of being an egotist; but in the eyes of The Patriot this reproach is toned down to "characteristic references to his own history, feelings, and habits." This is a true representation of the case; and any careful reader of the early sermons and other utterances might, collect sufficient to give a tolerably full portraiture of the man as he then lived and worked. Thus we find him, as The Patriot went on to show, speaking of the delight he found in reading old books, and his almost total disregard of new ones—a disregard which was certainly given up in later years. Then we find him confessing that he was almost wholly indebted to the Bible for the discipline of his mental faculties. Christ was his Sun; and in his quaint way he advised his hearers to allow other acquirements only to revolve as satellites around that centre. Mount Calvary was the place for a young man to build either his studio or observatory. It was thus early, moreover, that he made the confession that formerly he had his knowledge in "glorious confusion," but now everything was in its place ready for use when called for or wanted. His great facility for borrowing illustrations from nature, books, and all things around him, is also taken notice of; and that of course, in its way, showed the bent of a peculiar genius. Attention is drawn to the less attractive characteristics of the preacher's style, and this is how The Patriot refers to them:—

"Sometimes, no doubt, he lapses into a rude colloquialism bordering upon coarseness. 'If,' he observes, 'I were to preach nothing but what would please the whole lot of you, what on earth should I do?' The questionable colloquialism in the second clause occurs more than once or twice; and, what is worse still, such appeals as 'Good God!' and 'By Heaven!' At the same time that he insists upon preaching that only which he believes true and fit, he declares himself to have no fear that 'an honest British audience will turn away from the man who does not stick, and stutter, and

stammer in speaking the truth.' In citing the following as a specimen of his sayings, justice requires the acknowledgment that appropriations so little felicitous are extremely rare:—'I should like to take you this morning, as Samson did the foxes, tie the firebrands of prayer to you, and send you in among the shocks of corn till you burn the whole up.'" By way of contrast to this, many things are quoted which show "a high degree of eloquence"; and it is admitted that the sermons abound with aphorisms and pointed sayings, many of them quaint, and all of them having the genuine mark of genius upon them. Some passages are given at length, and all are more or less powerful. The review comes to a close by enumerating certain shortcomings. Mr. Spurgeon was not thought to be sufficiently tolerant towards those who differed from him, and his habit of judging others was held to be both "unlovely and presumptuous." The reviewer proceeds:—

"If asked who is fortunate enough to escape his sarcasm and invective, we should really be at a loss to answer. All, in turn, come under the lash of the precocious tyro. He alone is a consistent Calvinist; all besides are either rank Arminians, licentious Antinomians, or unfaithful professors of the doctrines of grace. College training does but wean young men's sympathies from the people; and 'really ploughmen would make a great deal better preachers.' The doctrine of election is, 'in our age, scorned and hated.' 'The time-serving religion of the present day' is 'only exhibited in evangelical drawing-rooms.' 'How many pious preachers are there on the Sabbath-day who are very impious preachers during the rest of the week!' He 'never hears' his brother ministers 'assert the positive satisfaction and substitution of our Lord Jesus Christ.' These fishers of men 'have been spending all their life fishing with most elegant silk lines and gold and silver hooks, but the fish will not bite for all that; whereas we of the rougher sort,' adds the self-complacent censor, 'have put the hook into the jaws of hundreds.' Still 'rougher,' if possible, is Mr. Spurgeon's treatment of theologians not of his own especial school. 'Arminian perversions, in particular, are to sink back to their birthplace in the pit.' Their notion of the possibility of a final fall from grace is 'the wickedest falsehood on earth.' Mr. Spurgeon was quite at liberty to uphold the comfortable and Scriptural doctrine of the final perseverance of the true believer with all his might; but this was possible without indulging, as he has indulged, in vituperation of opponents more gross than any words we have quoted. Nor, to any right-minded man, Arminian or Calvinist, will it be a compensation that he has dealt with the Antinomians just as bitterly. To the erring professor who conceives himself to be a child of God because he is in trouble, he replies, 'I know a great many rascals in the same condition.' He is too charitable, however, when he ascribes Antinomian licentiousness to a perversion of the Gospel; for it is attributable more correctly to the substitution of 'another Gospel.' But these are subjects on which we cannot enlarge, or we might point out several mistakes into which Mr. Spurgeon's doctrinal zeal has betrayed him. We therefore take our leave of him with this admonition—to cultivate more assiduously the modest spirit of which, after all, he is far from destitute; to remember his own youth and inexperience; to reflect upon the inconsistency of complaining that he is himself subject to hostile animadversion, when he deals wholesale in sweeping censure of ministerial brethren older and more experienced than himself; and, in fine, to bear in mind his own very just remark, that 'John Knox did much, but he might, perhaps, have done more if he had had a little love'—that love which 'thinketh no evil.'" As one of the first and one of the ablest notices of Mr. Spurgeon's life and work which appeared in the Nonconformist Press, the lengthened article in The Patriot, from which the above extracts are taken, attracted much notice at the time. On the whole, this seems to have been written without prejudice, and the writer showed an honest desire to recognise the more extraordinary qualities of

the young preacher which accounted for his popularity, although what were regarded as weaknesses were at the same time candidly mentioned. Every great man has some flaws of character, or he would not be human; but probably some of the things complained of in Mr. Spurgeon would not have been so apparent if at the outset he had been less exposed to detraction and misrepresentation. On the last night of the year 1855, New Park Street Chapel was densely crowded at the watch-night service. Mr. Spurgeon expounded the first twelve verses of Psalm xc.; he also preached a sermon from Lam 2:19—"Arise, cry out in the night," etc. At two minutes to twelve the preacher stopped in his discourse and asked all to engage in silent prayer. It was altogether a striking scene, and one which some who were present still remember. The occasion appears to have been taken advantage of for preaching the Gospel, and many penitents are said to have been present at this midnight service. The watch-night service was not then so popular an institution as it is now; but, as Mr. Spurgeon explained, he was ready to preach the Gospel at any hour. The crowded assembly might have been called a prayer-meeting, for others beside the pastor prayed; and very fervent were the petitions for a prosperous time during the year 1856. How little did pastor or people know what was before them! The great and comprehensive work in hand would assuredly extend in all directions; but times of fiery trial were also near, when the work and the workers would be tested in no ordinary way.

Chapter 22: Marriage--Interest In Sunday School Work

Chapter 22.

Marriage.—Interest In Sunday-School Work

Mr. Spurgeon marries Miss Thompson—Scene in New Park Street Chapel—A Sunday-School Teachers' Entertainment—First Volume of the Weekly Sermons—Estimate of The Freeman—"Why so Popular?"—A Doctor's Brochure.

The first sermon which Mr. Spurgeon preached in New Park Street Chapel in 1856 was founded on the text which had been instrumental in his own conversion at Colchester some years before—"Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth"—Isa 45:22. Particular reference was made by the preacher to his experience on that ever-memorable Sunday which has already been described. In the old days of Highbury College, which was a favourite seat of education when Mr. Spurgeon was a little boy at Stambourne, Mr. Thomas Wilson, the treasurer, was accustomed to advise the students not to think of getting "engaged" as students, because no woman worth having would think of accepting a man before it was seen what kind of a position he would be likely to occupy in the world. Though he married young, Mr. Spurgeon practically acted on this advice; for when he came to London he appears to have had no experience whatever in the art of love-making. At that time there happened to be living in Falcon Square one Mr. Robert Thompson; and it was a member of the Olney family who first called the young pastor's attention to the worth of Susannah, the only daughter, who became Mrs. C. H. Spurgeon on Tuesday, January 8, 1856. When the American Dr. Wayland was in this country, and visited Westwood some years ago, he heard facts relative to this matter which are of general interest. He had some things told him which had reference to the first time that Mr. Spurgeon ever preached in London. According to Dr. Wayland, "on that Sunday morning there were perhaps eighty persons present. The deacons had made a great effort to get people out, so as to swell the audience. One of the deacons went to a young lady and said, 'Do come on Sunday; there will be a young man from the country, and we do want to make as much of a show as we can.' The young lady went and saw the young man from the country, and heard him preach. She told me this herself; she has seen him a good many times since; and, in fact, a couple of years later, she took him for good and all; and what a blessing she has been to him and to the world only eternity can tell." The marriage service was conducted by Dr. Alexander Fletcher, of Finsbury Chapel, and the entire scene was as singular as anything of the kind ever witnessed. "Shortly after eight o'clock, although the morning was dark, damp, and cold, as many as five hundred ladies, in light and gay attire, besieged the doors of the chapel, accompanied by many gentlemen, members of the congregation and personal friends. From that hour the crowd increased so rapidly that the thoroughfare was blocked up against vehicles and pedestrians, and a body of the M division of police had to be sent for to prevent accidents. When the chapel doors were opened, there was a terrific rush, and in less than half an hour the doors were closed upon many eager visitors, who, like the earlier and more fortunate comers, were favoured with tickets of admission." According to one report, some two thousand people braved

the raw January atmosphere in hope of getting inside the chapel and failed. Dr. Fletcher is said to have been especially fervent in prayer on behalf of the young couple, after which the congregation sang with great heartiness the hymn, "Salvation, O the joyful sound!" The young couple went off followed by the good wishes of all who were assembled in the chapel; but their honeymoon tour was really little more than a flying visit to the Continent. Twelve days later, on Sunday, January 20, the pastor was again preaching in New Park Street Chapel. Was it through the preacher's being in a more than usually happy state of mind that he gave a sermon on the Beatific Vision? On Sunday morning, February 10, 1856, Mr. Spurgeon preached at New Park Street on behalf of the Particular Baptist Fund, which had then existed in London for one hundred and thirty-nine years. The object of the Fund is the relief of aged, infirm, or necessitous ministers; but a sum of £400 is annually voted for the education of students, while numerous grants of books are made every year to a number of young pastors who are just commencing their course. Mr. Spurgeon made a strong appeal for contributions; but his faith that nothing would really be lacking was reflected in the text on which his sermon was founded—"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing"—Psa 34:10. On the following evening Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon were the guests of the teachers of the New Park Street Sunday-school, who now rejoiced in a new schoolroom. The object was to do honour to the pastor and his bride; for as a former teacher himself, Mr. Spurgeon had all along, since his first coming to London, manifested the warmest interest in the work of the Sunday-school. Great enthusiasm prevailed; and, anxious to appear at their best on such an occasion, the teachers had spared neither pains nor expense to make the entertainment a success. The provision was all of the best, while the choicest flowers and plants which the greenhouse could supply adorned the tables. After tea, Mr. Cutler, the superintendent, presented the pastor with a proof impression of an engraving of the picture, "Liberty of Conscience," representing the Assembly of Divines at Westminster in the seventeenth century. Several speeches having been made, one by Mr. Spurgeon himself, the company adjourned to the chapel, where the weekly prayer-meeting was held. Nearly all the congregation afterwards passed through the schoolroom to view the picture and to express their admiration. The pastor's zeal for the Sunday-school cause was not confined to his own congregation. One sermon published about this time, and entitled "Come, ye children," was preached on behalf of the Western Kent Sunday-school Union; and another, entitled "A Visit to Calvary," was given at Hanover Square Rooms on behalf of a ragged-school in the locality. According to a contemporary reviewer, the latter "is highly characteristic of this popular preacher, whose earnestness and power in preaching Mr. Howard Hinton, a few days since, commended as a study to an assembly of Baptist preachers educated at the several collegiate institutions belonging to our denomination."

Passages from this discourse would sufficiently show that the young pastor still had his heart in Sunday-school work, and that he spoke with all the force of one who understood from actual experience what he was talking about. The first volume of the sermons, issued weekly, had appeared; and the preface shows the varied feelings with which the experiment had been regarded by persons in different quarters. The preacher had been unduly praised and unmercifully abused; but he professes to be invulnerable to detraction on account of the service the discourses had rendered in bringing about conversions. When he looked abroad in the dark world, and saw what was being achieved by means of the wide diffusion of the sermons, the preacher was not only comforted, he had the kind of answer to adverse critics he most desired. Mr. Spurgeon happened to go and see a suffering bed-ridden woman, who had lain for ten years without any

ability to rise, and when she confessed to having been brought from darkness to light, and declared that for nine years the sermons week by week had been as marrow and fatness to her soul, the young pastor thought that the printers had abundant cause for encouragement, as well as the preacher himself. At the time the first volume of sermons preached at Exeter Hall and New Park Street appeared, the Baptist newspaper, The Freeman, had been in existence about a year, and the paper had been conducted in a way which reflected some literary credit on the denomination, though many thought that in theology the editors were rather broad. In reviewing the volume the writer felt that he laboured under certain difficulties which could not be ignored; for while venturing to give a candid opinion, there was some risk of seeming to favour those who were reported to be decrying the preacher, or otherwise dealing out to him unjust treatment. Nevertheless, at all hazards, an honest verdict would be given "in the spirit of Christian charity."

It was admitted that since such great orators as Robert Hall, Thomas Chalmers, and Edward Irving had gone home, no modern preacher had made such a sensation as Mr. Spurgeon; but no one was to suppose that the pastor at New Park Street was one of the same class. "Whatever Mr. Spurgeon's merits may be—and he has some rare ones—they are of a very different order from those which distinguished the mighty preachers of the last generation. They were all men of gigantic reasoning powers, of refined taste, of profound scholarship, and of vast theological learning. Of all these qualities Mr. Spurgeon has little enough; nor, to do him justice, does he pretend to any of them, except, perhaps, in some unlucky moments to the last. But it will probably be admitted by all competent judges, that neither Irving nor Hall, nor even Chalmers, was so well fitted to carry the Gospel to the poor as is this modern orator of the pulpit. Their writings will last for many generations, and will be as fresh to the latest as they are today; Mr. Spurgeon's sermons will, perhaps, soon be forgotten for ever."

Still, it was allowed that the preacher showed the possession of undoubted genius; for a strong imagination, an easy colloquial manner, and ardent enthusiasm, were all so well combined that no one could hear him "without acquiring for him a sentiment of respect." Of course, something had to be said concerning those "thoughtful" people who are always so sensitive and so discerning:—

"If offended by his extravagances, as the thoughtful certainly will be, the offence is so immediately atoned for by some genuine outburst of feeling, that you remember that his extravagances are but the errors of a youth, and that the material on which these excrescences appear is that out of which apostles and martyrs have, in every age, been fashioned. You pardon his follies, for they are nothing else, for the sake of his unquestionable sincerity and impassioned zeal. You wish that it had been possible that a mind so gifted might have received more culture before it was called into its present dangerous position; but finding it as it is, you accept it with gratitude, and pray God, the All-wise, to be its guide and protector." The Freeman not only rejoiced in the young preacher's success, it was hoped that this would be "prolonged and increased"; but his faults, as they appeared to this critic, were freely pointed out. Mere blemishes of style, or offences against good taste, such as "fluent eloquence rushing into rant," or "imaginative flights that sometimes soar so high that they only reach sublimity and fall on 't'other side,'" were passed by. The faults had in view "were rather moral than intellectual, and need the more to be corrected, because they else will grow more palpable and grievous with the lapse of time." They would be sources of weakness, and if indulged persistently, would "prove disastrous to the last degree."

It is instructive, after the lapse of nearly forty years, to have the preacher's shortcomings pointed out by a friendly adviser, who when most severe proposed to speak in charity. What were these faults—real or imaginary?

"Perhaps, indeed, we should be right in summing them up all in one—the vice of vanity; for they all seem to spring from this fruitful root. This may originate his daring method of expounding Holy Writ, his intense egotism, and his habit of decrying his fellow-Christians and fellow-ministers. And these, we fear, are the illegitimate attractions which help to swell his popularity; though we sincerely believe that Mr. Spurgeon would be the first himself to rebuke the followers who loved him for such faults. It is amusing, but it is also painful, to hear a young man of twenty-one speaking of his experience as it he had lived threescore years and ten. Surely some sort of glamour must invest him when he says, 'I have always found through life,' or his audience would burst into a titter; but it is far worse to find him denouncing Arminians (whose creed he evidently does not understand) in almost every sermon.... It is sad to see so young a men so deeply imbued with the odium theologium.... If, already, he can not only preach but print mere vulgar abuse of men who, in the sight of God, may be as sincere as he, and as holy, to what lengths of ribaldry may he not descend when he finds that this knack of 'cordially hating' brings around him a crowd of fulsome flatterers?"

Such was the opinion of a very candid friend who thought it his duty to utter cautions or warnings as well as to give commendation. There were undoubtedly in Volume I. of the Sermons some things, or modes of expression, which Mr. Spurgeon himself might have altered had he ever carried out the design he once formed of revising his early discourses. The doctrines are identical with those of later years, however; and there were hardly so many breakers ahead as the candid critic of The Freeman supposed.

Meanwhile, many still professed to be puzzled on account of Spurgeon's unique popularity. Just about this time a certain Doctor in Divinity published a brochure on the subject of the hour, and apparently settled matters to his own satisfaction, while offering what he considered to be some very necessary advice. The doctor was not so candidly severe as is the critic in The Freeman. "Lend me a chair, my honoured brother," remarks this worthy, "that, sitting at your side, I may discharge the duty and enjoy the privilege of presenting my warm congratulations on the ministerial eminence to which divine Providence has so speedily raised you; accompanied with such paternal counsels as a knowledge of that position—as full of peril as it is of honour—may suggest."

Having introduced himself in this cordial manner, the worthy doctor comes at once to the subject of his young friend's popularity:—

"Your ministry has attained the dignity of a moral phenomenon; you stand on an eminence which, since the days of Whitefield, no minister—with a single exception, if, indeed, there be one—of any church in this realm has attained. You have access to a larger audience than the magic of any other name can gather; you have raised a church from dignity to eminence—perhaps I might add (rumour is my authority) from spiritual indigence to affluence. You entered on a sphere where, to use the mildest word, languor 'held unbroken Sabbath'; and in less than three short years you have, instrumentally, gathered a large, united, zealous, energetic church, second in numbers, in burning zeal, and in active effort, to no other church in the metropolis. 'The little one has become a

thousand, and the small one a great' congregation." So much for work at home; but the pastor of New Park Street had become as great a favourite as an evangelist in the provinces as the greatest of the Revival preachers of the eighteenth century. The doctor proceeds:—

"Blessed with a vigorous mind, and with great physical energy—mens sana in corpore sano—you have consecrated all to your Master's service, and hence you have become an untiring evangelist. East, west, north, south—in England, Wales, and Scotland, your preaching is appreciated by the people, and has been blessed of God. No place has been large enough to receive the crowds who flocked to hear 'the young Whitefield'; and on many occasions you have preached the glorious Gospel, the sward of the green earth being the floor on which, and the vault of the blue heaven the canopy under which, you announced, to uncounted thousands, 'all the words of this life.' Your name has thus become familiar 'as a household word' in most of the churches and many of the families of our land; and the young pastor of Southwark has taken his place among the celebrities of our land, and among the ecclesiastical portion of them he is 'higher than the highest.'"

Having made these concessions, which, were obvious truths to all observers, the doctor goes on to offer his congratulations on far higher ground; he takes account of the actual results of Mr. Spurgeon's preaching:—

"Usefulness is the law of the moral universe. This, in relation to the Christian ministry, means the moral renovation, the saving conversion, of human souls. Nothing short of this can satisfy the desires of any 'godly minister of Christ's Gospel'; and, therefore, all such will estimate the amount of their success by the number of well-sustained instances of conversion, which are the fruit, under God's blessing, of their ministerial labours. Subjected to this test, the ministry of him to whom my congratulations are now presented is placed above all the ministries with which I have any acquaintance, or of which I possess any authentic information. He states—so I am informed—that more than one thousand souls have been hopefully converted to God during the past year by the instrumentality of his ministry; and that, as the result of his metropolitan and provincial labours during the period of his short but successful pastorate, several thousands who had erred from the truth, or never known it, had been raised or restored to holiness and God. 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.' I know something of the state of religion in the British churches, and I do not hesitate to avow my belief that among the thousands—and happily their name is legion—who now Sabbatically proclaim the fundamental verities of the Christian revelation, there is not one who can truthfully say, as you can, that during three short years thousands, as the fruit of his ministry, have been added to the fellowship of his own church and of other churches." To the mind of the writer these facts were sufficiently singular, and they appear to have been more so the more deeply they were studied. The preacher was only just turned twenty-one; he had no high social standing and no exceptional educational advantages; he had no college distinctions; his only Gamaliel had been his own father; and yet in the metropolis of England, or of the world, the youthful preacher could draw a larger audience than the Archbishop of Canterbury could ever hope to do. That seemed to be a fact for which no moral casuist could satisfactorily account. As, however, every effect must have a cause, it might be possible to throw some light on the subject. The doctor asks his young brother, "How shall we account for your acceptance and success as a minister of Christ?" and then proceeds:—

"In your ministerial career you are subjected to not only the hostile attacks of the malevolent and prejudiced, but to the unintentional mistakes of the virtuous and wise. Keeping all your detractors before the mental eye, let me examine their statements so far as I know them. I ask one, 'Why is he so popular?' He answers, 'You have a large amount of dramatic genius, a melodious voice, and great eloquence as an orator.' But we more than hesitate to accept this explanation. No dramatic genius, no popular eloquence, no melodious harmony has ever done this in the past history of human nature. Macaulay, Garrick, Jenny Lind, Rachel, Gough, have not done it. The theatre must change its 'star' monthly, the singer must emigrate to other climes, and the orator must make 'angel visits few and far between,' to secure the audiences which the charm of your name will surely and speedily convene. And the phenomenon is more remarkable because your gathering is around the pulpit, where no art wins and no pleasure stimulates. I bear you witness, that judging by your published sermons, I know no minister who more emphatically denounces—and few, if any, who so emphatically denounce—the vitiated tastes, the degraded sensualities, and the immoral practices of our country and age. If we connected popularity with a desire to pander to a vitiated public taste, you are almost—if not altogether—the last minister in England whom I would expect to secure popular applause. You not only condemn sin, you do it emphatically, and con amore. 'But,' says another, 'he is so original—not in manner alone, but even in matter—that his originality is popular.' I know something, my friend, of the theology of those sainted men—now with God—with whose writings you are equally, probably better acquainted than I am; and I do not hesitate to say that your theological opinions harmonise substantially with those of Gill and Toplady, of Hervey and Romaine; and that in the tone and texture of that theology I find nothing to account, to my satisfaction, for their or for your popularity." But perhaps Mr. Spurgeon himself might have an answer to give, if plainly asked to account for his popularity and usefulness. The doctor felt sure that he would reply, "I am nothing; God is all; and to His sovereignty I ascribe all my popularity and all my success." That was very becoming, and so on; but at the same time it was not a sufficient explanation. Though God acted in His sovereign right, He never acted without reason. It might not be always discernible, but there always was a reason. How, then, was the thing to be accounted for?

"If I cannot discover the secret of your popularity in what you preach, can I find it in any peculiarity in your mode of preaching? Here is, in my judgment, the explanation of the secret. You have strong faith, and as the result, intense earnestness. In this lies, as in the hair of Samson, the secret of your power." The doctor then exhorted the young preacher to remain steadfast in the faith, and to go on preaching the Old Gospel as he had begun. In that case, "What a glorious prospect of honour, happiness, and usefulness presents itself to your view!" it was added. "A star in the churches; a star of no mean magnitude, of no ordinary brilliancy, you may be honoured to diffuse, very luminously, the derived glories you possess; and having run your appointed course, ultimately set—but far distant be the day!—as sets the morning star—

"'Which falls not down behind the darkened west, Nor hides obscured amid the tempests of the sky, But melts away into the light of heaven.'"

Utterances of this kind have a curious interest to readers in these days; and they bear emphatic testimony to the extraordinary popularity of the young pastor in those early times, when he had been labouring in London hardly more than two years. At this time he was making friends faster than had previously been the case; and this would be the natural result of such genial and

ably-written apologies for Mr. Spurgeon as now from time to time appeared. He was seen to be wearing well, and that was a sure sign of sterling metal. It was becoming also more apparent that there was no self-seeking in his preaching; for notwithstanding his many engagements from home, the preacher himself, at the end of his third year in London, found himself many pounds out of pocket on account of travelling expenses and other necessary expenditure.

Chapter 23: The "Rivulet" Controversy

Chapter 23.

"The Rivulet" Controversy

Origin of the Dispute—Thomas Toke Lynch—James Grant and The Morning Advertiser—Dr. Campbell—Mr. Spurgeon speaks in The Christian Cabinet—Mr. Lynch's Reply—Results of the Controversy.

The Rivulet" controversy, which belongs to this period, was so far associated with Mr. Spurgeon that he was one of the combatants, so that no biography of our great preacher would be complete without a chapter devoted to this "passage-at-arms" in the theological field, which once shook the religious world in a way which now excites one's wonder as one looks back upon it. It is not necessary to enter into such a matter at length; it will suffice to state succinctly the main facts as illustrating the part which Mr. Spurgeon himself took in the dispute. In November, 1855, appeared a small volume entitled "Hymns for Heart and Voice, The Rivulet." The author, Thomas Toke Lynch, was pastor of a chapel in Grafton Street, the congregation being a small one. Born in 1818, he was still hardly more than a young man; he had become known as a contributor to the monthly magazine, The Christian Spectator; but the poetical pieces which created such a furoreh had been composed during a time of domestic affliction in 1854, and some succeeding months. It is said that the author found much solace in the work of composition. The volume did not attract any extraordinary notice until the review by Mr. James Grant appeared in The Morning Advertiser. In that article the writer admitted, as he no doubt considered with generous frankness, that Mr. Lynch was amiable, intellectual, cultivated, and was even largely imbued with the poetic spirit; but at the same time the work was calculated to inspire sadness in the minds of those who knew in what true religion consisted. Mr. James Grant then continued:—

"It is with regret and pain we are compelled to say that, though the volume in many places displays much fine feeling, there is not, from beginning to end, one particle of vital religion or evangelical piety in it. At least, if there be, we have not been able to discover it. Occasionally—but even that is comparatively seldom—the name of the Saviour is introduced; but there is not one solitary recognition of His divinity, of His atoning sacrifice, or of His mediatorial office. Neither is the inherent depravity of man, nor the agency of the Spirit in the work of conversion and sanctification, even indirectly recognised from the first to the last page of the volume. Nearly the whole might have been written by a Deist; and a very large portion of the Hymns might be sung by a congregation of Freethinkers.... The hymns of Watts, of Doddridge, of Hart, of Cowper, of Newton, of Montgomery, and others, have, in innumerable instances, proved the source of unspeakable consolation to believers in seasons of sorrow, and on the bed of death; but what a cruel mockery it would be to put into the hands of believers, in such circumstances, such a book as this, or to repeat to them any of its verses! The author, if such were his pleasure, had a perfect right to pen and publish the contents of this volume; but, then, instead of palming them off as 'Christian Poems,' which he expressly does in his preface, he should have given them their proper character

of mere tributes to the beauties and beneficence of Nature; or, if he liked the expression better, as endeavours to 'look through Nature up to Nature's God.'"

Referring to this review, the biographers of Dr. Campbell remark: "Such is the marrow of that criticism which gave rise to 'The Rivulet' controversy." They speak of the dispute in a dispassionate common-sense manner, like Christian men whose literary training sufficed to preserve them from violence in expression either on one side or the other. In this respect Drs. Ferguson and Morton Brown set a more worthy example to writers who, after the noise and smoke of battle have passed away, seem desirous of reviving some of the worst phases of "The Rivulet" controversy itself. It is conceivable that Dr. Campbell, of The British Banner, and James Grant, of The Morning Advertiser, may have made mistakes, but that they were bad—ignorant and unscrupulous—no one less than a far-gone fanatic on the other side could ever suppose. The first to reply to Mr. Grant's notice of "The Rivulet" was The Eclectic Review, which in former years had been associated with the honoured names of Robert Hall and John Foster. Just at this time The Eclectic had a new editor, which probably occasioned the opinions put forth to be looked upon with the greater misgiving. In due course The Morning Advertiser reviewed the notice in The Eclectic, and then, in answer to this, the latter published a protest signed by more than a dozen of the leading Nonconformist ministers. "This was a new feature in the case—a new feature, indeed, in relation to reviewing," remark the biographers of Dr. Campbell. "Here was a rush into the field of a whole band of helpers to overpower the opinion and to condemn the condemnation of one man." Of course, Mr. Grant, as the chief of a great daily newspaper, was not to be easily suppressed. He republished the Protest, and made remarks upon it, and, after quoting some of the hymns, asked certain of the Protesters whether they would give out such pieces to be sung by their congregations. As the body of Protesters included such men as Henry Allon, Newman Hall, and Thomas Binney, the commotion increased.

Dr. Campbell was the last of the Nonconformist editors to enter into the fray; but when he did speak the excitement greatly increased. There was no indecision or hesitation: "The Rivulet," taken as a whole, was "the most unspiritual publication of the kind in the English language." The doctor published "Seven Letters," and addressing these to the "Principals and Professors of the Independent and Baptist Colleges of England," he insisted that there was less of distinctive evangelical truth in Mr. Lynch's pieces than in the hymns used by the Unitarians.

Mr. Spurgeon had something to say on the controversy, and though he may have made passing references to the subject in speaking or preaching, his chief utterances concerning the matter were given through The Christian Cabinet, for which, as already explained, the pastor of New Park Street Chapel wrote pretty regularly through friendship for his friend Mr. Charles Waters Banks. Unhappily for itself, The Cabinet appears to have reviewed "The Rivulet" favourably before Mr. Spurgeon undertook to examine the matter for himself, with very different results. Hence we find Mr. Lynch remarking, "The Cabinet is getting now a little more self-consistent. Its conduct towards me has been ridiculous; but wishing it, under its new management, more wisdom, I can heartily wish it, as wiser, a good success." Mr. Lynch himself thus refers to the part which Mr. Spurgeon took in this dispute:—

"Amongst the oddities of this controversy, the conduct of The Christian Cabinet deserves a word or two. Did the reader ever hear of The Christian Cabinet? Truly it is a cabinet not without

curiosities. It is a little penny journal, just big enough to make a paper boat of to swim for a moment's sport, and then perish. The wind is very inconstant, but not so variable as this paper, which, indeed, changes its mind, like the wind its direction, without any very discoverable reason. On December 28, 1855, just after the appearance of 'The Rivulet,' its opinion was that the volume abounded with passages adapted 'to brighten and exhilarate the mind—to recover it when it is losing the proper tone of feeling, to exalt it with happy, holy thoughts—to clothe the waste and desolate places of the soul with fruitfulness and verdure, and prepare it for doing brave battle amidst the trials and discouragements of daily life.' The Cabinet quoted three hymns in illustration of these sentiments, and concluded, as well it might, by cordially wishing the volume a wide circulation.' But on March 21 The Cabinet discovered that it had never seen the volume, and on May 16 called it 'a little penny rattle of rhymery by one Mr. Lynch.' This was somewhat of a descent both for it and me. However, when things get to the worst, they begin to mend. So on May 23 out came 'Mine opinion,' that is to say, Mr. Spurgeon's opinion, which was communicated to the world through this important organ. Mr. Spurgeon acknowledged that he could 'scarce see into the depths where lurked the essence of the matter.' 'Perhaps the hymns,' said he, 'are not the fair things that they seem.' He saw enough in the 'glistering eyes' of the mermaids to suspect they might have a fishy body and a snaky tail. But he confessed that he did not see the said tail. In fact, it lay too deep for him to see, or for anybody else. This review of Mr. Spurgeon's enjoys the credit with me of being the only thing on his side—that is, against me—that was impertinent, without being malevolent. It evinced far more ability and appreciation than Grant or Campbell had done, and indicated a man whose eyes, if they do not get blinded with the fumes of that strong, but unwholesome, incense, Popularity, may glow with a heavenlier brightness than it seems to me they have yet done. Mr. Spurgeon concluded by remarking that 'the old faith must be triumphant,' in which I entirely agree with him, doubting only whether he is yet old enough in experience of the world's sorrows and strifes to know what the old faith really is. He says, 'We shall soon have to handle truth not with kid gloves, but with gauntlets—the gauntlets of holy courage and integrity.' Ay, that we shall, and some of us now do. And, perhaps, the man who has a soul that 'fights to music,'

'Calm 'mid the bewildering cry, Confident of victory,'

is the likeliest to have a hand with a grip for battle, and a grasp for friendship alike strong and warm. Mr. Spurgeon spoke on May 23; and now in October The Cabinet scarce knows what to think. A week or two ago it compared me to Apollos, and recommended Priscilla and Aquila to invite me to tea, and 'teach me the way of the Lord more perfectly.' And in the last number that I have seen, it expresses a hope that I 'shall turn out well.' I am sure I hope I shall, and that soon, and the controversy too, for time loiters not." As the controversy widened, "The Rivulet," which had started the disputants, was no doubt in the main lost sight of, and the battle centred around the standards of orthodoxy and negative theology. Thus, the controversy, on the whole, had the effect of clearing the air, the general result being, as one authority tells us, "an untold amount of good to the Church of God," Neither the severe criticism nor the abuse was confined to one side; but it is pleasant to find that many of the combatants who were at open war afterwards became good friends. In a general way the bulk of these would probably have united in confessing that good had come to the churches all round. In common with Dr. Campbell and Mr. Grant, Mr. Spurgeon desired nothing different from this; they sought neither fame nor aggrandisement by what they did.

Hence, when they found that truth had been the gainer by what they had done, these leaders must have felt themselves compensated for all their pains. "I am able to testify that the agitation has proved a mighty impetus to the ministry," said one; "the cardinal elements of the Gospel have had more prominence than for many years." In some instances it appeared that the ministry itself had been revived. "Never did I feel so concerned clearly and unmistakably to set forth the atoning sacrifice of Christ in all its fulness as now," wrote one preacher; while another added, "Emerging from painful discussions, we shall enter on new and united plans of Christian usefulness." The gain was on the side of truth.

Chapter 24: James Grant And Other Friends

Chapter 24.

James Grant And Other Friends The Morning Advertiser defends Mr. Spurgeon—James Grant's early Life—A general Criticism—Jubilee Services at Stambourne—Exeter Hall and New Park Street Chapel—An unfulfilled Prophecy.

The late Mr. James Grant was one of Mr. Spurgeon's earliest friends in London; and as editor of The Morning Advertiser, which, at that time ranked next to The Times among the daily papers of the metropolis, he was able to exercise a powerful and widespread influence. Mr. Grant's journal was probably the first newspaper which cordially recognised the abilities of the young pastor, or which undertook to offer him advice under the name of impartial criticism. As the veteran editor's name may several times occur in the course of the life-story which still remains to be told, a few facts about him will enable the reader the better to understand why he so closely identified himself with the cause which Mr. Spurgeon had at heart.

James Grant was a native of Elgin in Scotland, and he was quite thirty years the senior of the pastor at New Park Street, for whom he at once contracted a strong liking because they were agreed in theology. Mr. Grant commenced to write for London papers as early as 1820, and seven years later he and a relative successfully founded The Elgin Courier. In 1833 he removed to London, and became connected with The Morning Chronicle at or about the same time that Charles Dickens was on the staff. In the following year, or in the year of Mr. Spurgeon's birth, Mr. Grant accepted an appointment at the office of The Morning Advertiser, and there he remained until he retired more than a third of a century later. In 1850 the paper was permanently enlarged to a double sheet, and Mr. Grant became editor. In this sphere the young Scotsman became an indefatigable worker, and the result was that the journal vastly improved its position, so that the chief more than held his own, notwithstanding the efforts which were made by a noisy section of the Licensed Victuallers' Society, to whom the paper belonged, to displace him.

Mr. Grant's family belonged to the Scotch Secession Church; but like his younger friend, the preacher at New Park Street Chapel, he embraced the views of the Baptists in early life. He attended the chapel at John Street, Bedford Row, where James Harington Evans and the Hon. Baptist Noel successively ministered. At one time Mr. Grant was editor and proprietor of The Metropolitan Magazine, the publication price of which, sixty years ago, was the old-fashioned one of three shillings and sixpence a month. In addition to all, he contrived to write a number of books, which alone seem to be almost sufficient for a life's work. A critic like Thomas T. Lynch would make some stinging remarks, when retaliating for the part taken by The Morning Advertiser in "The Rivulet" controversy, comparisons being drawn between Grant's religious professions and certain characteristics of the Licensed Victuallers' paper which he conducted. Others looked at the matter in a somewhat different light. Thus, one authority declared that much might be said about the advantages which had resulted from such an editor's connection with The Morning Advertiser. "The presence of such a man at the head of such a journal is an affair of unspeakable moment, in

consequence of the immense influence which he exercises for good by the insertion of religious matter, in which respect The Advertiser is a wonder unto many, as it often furnishes reports of important religious services which the religious journals themselves overlook."

Such was James Grant, journalist and Christian teacher, who at the time of Mr. Spurgeon's coming to London was in the prime of his days and at the height of his success in life, after some years of anxiety in regard to the progress of the journal he edited. When the sudden transformation scene at New Park Street occurred, the news did not travel with leaden feet to the well-known office in Fleet Street; the lynx-eyed newspaper had intelligence of what was going on, and the editor-in-chief himself walked to New Park Street to learn for himself what the attraction was which drew together a greater crowd than could get into the lately nearly empty chapel. The Morning Advertiser gave its opinion of the preacher—of course, favourable on the whole; and then some months later, when the first volume of sermons appeared, there was a return to the subject, thus:—

"About twelve months ago, when Mr. Spurgeon was preaching in Exeter Hall to the most densely crowded audiences that ever assembled within the walls of that spacious place, we called especial attention to his qualities as a preacher and as a theologian. We pointed out freely, but in the spirit of sincere friendship, what we conceived to be his faults, and expressed not only a hope but a belief that, as he was so young a man—not having then reached his majority—he would, with the lapse of time, which generally matures the judgment as well as mellows the mind, get rid, in a great measure, if not wholly, of what we then specified as defects. It gives us great gratification to say that, having heard him recently in his own chapel in New Park Street, Southwark, we discern a decided improvement, both as regards his matter and manner. Not that there is any change in Mr. Spurgeon's doctrinal views, or in his mode of illustrating, enforcing, and applying them, but that there is less of the pugnacious quality about him when grappling with the views of those from whom he differs. He does not speak so often with asperity of other preachers of the Gospel, whom he conceived—and we must say, in the main, rightly—to be unfaithful to their high calling. There is, too, a marked and gratifying improvement in Mr. Spurgeon as regards the manner of his pulpit appearances. He was always profoundly earnest in his appeals to the conscience of the unconverted, and spoke with an emphasis which showed how deeply he felt when dwelling on the joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears, of believers. And yet, strange to say, there was at times associated with this a seeming irreverence which we know frequently caused much pain to some of his greatest friends and admirers. In this respect also, we are happy to say, we can discern a decided amendment. Still, truth compels us to add that there is room for yet greater improvement, both in his matter and manner. We see something of a spirit which we cannot commend in the preface to this volume. There is a lack, too, of good taste in many parts of the volume itself. More charity of feeling and gentleness of expression are yet wanting, and may be attained without any deficiency in the faithfulness with which he advocates and enforces the distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel. It were well, too, that he should be especially careful to avoid the very semblance of irreverence when engaged in the most solemn and responsible work which a human being was ever delegated to perform—namely, the proclamation of mercy from heaven to fallen man, regarded in conjunction with the awful consequences to those who reject the message. We would, with great earnestness, urge on Mr. Spurgeon the propriety of studiously avoiding the use of expressions calculated to excite a smile, or to make hearers think lightly of the purpose for which

they are met together. There is no inconsiderable number of such expressions in the volume before us, which, to the eyes of all who have right views of the sacred mission of the pulpit, must be exceedingly painful to witness.

"We point out these defects in the preaching of Mr. Spurgeon with all the greater freedom, because he is, in various respects, an uncommon man. Never, since the days of George Whitefield, has any minister of religion acquired so great a reputation as this Baptist preacher in so short a time. Here is a mere youth—a perfect stripling, only twenty-one years of age—incomparably the most popular preacher of the day. There is no man within Her Majesty's dominions who could draw such immense audiences, and none who, in his happier efforts, can so completely enthral the attention and delight the minds of his hearers. Some of his appeals to the conscience, some of his remonstrances with the careless, constitute specimens of a very high order of oratorical power. When pronouncing the doom of those who live and die in a state of impenitence, he makes the vast congregation quail and quake in their seats. He places their awful destiny in such vivid colours before their eyes that they almost imagine they are already in the regions of darkness and despair. In his preface he tells us that such has been the impressions produced by some of his sermons, that he has ascertained upwards of twenty cases of conversion as the result of one discourse; to say nothing of those instances of a saving change wrought on his hearers which will be unknown until the world to come has made its important and unexpected revelations.

"When this able and eloquent preacher first made his appearance in the horizon of the religious world, and dazzled the masses in the metropolis by his brilliancy, we were afraid that he might either get intoxicated by the large draughts of popularity which he had daily to drink, or that he would not be able, owing to the want of variety, to sustain the reputation he had so suddenly acquired. Neither result has happened. Whatever may be his defects, either as a man or as a preacher of the Gospel, it is due to him to state that he has not been spoiled by public applause. Constitutionally, he has no small amount of self-esteem; but so far from its growing with its daily extending fame, he appears to be more humble and more subdued than when he first burst on our astonished gaze.

"With regard, again, to our further fear that his excellence as a preacher would not be sustained, the event has, we rejoice to say, no less agreeably proved the groundlessness of our apprehensions; here is no falling off whatever. On the contrary, he is, in some respects, improving with the lapse of time. We fancy we can see his striking originality to greater advantage than at first. There is no sameness in his sermons. The variety of his matter—not, of course, as regards his doctrines, but as relates to his expositions, illustrations, and applications of Divine truth—is as great as ever." This was intended to be generous, and at the same time impartial, and the preacher recognised in Mr. Grant a friend who would stand by him in an emergency. Mr. Spurgeon was now supposed to be established in the world; his following was greater than ever. But while the pastor at New Park Street was living down detraction and gathering to himself new friends, the time was fast coming when allies on the Press who would stand by him would be of the utmost service.

About this time appeared "The Baptist Confession of Faith; with Scripture Proofs, adopted by the Ministers and Messengers of the General Assembly which met in London in 1689; with a Preface

by the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon." The young pastor regarded this "Confession" as a most admirable summary of what the Fathers of the denomination had believed, and he thought that while it was calculated to confirm faith in those who came after, it was really a body of divinity in small compass which would be of great service in controversy, especially to young people and the less-informed classes generally. To the end of his days Mr. Spurgeon set a high value on this little work.

"A Graduate of the London University" also published "Who and What is the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon? A Voice from one of the Colleges." This brochure consists of a dialogue between two students, the object being to show what such observers thought of the preacher of whom all London seemed to be talking. Written with some power, this was regarded as a generous tribute to Mr. Spurgeon's worth and far-reaching influence. On Tuesday, May 27, of this year, Mr. Spurgeon visited the scenes of his childhood at Stambourne, where he preached in celebration of the jubilee of his grandfather. The text was Isa 46:4—"Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you. I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." In a contemporary newspaper account this interesting festival is thus described:—

"On Sunday week a large concourse assembled, by public invitation, at the Hill Farm, Stambourne, to celebrate the Jubilee of the Rev. James Spurgeon, who has just attained the forty-sixth year of his ministry in this village, as pastor of the Independent Chapel. Considerable preparations had been made, and there were probably from fifteen hundred to two thousand persons present at the services. The public duties were conducted by members of Mr. Spurgeon's family; the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, of London, being the preacher, assisted by his younger brother (a student) and his father in leading the devotions of the meeting. Many of the surrounding ministers of churches, with their congregations, came from great distances to testify their respect for the venerable pastor of Stambourne meeting. The devotional exercises and the sermons, on the whole, were suitable to the occasion. The collections were liberal. In the course of his sermon the preacher animadverted very severely on the Rev. Thomas Binney's book, "On Making the best of both Worlds," which he denounced as a specimen of the 'new heretical theology.' At the close a minister rose up and protested against Mr. Spurgeon's remarks on Mr. Binney. A general state of confusion ensued in the congregation. Some clapped, some shouted 'Hear, hear,' others cried, 'Turn him out.' The reverend gentleman, however, persisted in defending Mr. Binney, and explained that the design of Mr. Binney's book was to prove and illustrate the Scriptural doctrine that 'Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' He said, 'I charge Mr. Spurgeon with having uttered a public falsehood.' In reply, Mr. Spurgeon denounced the speaker for wishing to gain public notoriety by means of his popularity; and in his subsequent prayer at the close of this painful scene, he petitioned that the Lord would forgive him for the sin he had committed, and make him sensible of the wrong he had done in not having first gone privately and reproved him, according to the Scriptural rule."

Meanwhile, the continued interest which the young pastor took in Sunday-school work became manifest from time to time. Mr. Cutler, the superintendent of the Sunday-school, and Mr. Kimber, the secretary, resigned their offices, and on a summer evening, after the week-night service, we find Mr. Spurgeon presenting them "with tokens of affection and grateful remembrances of their past services," in the names of the teachers. A suitable address was given, after which the one was presented with a timepiece, while the other received a gift of books. The enlarged chapel at

New Park Street did not suffice for the requirements of the congregation, and thus the experiment was made of using the chapel in the morning, and of hiring Exeter Hall for the vast crowd which regularly gathered to hear Mr. Spurgeon in the evening of each Sunday. The second series of services in the great hall was commenced on June 8, the sermon being founded on Heb 7:25—"Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." The new arrangement did not answer according to expectation, not that the crowds, which partially blocked the thoroughfare of the Strand, showed any falling off, but the proprietors of Exeter Hall itself were not willing that the building should be used exclusively by a representative of one denomination. It was now that the preacher had his views misrepresented as being "profane," "blasphemous," and even "diabolical," and he directed people to the "Confession of Faith" if they wished to see what his sentiments really were. Meanwhile, a visitor thus describes a service in the Hall and the scene outside. This really relates to a later series of services, but it is so characteristic of one and all of these memorable occasions, that I give it in this place:—

"A few Sundays since I went, with some friends, to hear him at Exeter Hall. As it was an impromptu visit, we were unprovided with tickets, so had to wait in the Strand from the time of our arrival at the Hall, ten o'clock, to that fixed for the opening of the doors, half-past ten. During this period it amused us to notice that not one omnibus passed by, whether from the East or from the West, which did not stop to deposit one or more persons at Exeter Hall. One omnibus debarked its whole freight of passengers there. The hall was crowded to suffocation. Indeed, I know nothing to compare with the way in which the people were wedged together but the packing of figs in a drum. Yet, despite the heat and exceeding discomfort many must have felt from their position—for a vast number had to stand all the time—I was rejoiced to observe the decorum and devotional aspect of all. The auditory was composed mainly of men—young men—one-tenth part only were women, I should say; and to hear, as one stood in the crowd, the loving, honouring way in which all were speaking of him, the good they said he was effecting, was really a blessed gratification." To many observers there was nothing lasting in all this; Spurgeon was only one of those passing phenomena which, like shooting stars, brilliant for the moment, would soon be lost sight of and forgotten. How often was a similar prophecy made during these days! "Will his popularity last?" was asked by one and another, and one then popular journal somewhat later in the year gave this reply to the question:—

"Will his popularity last? We more than doubt it. It stands on no firm basis. Thousands who now go to hear him only go through curiosity. Men are very much like sheep; one goes through a hedge, then another, and another, at last... the whole flock rushes madly forward. This has been a good deal the case with Mr. Spurgeon's congregation, but the current will soon turn and leave him; and as to those who have gone from a slightly different, if not better, motive, it is hardly likely he will retain them long. There is one excuse for Mr. Spurgeon, he is very young—only twenty-two. When he shall be a few years older... he will wish that much of his earlier career and strange utterances may be forgotten."

Chapter 25: The Pastor of Helensburg

Chapter 25.

The Pastor Of Helensburgh The Rev. John Anderson one of the first to predict the Preacher's lasting Popularity-Visits New Park Street Chapel—Graphic Description of the Service—Mr. Spurgeon visits Helensburgh.

Soon after Mr. Spurgeon came to London, a certain Scottish minister, already mentioned, was attracted to New Park Street Chapel, a man who was destined to become a friend and supporter of the most sterling kind of the young Baptist preacher. On one occasion a North British newspaper, published at Greenock, referred to "Mr. Spurgeon's first visit to this district, made at the very onset of his ministerial life as the guest of the late Rev. Mr. Anderson, of Helensburgh. That excellent man and able divine was the first person of any note in the North to take the New Park Street preacher by the hand; and Mr. Spurgeon evinced his gratitude by calling his first residence in London by the name of Helensburgh." This does not appear to be quite correct, however; for as the reader is aware, when Mr. Spurgeon first visited Scotland in July, 1855, his headquarters were at Glasgow; Helensburgh, where his future friend resided as pastor of the Free Church congregation, being twenty-four miles away in a north-westerly direction. The town lies at the mouth of the Gareloch, and is a branch of the Firth of Clyde, being opposite to Greenock, which is about four miles away. Named after Lady Helen Colquhoun, a former proprietor of the land, it is pleasantly situated; while the gardens surrounding the houses impart to it a charm which is wanting in some other places. As a convenient centre for visiting the sites and scenes around Glasgow, Helensburgh is much frequented during the holiday season. It is also such a growing place that the population is probably double what it was in days when Mr. Spurgeon used to be an occasional visitor during his early ministry in London. I am not aware that he actually visited Helensburgh during the time of his first tour in Scotland in 1855, but he may then have first become acquainted with the genial Free Church minister.

Mr. Anderson was thirty years the senior of the London pastor, and he had been settled at Helensburgh as far back as the year 1827, when the now popular holiday resort was a mere village of seven hundred souls. "The charge, indeed, was a small one; but in feeling it his duty to accept it, he was no doubt attracted also by the character of the locality, which, for the scenes of loveliness and splendour that surround it, both seaward and landward, is the finest of the many favourite spots on the noble Firth of Clyde."

Mr. Anderson was so successful in his sphere that a new church was erected in 1853 at a cost of £4,500, and soon afterwards a new manse also was provided. The pastor was no mean scholar, and while he was himself an accomplished writer, his love for the Old Gospel was quite as ardent as that of Mr. Spurgeon. "Nothing pleased Mr. Anderson better than to meet with specimens of fresh, simple, and impressive preaching; such, for instance, as he recognised in Mr. Spurgeon's sermons." Soon after the boy-preacher left Waterbeach Mr. Anderson became acquainted with him, and to his credit, he at once formed a high estimate of his young friend's worth and capacity

for usefulness. "Mr. Anderson had the discernment to perceive, while others looked on with doubt and suspicion, the rare and sterling qualities which now stamp that remarkable man, in the judgment of all, as one of the prodigies of the age." Being thus struck with Mr. Spurgeon's superlative gifts, Mr. Anderson sought a closer acquaintance. During a visit to London in the early part of the year 1856 he attended at New Park Street, and it is a great pleasure to be able to give the genial Scotsman's graphic description of the service. "He was satisfied that his splendid voice and effective gesture, his burning zeal and sound doctrine, his affluence of striking illustration, and the Saxon energy of his diction, were all combining to render Mr. Spurgeon the first preacher of the day. And this he had no hesitation in publicly declaring, in face, too, of all the ridicule that was being poured upon the young Baptist minister, on account of the offences against good taste and pulpit decorum that were then laid to his charge. Soon afterwards, Mr. Spurgeon, on Mr. Anderson's invitation, visited Helensburgh, where he repeatedly preached to admiring crowds, and thus was formed an endearing and enduring friendship." As the narrative proceeds, something may be said concerning these services in the proper place; but in the meantime the reader will be glad to have Mr. Anderson's own realistic account of what he saw and heard at New Park Street Chapel on Sunday, March 30, 1856. Before starting for London he had said to his friends, "I have heard of the fame of this young preacher, and I am going to hear him." On his return he related his experience :—

"When Mr. Spurgeon was in Glasgow last summer, the fame of his eloquence had reached me in my seclusion here, by the shores of the sounding sea, the noise of whose waves delight mo more than the 'din of cities' or the tumult of the people. I had heard him 'spoken against' by some, but spoken of by others as a preacher of remarkable and, since the days of Whitefield himself, of unprecedented popularity. But being one of those who judge for themselves in the matter of preaching, and whose opinions as to what constitutes good preaching are somewhat peculiar, I did not attach much—I may almost say any—importance whatever to what I heard of Mr. Spurgeon and his popularity in Glasgow. One of his printed sermons, however, having fallen in my way, I had no sooner read a few paragraphs of it than I said, 'Here, at last, is a preacher to my mind; one whom not only I, but whom Paul himself I am persuaded, were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own.' I forget what was the subject of the discourse; but I remember well saying to myself, 'I would rather have been the author of that sermon than of all the sermons, or volumes of sermons, published in my day.' I had lately before this been reading Guthrie and Caird, but here was something entirely different, and to my mind, in all that constitutes a genuine and good Gospel sermon, infinitely superior.

"For some time after this I heard little, and thought little, about Mr. Spurgeon. Having been, however, in London on the last Sabbath of March, and having been unexpectedly released from an engagement to preach, I thought I could not do better than go and hear for myself the preacher of whom I had heard so much in my own country. Along with two young friends, see me, then, early on the beautiful morning of that beautiful Sabbath day, when as yet there were few people on the streets, and all the 'mighty heart' of that great city was 'lying still,' on my way from Islington to New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, a distance of nearly four miles. We arrived at the chapel about eleven, but found that the service had commenced a quarter before eleven. The church was filled, and there were crowds of people at the gate uncertain what to do. Seeing one of the doorkeepers near the great entrance, I went up to him and said 'that I was from Scotland, and that

having come so far I really must get in.' He asked me from what 'part of Scotland I came.' I said, 'Glasgow.' He asked no more, but said, 'Come, follow me; I really must get you in,' or words to that effect. He led the way into a wing of the building, fitted up and evidently used as a school; and here, where there were many assembled, we found seats; and though, from the crowd which choked the doors and passages, we did not see the preacher very well, we—and this was what we wanted—heard him distinctly. When we entered he was expounding, as is his custom, a portion of the Scriptures. The passage expounded was Exodus, fourteenth chapter, which contains an account of the Israelites at the Red Sea—a passage of Scripture peculiarly interesting to me, having stood on its shore and sailed on the very spot where the waters were so wondrously divided. The remarks of the preacher on each of the verses were very much in the style of Henry, and were rich and racy. His text was from the 106th Psalm, and the subject of the discourse was the same with that of the chapter he had just expounded—'The Israelites at the Red Sea.'

"Regarding them as typical of the people of God under the Gospel, he said there were two things which he intended to consider. First, their difficulties; secondly, their resources. Their difficulties, he said, were occasioned by three things—first, the Red Sea before them; second, the Egyptians behind them; and third, the weakness of their faith. These difficulties were in the way, he said, of believers: first, the Red Sea of trials—trials peculiar to them as Christians, and caused by their coming out of Egypt, or their renouncing the world; second, the Egyptians are behind them—sin, Satan, and the world, seeking to recover them to their yoke, and, failing this, to harass and distress them. But the greatest difficulty in the way of both was unbelief. Had they trusted in Him that was for them, they would have made little of all them that were against them.

"Second, their resources. These were three—first, the providence of God. He had brought them to the Red Sea; and He who had brought them to it, was able and wise enough to bring them through it. Second, His covenant, in virtue of which He was under engagement to do so, and was bound in honour to do so. Third, the intercession of Moses. He prayed for them when they knew it not. So Christ prays for His people, and Him the Father heareth always; and in answer to His prayers, delivers, and will continue to deliver, them out of all their troubles, etc.

"Such was the method of one of the richest and ripest sermons, as regards Christian experience, all the more wonderful as being the sermon of so young a man, I ever heard. It was a sermon far in advance of the experience of many of his hearers; and the preacher evidently felt this. But, notwithstanding this, such was the simplicity of his style, the richness and quaintness of his illustrations, his intense earnestness, and the absolute and admirable naturalness of his delivery, it told upon his audience generally, and told powerfully. Many, most of them, were of the 'common people,' and when I looked upon their plebeian faces, their hands brown with labour, and, in many cases, their faded attire, I could not help remembering Him of whom it is said, 'And the common people heard Him gladly.' Yes, Mr. Spurgeon is the minister of the 'common people'; he considers himself, I am told, to be such, and well he may. Happy London people, if they but knew their happiness, to have such a minister! But to return to the sermon, and its effects on the faces! How intensely fixed were they on the preacher—how eager to hear every word he uttered—how fearful lest they should fail to catch the least! Tears were now to be seen trickling down them; and then, again, pale and careworn though many of them were, they might be seen beaming with light and joy, and brightening into smiles. One man I noticed in particular. He was evidently of humble rank, but had a noble and intelligent countenance; his face was a perfect study; every time the preacher

said a striking thing, he looked expressively to me and I to him. At the close of the service I could have given him a hearty, brotherly shake of the hand, but I lost him in the crowd, and did not see him again.

"Thus much for the morning. A word or two now about the evening sermon. "We were told that, if we wanted to get in, to come early, as the crowd would be greater than in the morning. With two friends, I returned about six; the service was to commence at half-past six. To our dismay, when we arrived, we found crowds already at the door waiting for admission. Those only who had tickets were now permitted to enter; as we had none, we almost despaired of getting in. One of my friends, however, knowing how I had got in in the morning, went up to a police officer, and told him I was a clergyman from Scotland, and was anxious to be admitted. The police officer, hearing this, said, very politely, he would allow us to enter the church, but would not promise us seats. This was all we wanted. One of us (a lady) was kindly favoured with a seat; my other friend and myself thought ourselves happy, like Eutychus of old, in being permitted to sit 'in a window,' with a dense crowd in the passage at our feet. I asked a man near me if he came regularly; he said he did. 'Why, then,' I asked, 'do you not take a seat?' 'Seat!' he replied; 'such a thing is not to be had for love or money. I got a ticket for leave to stand.' The church, I was told, is seated for 1,500; but what with the schoolroom and the passages, which were choke-full, there could not have been fewer in it than 3,000. The service commenced with a hymn, which was sung by the congregation standing. Never did I hear such singing; it was like the 'voice of many waters,' or the roll of thunder. No need was there of an organ in that congregation; the most powerful organ would not have been heard in the loud swell of so many living human voices. Then came the prayer. Phrenologically speaking, I should say veneration is not largely developed in Mr. Spurgeon; yet that prayer was one of the most remarkable and impressive I ever heard. He prayed first for confirmed believers, then for declining ones, then for sundry other conditions. Then there was a pause; after which he prayed for the unconverted. 'Some,' he said, 'were present who were in this state, who, in all likelihood, would never be in that or any other church again—who were that night to hear their last sermon—who, ere next Lord's day, would not be in this world; and where would they be? There was but one place where they would be—in hell!' He then said, or rather cried out, 'O God, God! must they perish? wilt Thou not save them, and make that sermon the means of their conversion?' The effect was overwhelming; many wept, and I am not ashamed to say I was one of them. The text was in Psa 126:1-2—'When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.' The subject raised from the text was the 'joy of the young convert.' This sermon, in some respects, was not equal to the one in the morning; but in other respects, and in particular in its suitableness to a large and promiscuous audience, was superior.

"Some of the sketches, and that in particular of a slave newly emancipated, drunk with joy that he was free, was equal to anything ever drawn by a Dickens, or any of our great masters of fiction. Equally fine was that of the sick man restored to health, and going forth for the first time after his recovery to take his walk in the streets of London. But it would be impossible to mention all the fine touches of nature in that sermon, which made the whole of that vast congregation for the moment 'kin.' His denunciations of the Sabbath-breaker and others were as terrible as his delineations of the penitent were tender and melting. Mr. Spurgeon is equally great in the tender and the terrible. Nor is he without humour. Here many will refuse him their sympathy, and think him censurable. I

scarcely think he is. Others will think, and do think, differently. His taste, according to others, is bad. It is, I admit, often so. But, then, think of the immaturity of his years. I was told he was conceited. I saw no proofs of it; and if I had, was I on that account to think less of his sermons? I do not say I will not eat good bread, because the maker of it is conceited. His conceit may be a bad thing for himself—his bread is very good for me. I am far from thinking Mr. Spurgeon perfect. In this respect he is not like Whitefield, who from the first was as perfect an orator as he was at the last. In respect of his power over an audience, and a London one in particular, I should say he is not inferior to Whitefield himself. Mr. Spurgeon is a Calvinist, which few of the dissenting ministers in London now are. He preaches salvation, not of man's free will, but of the Lord's good will, which few in London, it is to be feared, now do. On all these accounts, we hail the appearance of Mr. Spurgeon with no ordinary delight, and anticipate for him a career of no ordinary usefulness. 'Happy are they which stand continually before him, and hear his words of wisdom.' As for myself, I shall long remember with delight the day on which I stood among them, and recommend such of my countrymen as may have a Lord's day to spend in London, to spend it as I did at New Park Street Chapel in hearing Mr. Spurgeon." In the course of this life-story of Mr. Spurgeon, some other things will need to be said about the close friendship which existed between the young preacher of Southwark and the pastor of Helensburgh. In a sense, John Anderson, like Charles Haddon Spurgeon, seemed to be born to preach the Gospel. If the one in childhood was found preaching from a hay-rack, the other, at a corresponding age, showed similar inclinations. "His own desire was to be a minister of the Gospel, and the indications of his early ambition were not to be mistaken," remarks his biographer. "When a mere boy, he was in the habit of preaching. His pulpit was a tree that grew in the vicinity of the school he attended, and his audience a company of schoolmates." He was no mean poet; his reading was wide and varied; and while travelling in warmer climes in search of health, he showed himself to be a keen observer as well as an accomplished writer. Visitors to Helensburgh became familiar with the sight of "the erect and manly form" of the pastor, while "the lustre of the dark eye" told in his favour. In 1841 the first symptoms of the bronchial affection from which he afterwards suffered showed themselves, so that he was more or less of an invalid during the twelve years of his acquaintance with Mr. Spurgeon. The two had much in common; and "Helensburgh House," Nightingale Lane, Clapham, was a name which told of a friend far away in the beautiful North—"my own John Anderson."

There is a working man now in Helensburgh who remembers standing on the pier when Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon took their departure after their first visit to the manse. Mrs. Spurgeon walked down leaning on Mr. Anderson's arm, while a worthy porter, who was himself a Baptist, carried the bag belonging to the pastor of New Park Street Chapel with no little pride. According to the honest man's own confession, it had afforded him no small satisfaction to do such a service for one whom he characterised as "the greatest preacher of the day." The following was written in a book which the pastor of Helensburgh received from his younger friend in the early days of their acquaintance:—

"To my dear friend John Anderson,

"Whose boundless generosity compels me to add an injunction to all men, women, and children on the face of the earth, that none of them dare to accept this volume of him when he shall offer it, seeing that this is a small token of the undying love of "C. H. Spurgeon.

"February 21, 1859."

Chapter 26: The Founding of the Pastor's College

Chapter 26.

The Founding Of The Pastors' College The Work commenced—Mr. T. W. Medhurst—His History—Becomes the first Student—Early Difficulties—George Rogers the first Tutor—Spurgeon's favourite Institution—A Work of Self-denial—An American Testimony.

When Mr. Spurgeon had been in London about two years, the work of what afterwards became known as the Pastors' College was commenced; but neither the young pastor, nor those associated with him in encouraging a few young men who desired to preach the Gospel, had any idea of the extent to which this service would develop. They seemed to be providentially directed to the work, and in every stage afterwards they believed that God was opening the way. "C. H. Spurgeon's first student," as he is still called, is Mr. T. W. Medhurst, pastor of Hope Chapel, Cardiff; and to tell something of his early life-story will be the readiest way of showing how the college was really commenced.

Mr. Medhurst, who was born in the same year as Mr. Spurgeon, was associated with the Strict Calvinists; and while, as a young man, he carefully avoided all low and vicious tendencies, he really understood little or nothing of that heart religion of which to many the young preacher of Southwark had become the prophet. The theatre had a fascination for him which he could not resist; he devoted many of his week-nights to the drama, and on the Sabbath he regularly attended the preaching of James Wells at the Surrey Tabernacle. The discourses of that pulpit orator exercised a wonderful influence over young Medhurst, who, feeling secure in the citadel of Antinomian doctrine into which he had retreated, felt perfectly safe while endeavouring to serve two masters.

It has already been mentioned that Mr. Medhurst stepped into Maze Pond Chapel early in 1854, and heard what he believes to have been Spurgeon's first platform speech in London. The speaker seemed to show the possession of some extraordinary qualities, and having thus met him at a Sunday-school anniversary, Mr. Medhurst was tempted to hear him at New Park Street Chapel. At first, however, he actually trembled at the thought of leaving a teacher so sound in the faith as James Wells to hear a mere Arminian like Spurgeon. It was leaving the assembly of the saints to hear an adventurer, who was giving the people a stone in place of the true bread; and though he summoned sufficient courage to enter the chapel, he felt that it would be a righteous judgment if the walls fell and crushed so notorious an offender out of existence. The sermon happened to be one of a rousing kind, founded on Hos 6:3—"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." It turned out that Mr. Spurgeon was no Arminian after all; and the discourse made so deep an impression that the young tradesman gave up the theatre, and saw himself "a sinner, lost, ruined, undone." The state of his mind may be judged of from the letter he sent to Mr. Spurgeon, as follows:—

"Will you be kind enough candidly to inform me whether I have any room for hope that I belong to the elect family of God, whether Jesus Christ His Son has died for me, while my affections are in the world? I try to pray, but cannot. I make resolutions only to break them. I from time to time listen to you when you speak of the glory set apart for the saints, when you describe their joys and their feelings, but I feel myself as having nothing to do with them. Oh! sir, that Sunday morning when you spoke of the hypocrite I felt that you described me. I go to chapel to hear the Word preached, I return home and make resolutions; I go to work, then out into the world, and forget all until the time for preaching comes again. I read the Bible, but do not feel interested; it seems no more to me than a book I have before read, dry and insipid. Christ has said that of all who come to Him He will not send any away. How am I to come? I feel that. I cannot come. I would if I could, but I cannot. At times I think that I will give it all up, that I will not go to chapel any more; yet when the time comes I cannot stay away, but feel compelled to go again once more. Do, dear sir, tell me how am I to find Jesus? How am I to know that He died for me, and that I belong to His family? Dear sir, tell me, am I a hypocrite?"

After a time, but not before he had passed through an experience similar to what Mr. Spurgeon and John Bunyan himself had endured, young Medhurst found peace of mind, and was ever afterwards considered by the New Park Street pastor as a son in the faith. He was baptised in September, 1854. On a recent occasion Mr.

Medhurst gave an interesting account of how the college really came to be commenced:—

"Immediately after being baptised, though I bad not then any idea of entering the ministry, I commenced preaching in the open air at Baukside, Southwark, and also on Tower Hill and at Billingsgate Market. Two persons who were drawn into the church at New Park Street by my preaching soon after I started led Mr. Spurgeon to suggest that I should prepare myself for pastoral work. I was just then out of my time. I consented to the proposal, and immediately arrangements were made by Mr. Spurgeon with the Rev. C. H. Hosken, of Bexley Heath, where I went to reside, once a week spending several hours with Mr. Spurgeon (who was then lodging at 75, Dover Road, Southwark), and studying theology with him. After having been preparing for the ministry six months, I received an invitation to preach at Kingston-on-Thames, and this led to my receiving a unanimous invitation to the pastorate of the Baptist church there. Acting on Mr. Spurgeon's advice, that invitation was accepted temporarily until two years of study had expired. It happened in this way:—Mr. Spurgeon himself made arrangements with the church that in addition to the amount they were giving me for my services they were to give him the amount he was expending in the payment of my tuition at Bexley Heath; and at the expiration of the first quarter he handed me a cheque, saying, 'That is yours; the deacons would not have given that extra if I had not put it in the way I have done.' On my refusing to accept the cheque he at once said that as ho had given the money to the Lord for two years he must take a second student. In that way the Pastors' College was commenced. After being with the Rev. C. H. Hosken (who is still living at Norwich), I studied with the Rev. George Rogers, at Albany Road, Camberwell." The above will clearly show how the idea of the college took shape in Mr. Spurgeon's mind. The young pastor's preaching, like a trumpet-call of one of the old prophets, was bringing in young men from the world, and they were, in many instances, anxious to engage in Christian service. The success of Mr. Medhurst was an encouragement to take others, so that before long the work of education had developed into quite a costly institution. One of the chief difficulties at the outset was that of getting

the necessary funds; for the students taken in were generally of a class too poor to do anything in the way of paying for their own support, while there would have been little or no hope of their being accepted by any other college. Mr. Spurgeon's ideas of educating students were thus not of the conventional kind. While he did not undervalue scholarship, mere educational acquirements alone were never any recommendation; his aim from the first was to assist and encourage men who were already preachers. Both Mr. William Olney and Mr. Winsor, as deacons of the church, were in hearty sympathy with the new enterprise, and contributed liberally to its support. The next difficulty was that of finding a suitable tutor, a man who, to ripe scholarship, united soundness in the faith. In regard to funds, the establishment of the weekly offering at the Sabbath services ensured a regular income; while the very kind of Principal needed was found in George Rogers, then pastor of Albany Chapel, Camberwell.

Although an uncompromising Pædobaptist, Mr. Rogers was otherwise a man quite after Mr. Spurgeon's own heart. He was born in 1799, and lived to be the oldest Congregational minister in England. Like Mr. Spurgeon, he was an Essex man, and his birthplace, Ardleigh Hall, was not far from the spot where in Puritan times a famous preacher known as Roaring Rogers carried on his ministry. George Rogers was one of a family of thirteen, all of whom strongly adhered to nonconformity. George even refused on principle the offer of a free education at Cambridge University. As it was, he completed his studies at Rotherham College, and on coming to London as a very young man, he served for a time as assistant at the Weigh House Chapel, London, under Dr. Binney's predecessor, John Clayton. He afterwards settled for a time at Upminster, and he was young when he returned to London to take charge of the congregation at Albany Chapel. In London Mr. Rogers settled down to hard work, and desiring, above all things, the sphere of a theological professor, he actually prepared himself for such an office. To discover such a man just at the time he was needed was quite "a find" for Mr. Spurgeon. The pastor of Albany Chapel was then fifty-seven years of age, and being so well qualified for what was required of him, he entered on his new duties with the greatest satisfaction. His acceptance of the orthodox doctrines was as hearty as that of Spurgeon himself, while he was Catholic-minded, witty, and judicious. In the early days of the college the students were lodged in the house of Mr. Rogers, and from the first the tutor showed that he was willing to make sacrifices for the enterprise. When on one occasion the funds were low, Mr. Spurgeon suggested that he should sell his own carriage and horses to aid the cause. The tutor would not listen to such a proposition, and declared that he would even prefer to make sacrifices himself. Mr. Rogers became in time so ardently in love with the work that he was wont to say the college could do better without him than he could do without the college. His students contracted the greatest love for him, and few, indeed, ever departed from the evangelical doctrines which were even dearer to the Principal than life itself.

There can be no doubt that the college was Mr. Spurgeon's favourite institution, and in one place he speaks of it himself as "his first-born and best beloved." The importance the young pastor attached to such educational effort was shown by the self-denial he was prepared to exercise in order that the work might be vigorously maintained. When we think of a young man who had recently married, and who was still under twenty-three years of age, devoting a main part of his income to such service, his wife in the meantime practising the most rigorous economy in the household in order to enable him to do it, we shall not doubt his enthusiasm. Mr. Spurgeon thought he saw a great opportunity, and he was determined to seize it. Like the young pastor's method of

preaching, the idea of this college was in itself sufficiently original to be an innovation, and as such it was regarded both by friends and objectors. The constituency catered for was unlike that for which any other college provided. In all other similar institutions married men were not eligible for admission; but Mr. Spurgeon would not be hampered by any hard-and-fast rules. Even a young married man, who could be made more useful by a couple of years' theological and literary study, would be taken in. Another might actually be settled in the ministry; but if by leaving his people for a time he could be helped to become a more effective preacher, he also would be welcomed. In short, the design was to help men who were already preachers to become better servants of God and of the Church—workmen who needed not to be ashamed. So long as he detected genuine talent for the work, Mr. Spurgeon did not greatly concern himself in regard to a young man's educational shortcomings. They could be in some measure repaired; but zeal in Christian service was not to be acquired apart from a change of heart effected by the agency of God's Holy Spirit alone. The pastor always looked with extreme suspicion on a man who proposed himself on account of the possession of exceptional literary talent, whether genuine or imaginary. From time to time a few somewhat ludicrous examples of self-satisfied genius came before him, but with keenest eye and unerring judgment Mr. Spurgeon never failed to take the measure of such men; and none knew better than he how to administer an effective quietus to such aspiring egotists. From the first, the founder of the college never favoured the idea of lodging a considerable number of young men under one roof. It is true that for a time the household of Mr. Rogers included the whole of the students, but that was not a permanent arrangement. When the number increased they were lodged in twos and threes in houses surrounding the Tabernacle; and when the college building itself was erected about eighteen years ago no accommodation for lodging students on the premises was provided.

Mr. Spurgeon's experience in this service confirmed him in the belief that he was doing the right thing, and that his methods were such as would be most fruitful in good results. He was always a man who adopted Christ's way of judging a tree by its fruits; and in this instance he saw fruit which yielded satisfaction while it inspired gratitude. Objectors arose who insisted that he was training men for whom ministerial spheres would never be found; or that the prescribed curriculum was quite inadequate to equip preachers for active service whose early advantages had been so inconsiderable. The most conclusive answer to this objection was found when the young men made spheres for themselves in the Colonies, or in the foreign mission field; or when, as often happened, they secured some of the best positions at home. This has actually occurred in more cases than can be mentioned.

Since the college was Mr. Spurgeon's favourite service, we shall find, as we proceed, that he devoted to it his best energies. Year by year, beginning with 1865, we shall find him at the annual conference, on each occasion giving one of those instructive and stimulating addresses which seemed at the time to call forth at once all his powers and all his enthusiasm. Friday afternoons were devoted to the students; and the lectures then given can never be forgotten by those who heard them. It was a work of self-denial all along so far as the founder was concerned; but he never grudged either the toil or the money that it cost him.

Since Mr. Spurgeon's death, one of his American friends has remarked concerning this work:—

"The curriculum of the Pastors' College has been criticised as too meagre, and as not affording the student an education sufficiently comprehensive for the times; but it ought always to be remembered that the plan of study adopted by this institution was never designed to be a substitute for university training, and its President never under-estimated the value of higher and ampler advantages. Nor should it be forgotten that until within a recent period it has not been an easy thing for Nonconformists to obtain the privileges of Oxford or of Cambridge. Indeed, I have the honour of being myself acquainted with one among the first of dissenting scholars permitted to graduate at Cambridge, and he is not yet an exceedingly venerable gentleman. We must consequently make allowances both for the peculiarities of Mr. Spurgeon's surroundings and for the pressure of necessity for what may seem to be superficial in the Pastors' College. It was devised and inaugurated as an institution for practical equipment, and as such it has unquestionably justified its existence. While the students may not have been taught the art of interweaving much of polite literature in their discourses, and while they may not have been able to acquire the rare lucidity of their President's style, nevertheless they have received valuable and accurate information. They have likewise obtained a complete knowledge of Holy Scripture; and have listened to sagacious suggestions regarding pastoral duties, and cautious against overdoing, against fanaticism, and against perpetually running after this or that tribe of religious gipsies who insist on encamping in the environments of God's holy city."

Such a testimony from the New World the late President of the Pastors' College would have greatly valued.

Chapter 27: A Great Disaster

Chapter 27.

A Great Disaster

Beginning to collect for a Great Chapel—The Surrey Gardens Music Hall—Engaged for Spurgeon's Services—Scene in the Building and Grounds—A Panic—Accounts by various Spectators—The Killed and Wounded—Effect on the Preacher.

At the best Exeter Hall was not a very conveniently situated place for a congregation which had its home on the south side of the river; and, apart from that, the proprietors of the hall were not willing to have the place too regularly occupied by a congregation representing one denomination. To other objections, Mr. Spurgeon himself might have added that of the building not being large enough. The great room was densely crowded on every occasion of a service being held in it, and had it been twice the size it would still have been too small. On Michaelmas-day, 1856, a meeting was held in New Park Street Chapel to initiate the scheme for the erection of what we find already spoken of as "the largest chapel in the world." Drs. Leask and Fletcher, Counsellor Payne and George Moore, were among the notables present in addition to Mr. Spurgeon himself, and very liberal contributions were promised. This "mammoth undertaking" now began to excite increasing interest, and this first meeting was densely crowded.

Hence, looking at things all round, a crisis appeared to have come on, and a crisis of a kind which neither Mr. Spurgeon nor his friends well knew how to deal with. London seemed to be so aroused by the simple preaching of the Gospel, that the largest buildings in the town were too small to accommodate the throngs who wished to hear. Exeter Hall itself was one of the most spacious rooms that could be obtained; but if that was not available for any lengthened period, what was to be done in the meantime?

Persons of an ardent, go-ahead temperament might advocate the immediate erection of a building worthy of the occasion, but that would need a large sum of money, and, even if the needful funds were available, the mere building of such a chapel would require some considerable time. Was it not possible to make some temporary arrangement which would enable the popular young preacher still to give his message to the multitude?

It so happened that just about that time a building capable of receiving an audience of some ten or twelve thousand persons was erected. This was the Music Hall in the Royal Surrey Gardens, and of which the musical conductor, M. Jullien, was the presiding genius. There was, indeed, a strange kind of connection between Exeter Hall and the popular recreation ground at Walworth, but of this many were probably not aware. When the wild beasts were taken away from old Exeter Change, and gave place to the present Exeter Hall, they for a time found a home at the King's Mews, Charing Cross, whence they afterwards found their way to what had been the gardens of the Manor House at Walworth. There they were housed in a great round conservatory, the whole being under the management of the proprietor, Edward Cross. Fireworks and panoramic pictures

were afterwards added to the attractions, and at last, in 1856, when the Gardens belonged to a limited liability company, a great hall was erected for the popular concerts of M. Jullien. The idea occurred to several friends that this Music Hall might be utilised for Spurgeon's services, but when this was suggested to others they at once opposed as impious the thought of preaching the Gospel in a place which was a mere temple of worldly amusement. If Mr. Spurgeon and certain of his friends did not see things in such a light, it was because they were innovators who were before their time. As Christians they were aggressive in a sense which many of those whose co-operation they desired were altogether unable to understand. The idea of giving the Gospel to people in halls, theatres, or similar places, was new, and was far from being universally accepted. Mr. Spurgeon was quite free from such prejudices; he would take his message anywhere, feeling that it was everywhere alike wanted. It is true that in after years the Music Hall was forsaken because it was to be used as a place of amusement on Sunday nights, but that was because the congregation should not seem to support a management which wantonly profaned the Sabbath.

Before it was finally decided to hire the great Music Hall, Mr. Spurgeon and his friend William Olney went to look over the building, and both being impressed with the immense size of the structure, they could not help thinking that it was a somewhat hazardous thing to open such a place to the crowd for religious services on the Sabbath. Nothing of the kind had ever before been attempted, for the largest audiences ever addressed by Wesley and Whitefield had been in the open air, because no buildings were large enough to contain them. In this instance the pastor and his friend found a building of which the seating capacity does not appear ever really to have been measured, though if it be said that over twelve thousand persons could be accommodated, the statement is probably quite within the truth. As the two looked over the vast area, and then glanced upward at the three great galleries, they might well have some misgivings as to the propriety of trying an experiment of which no one could prophesy what the outcome might be. At the same time, both the preacher and his faithful friend were reassured by the thought that it would be a glorious thing to preach the Everlasting Gospel to twelve thousand or more at one time; and, putting their trust in God, they resolved to go forward. Those who rejoiced at the prospect of what was about to be done, and those who regarded the great enterprise with misgiving, prayed together for its success. Sunday evening, October 19, was the time fixed for the first service. When the news went through London that Spurgeon was to hold Sunday services in the hall in which M. Jullien, with his great band and opera "stars," had entertained the multitude of pleasure-seekers, expectation ran high, and probably the desire to be present at the service on the part of the common people was such as had never been equalled. People, from children upwards, of every social grade seemed to be desirous to attend. Even in the afternoon of that memorable autumn day, and almost before the shades of evening had begun to fall, the streets leading to the Gardens began to be thronged with people. When Mr. Spurgeon himself arrived, the sight of the people for the time unnerved him; and certainly it was enough to make even a strong man feel sick and faint to find himself the hero of such an occasion. For a considerable distance away the streets appeared to be alive with streams of people, while the entrance-road in the Gardens was blocked with a dense crowd which was unable to enter the hall. When the building itself was filled there were still over ten thousand persons in the grounds; and at last the outer gates were closed to keep in check the encroaching multitude in the streets beyond. The doors of the building were opened at six o'clock, and such was the pressure at the doors that in a few minutes the three galleries, the orchestra, and the area were all densely crowded. "Notwithstanding the immense

size of the place," says one account, "there was not sufficient room for a dozen more to enter, and when the seats became filled there were some two or three thousand persons who were content to stand in the passages, and there were considerably more on the greensward outside, looking through the windows." In its way the scene was unique; no such congregation had ever before been gathered in any building to hear the Gospel simply preached. Dr. John Campbell, the editor of The British Banner, sat near the pulpit, and he thus wrote of the occasion:—

"The spectacle, of its kind, was one of the most imposing, magnificent, and awful ever presented to the human eye. No adequate idea of it can be conveyed by description; to be understood it must have been seen; and they who beheld it received an impression which no time will ever obliterate. The sight of ten or twelve thousand people, more or fewer, assembled to listen to the Word of the Living God, in such a place, at such a time, and addressed by a man with a voice of such power and compass that the remotest might hear with ease and pleasure, was sufficient to excite intense joy in the hearts of all good men who witnessed it, nor is it extravagant to say that it was enough to wake the attention of the angelic world." A friend who is still living, and who, with his wife, was present on the occasion, says:—

"We reached the place in good time; the building was rapidly filling. We occupied the first gallery, and sat immediately opposite the pulpit; we were not able to sit together. At length, the three galleries were not only full but overcrowded, and so was the floor of the building. The thought came to me and my wife also that the walls of the building were subject to such a degree of pressure as to render their collapse a probability. We both, without concert, determined, as soon as the service should be quietly proceeding, to leave the building."

If any such thoughts had possession of other minds, the getting up of a panic by thieves for their own purposes was a comparatively easy thing. All began in a promising manner. The preacher, who had recovered from the faintness and sickness which had come upon him, appeared to be quite himself. He opened with a few appropriate words; reading of Scripture and a hymn followed. "There was no dry disquisition, no curious criticism," adds Dr. Campbell, "but an address directed to the hearts of the hearers, showing from the first that the speaker came strongly intent upon most important business, and that nothing was to be regarded short of its accomplishment. The general prayer next followed; and here, too, the same pertinent and peculiar air was manifested. The one great thing which animated the preacher was most obviously the salvation of men."

It was just after the commencement of the general prayer that the conspirators, who had so skilfully prepared their mine, saw that their opportunity had come. It seemed as though well-instructed agents were stationed in various parts of the hall, each section carrying out its own allotted part of the programme. At all events, just after Mr. Spurgeon had commenced his prayer there was suddenly heard from one quarter a cry of "Fire!" In another part a different cry was taken up—"The galleries are giving way!" Then from another part was heard another cry in tones of assumed terror—"The place is falling!" The scene which at once followed was such as will never be adequately described. Mr. R. J. Curtis, already mentioned, says that "immediately there was a hurried and disordered rush from all parts of the building, especially from the upper galleries. I very soon left, and on reaching the landing and moving towards the stairs—not to go down, but to look—someone, fearing that I was rushing into danger, pulled me back. While standing there, the people in terror rushed on like a resistless wave, the forward portion of which rolled over the

banisters, and was precipitated to the bottom of the stairs." The manner in which some jumped from dangerous heights, in order to escape imaginary danger, was unaccountable. I know of one gentleman who sat in one of the galleries, and who, seeing that there was no cause for alarm, did his utmost to reassure a lady who happened to be sitting next to him. His endeavours were fruitless, however; for the woman, beside herself with terror, sprang from her seat, and jumped into the area, to break both of her legs, leaving a shawl in the hand of the friend who would have held her back. The frenzy of this woman was typical of the uncontrollable fright of others, which in a number of instances resulted in death and broken limbs. The rush from the galleries to the staircases was such that the banisters gave way, and what was hoped would prove ways of escape at once became fearful pitfalls of death.

Describing the height of the commotion a few minutes after the conspirators had fired their mine, a contemporary account says:—

"The cries and shrieks at this period were truly terrific, to which was added the already pent-up excitement of those who had not been able to make their exit. They pressed on, treading furiously over the dead and dying, tearing frantically at each other. Hundreds had their clothes torn from their backs in their endeavours to escape; masses of men and women were driven down and trodden over heedless of their cries and lamentations; men appeared not to care for women, and women appeared equally callous of their own sex, one object only appearing to fill the mind of all—that of self-preservation. Some climbed over the galleries and dropped upon the heads of those below. All this time the pressure from those behind became greater and greater; many who would not otherwise have been injured were crushed by the surrounding multitude. Women, and even strong men, fainted, dropped upon the floor, and were trodden over by those following them.

"Notwithstanding the number that had fallen from the gallery, the crowd still pressed on to the staircases, and had it not been for the providential circumstance that there was an iron pillar supporting the end of the gallery, the loss of life must have been most awful. While this scene of devastation and terror was proceeding at the north-west end of the building, similar horrors were being enacted at all other outlets.

"As soon as the shrieks of the unfortunate creatures who were suffering in the inside were heard by those who had obtained ingress into the gardens, but could not obtain admission into the hall, they made a desperate rush for the outer gates; but by a strange arrangement they could find no means of getting outside the gates, they having been firmly closed to prevent the great crowd, which had been outside all the evening, from entering the gardens. Men, women, and children climbed, were drawn and thrown over the iron railings, many of them being seriously injured in consequence. As soon as it was known by those outside that a terrible accident had occurred, the wildest rumours prevailed. Some asserted that the entire building had fallen in, burying all beneath; others that the galleries had given way, carrying their occupants upon those below. Then the most fearful excitement prevailed outside. Fathers, whose wives and daughters were in the building; mothers, whose children were there; and in fact every person who knew of a relative of any kind that had gained admission, raised their wildest lamentations for those who they believed were lost to them for ever.

"By this time the greater portion of the audience had escaped from the hall, and of course with all precipitancy made for the street. Those who had been fortunate enough to escape without injury

assisted in bringing out their more unfortunate friends and companions, which at once realised the fact of the sad calamity to those outside, who, as quickly as possible, made their way toward the building for the purpose of seeking their relatives and friends. All those who had the power to do so had left the hall, and only the dead, dying, and wounded were to be seen." My friend Mr. E. J. Curtis communicates a description of the scene inside the building and nearer the pulpit as it appeared to him:—"After a short time I returned to my seat and remained till nearly the close of the service. During the uproar occasioned by the causeless cry of 'Fire!' Mr. Spurgeon retained perfect self-possession, and to allay the panic vociferated, 'Take care of your pockets!' His text on the occasion—no doubt impromptu—was the words, 'The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked' (Pro 3:33). The sermon was to the point, and as effectively delivered as on the most auspicious occasion. He was not aware of the cruel consequences of the false alarm till after the service. On leaving the place we saw at the bottom of the stairs a large pool of blood partially covered by a carpet." This is identical with the view taken by the leading journal so far as the preaching is concerned:—"The preacher kept his place, preaching, praying, and giving out psalms; the surviving congregation returned to their seats, the boxes for the new chapel were rattled about, and the service concluded almost as if nothing had happened." The truth is, nevertheless, that Mr. Spurgeon did not even attempt to give a sermon until calls of "Preach! preach!" from different quarters of the hall prompted him to do so; and it has to be remembered that the preacher and those around him in the vicinity of the pulpit knew nothing of what was really happening in distant parts of the building. A pretty full account of what Mr. Spurgeon actually said was given in the denominational newspaper. The preacher desired that the people should retire while a hymn was being sung; but the vast majority of the congregation, who knew nothing of the extent of the calamity at the doors, still cried, "Go on! Preach!"

"My friends, what shall I preach about?" said Mr. Spurgeon. "You bid me preach to-night. I am ready to do all I can, but in the midst of all this confusion what shall be my subject? May God's Holy Spirit give me a subject on this solemn occasion. My friends, there is a terrible day coming, when the terror and alarm of this evening shall be as nothing. That will be a time when the thunder and lightning and blackest darkness shall have their fullest power; when the earth shall reel to and fro beneath us; and when the arches of the solid heavens shall totter to their centre. The day is coming when the clouds shall reveal their wonders and portents, and Christ shall sit upon those clouds in glory, and shall call you to judgment. Many men have gone away to-night in the midst of this terrible confusion, and so shall it be on that great day. I can, however, believe that the results of that day will show that there will be a great many—not a less proportion than those who have left—who will stand the ordeal of that great day. The alarm which has just arisen has been produced in some measure by that instinct which teaches us to seek self-preservation. But in the more numerous of the cases it is not so much the dread of death which has influenced them as the dread of something afterwards—that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns. 'Tis conscience that makes cowards of us. Many were afraid to stop there, because they thought it was to stop and be damned. They were aware—and many of you are aware, that if you were hurried before your Maker to-night you would be brought there unshriven, unpardoned, and condemned. But what are your terrors now to what they will be on that terrible day of reckoning of the Almighty, when the heaven shall shrink above you and hell open her mouth beneath you? But know you not, my friends, that grace, sovereign grace, can yet save you? Have you never yet heard the welcome news that Jesus came into the world to save sinners? You are the chief among

sinners. Believe that Christ died for you and you may be saved from the torments of hell that await yon. Do you not know that you are lost and ruined—that none but Jesus can do the sinner good? You are sick and diseased. Jesus can do you good, and will. I thought this night of preaching from the text, 'The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but He blesseth the habitation of the just.' I feel that I cannot preach as I wish. You will have another alarm yet, and I would rather that some of you would seek to retire gradually, in order that no harm may be done. My text will be found in the 3rd chapter of Proverbs, at the 33rd verse."

Something like silence was obtained, but soon the agitation again broke out. "You ask me to preach, but how can I after this terrible scene?" asked Mr. Spurgeon. "My brain is in a whirl, and I scarcely know where I am, so great are my apprehensions that many persons must have been injured by rushing out." The hymn, "His sovereign power without our aid," was then sung, and the congregation was urged to retire quietly. As regards the effect of the panic on the preacher himself, several accounts were given. According to one he was carried senseless from the pulpit; but the truth seems to be that the service was brought to a close when the worst was known. In the words of one chronicler, "Mr. Spurgeon commenced his sermon by observing that he could not, of course, after such an occurrence, preach to them as he would wish, but he would preach to them for the usual time if they thought fit to remain." Another remarked, "Mr. Spurgeon's mind during the terrible scene manifested a composure truly astonishing. He seemed in no respect unnerved, but manifested a meek yet resolute determination to proceed; but the thieves, who must have comprised hundreds, continued their noises with such pertinacity as to render it utterly hopeless. Mr. Spurgeon then intimated that the meeting would dissolve, and exhorted the immense multitude to withdraw slowly."

Seven persons were killed, while a larger number were injured. In regard to the originators of the panic, an inspector of police who was present expressed the opinion that the mischief had not been occasioned by thieves. It was rather thought that certain enemies of Mr. Spurgeon had merely resolved to cause him some annoyance.

Chapter 28: Criticism of the London Press

Chapter 28.

Criticisms Of The London Press

Wild Rumours—Violent Articles in the London Papers—Some Sample Extracts—The Other Side, as given by Friends and Impartial Observers. The cases of death were some of them touching instances of young persons going out from their homes in a state of health and expectancy, and in a few hours being carried back stiffened corpses, with features blackened by suffocation. The great building contained neither flue nor fireplace of any kind, and hence did not seem to be a place likely to become a prey to fire. On the morning after the accident the hall was found to be strewn with all kinds of garments which had belonged to men, women, or children, the quantity being so great that the police-station at Lock's Fields could hardly find sufficient storage room for them. Both inside the hall and among the crowd outside a number of thieves committed many robberies, but not one of these offenders appears to have been apprehended. During the night the wildest rumours were current throughout London, and the excitement was certainly not allayed when the newspapers appeared on the following morning with reports of the catastrophe, accompanied by leading articles which more or less misrepresented the facts of the case. It was now that the young pastor realised the advantage of having two such friends to stand by him as James Grant of The Morning Advertiser, and Dr. John Campbell of The British Banner. A correspondent of The Morning Advertiser said:—

"A variety of absurd and inaccurate statements have been made as to the causes which led Mr. Spurgeon to leave Exeter Hall, and, consequently, necessitated the use of some larger building than his own chapel, and thus eventually led him to the Surrey Music Hall, where this catastrophe occurred. Exeter Hall was taken while the New Park Street Chapel was being enlarged; but when that edifice was duly finished the Exeter Hall committee refused to allow Mr. Spurgeon the use of that building any longer. The fact is, that it would have been contrary to their rules, inasmuch as, to prevent any infringement of their non-sectarian character, they have provided that no minister or sect shall be allowed to take possession of the Hall any longer than they may be necessitated to do so by their own buildings being under repair. When, therefore, Mr. Spurgeon's chapel in New Park Street was reopened on its completion, the committee of Exeter Hall could no longer, consistently with their rules, permit him the use of it, or the building would have become identified with his name, and thus its unsectarian character, which has been so jealously guarded, would have been lost. These are the facts of the case, and they will be a sufficient answer to the divers wild imaginings of those who sought to account for a result, while they were ignorant of the circumstances which led to it." On the Monday evening there was a meeting at New Park Street Chapel, when Mr. Moore, one of the deacons, said:—

"With reference to the origin of the alarm, there is no doubt that it originated from wicked designing men. Oh, that dreadful scene! You are anxious to hear about our poor pastor—he is very bad. Very bad I say, not from any injuries or bruises he has received, but from the extreme tension on

his nerves, and his great anxiety. So bad is he that we were fearful for his mind this morning. Under these circumstances, only one thing could be done—that is, to send him into the country away from the scene. As we knew that a great number of persons would call at his house during the day, we sent him early this morning, so that none of his engagements can be entered into this week. From information I have just received I am enabled to tell you that to-night he is a little better, but still very prostrate. Mr. Olney (another deacon) is still in bed. Let us be more merciful to our enemies of last night than they were to us. That wicked wretch—that man whom we are justified in calling a miscreant—who first gave the dreadful signal by which so much life was lost—let us even pray for him. Who knows but that he may one day stand in this room and own his great crime, and seek for repentance?" In referring to the accident The Freeman maintained that Mr. Spurgeon and his friends were right in hiring the hall, and dismissed as puerile "the charges of ambition or vanity against the preacher or his deacons for following what seemed to be the leadings of Providence and the dictates of Christian zeal." The Times made some strange mistakes in reference to the disaster. It was said that 20,000 persons went to a new hall to hear a preacher who was "only twenty-five;" and for whom "they are building a place somewhere to hold 15,000." The writer inferred that due care had not been taken, and that under the circumstances the accident was just of the kind that might have been expected. Some advice was then given to Mr. Spurgeon, the impression being that he was ambitious of addressing greater multitudes than had ever been spoken to before by any popular orator:—

"The human voice is limited. Stentor himself could not be heard by the whole human race. On certain occasions 20,000 people are assembled in St. Paul's, but they do not hear, or expect to hear; on the contrary, as soon as the preacher appears in the pulpit they take out sandwiches, buns, brandy-flasks, and newspapers. No church in the metropolis holds 3,000, though some have a name for more. There is something, then, very ambitious, to say the least, in the attempt to have five times as many hearers as anybody has had before. Let Mr. Spurgeon be at least content with as many as the Surrey Music Hall was intended to hold sitting in comfort and with sufficient means of exit.... Would Mr. Spurgeon be so good as to attend to the subject at once? Next Sunday, instead of 20,000, the Surrey Gardens will be blockaded from four o'clock by at least 50,000. They will expect to hear, not only Mr. Spurgeon, but also a sermon from him on the sudden fate of the victims last Sunday. The prospect is rather a serious one, and if this gentleman and his friends have the means of providing against a crush, or the effects of a panic, they will be held responsible for omitting to do so."

It may be interesting to quote some additional opinions on this terrible incident which appeared in the London papers. The Daily News had an article, and Dr. Campbell characterised its representations as "cruel in the extreme":—

"But the crowd had been assembled to collect a subscription towards the erection of such a mammoth chapel, and Mr. Spurgeon and his friends were unwilling that the opportunity should bo lost. Therefore this untimeous reminder; therefore Mr. Spurgeon's exclamation to the panic-stricken fugitives, that they were more afraid of temporal than eternal death; therefore the indecent rattling of money-boxes in their ears. We might go further, and remark on the callous manner in which Mr. Spurgeon and his friends left the meeting, without one attempt to aid or soothe the sufferers; but we are willing to make allowance for the bewilderment which such a spectacle was calculated to produce." For many years previous to Mr. Spurgeon's death, The

Daily Telegraph showed a truly generous appreciation of him and his work. On the morning after the Surrey Gardens calamity, however, this journal probably exceeded all the other London newspapers in the harshness of its censure, e.g.:—

"Mr. Spurgeon is a preacher who hurls damnation at the heads of his sinful hearers. Some men there are who, taking their precepts from the Holy Writ, would beckon erring souls to a rightful path with fair words and gentle admonition; Mr. Spurgeon would take them by the nose and bully them into religion. Let us set up a barrier to the encroachments and blasphemies of men like Spurgeon, saying to them, 'Thus far shalt thou come and no further;' let us devise some powerful means which shall tell to the thousands who now stand in need of enlightenment, This is man, in his own 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, we would 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, 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 Spurgeon in the music hall of the Surrey Gardens. And lastly, when the mangled corpses had been carried away from the unhallowed and disgraceful scene—when husbands were seeking their wives, and children their mothers, in extreme agony and despair—the chink of the money, as it fell into the collection-boxes, grated harshly, miserably, on the ears of those who, we sincerely hope, have by this time conceived for Mr. Spurgeon and his rantings the profoundest contempt."

After the majority of the morning papers had spoken in a strain which seemed to suit the temper of their readers, one of the most influential of the evening journals was more generous in its testimony:—

"We have inquired of respectable persons who were present, and they inform us, up to the moment, during the prayer, when the bell was heard to tinkle, and the cry of 'Fire!' was raised, no worship they ever attended was conducted with more solemnity and decorum; that the singing of a hymn by so many thousands of persons, in so vast a building, was peculiarly impressive; and that but for the intentional disturbance, the effect of the whole must have been all that could be desired. We hardly think anyone can be held responsible for not conjecturing that any even of the lowest roughs and rowdies could be found wicked enough to hazard the lives of so many persons, however willing they might have been to annoy one whom they, of course, judged a fanatical preacher." The Evening Star, then a widely circulated penny journal, also joined in the discussion with some vigour, showing that other questions than the mere structure of buildings, or the protection of excited panic-stricken multitudes from harm, were raised by the accident at the Surrey Gardens. That mishap had brought the vocation of the preacher and the secret of his power within the range of newspaper discussion. The Star then proceeded to deal with things as they were. It often happened that a curate, who preached better than his rector, gave offence rather than satisfaction to his employer. The so-called popular preacher was rarely found to belong to the common people. To go into any ordinary church or chapel was to see a middle-class congregation:—

"But where are the artisan classes—that keen-eyed, strong-minded race, who crowd the floor at political meetings or cheap concerts, fill the minor theatres, and struggle into the shilling gallery of

the Lyceum or Princess's? So very scanty is their attendance upon the most noted preachers, that it is their adhesion to Mr. Spurgeon which has made that gentleman a prodigy and a phenomenon. The first that we heard of him, two or three years since, was that the Bankside labourers went to hear him on Sunday and week nights. The summer before last we found the artisans of Bethnal Green, a much more fastidious race, flocking round him in a field at Hackney. And in the list of the killed and wounded at the Music Hall are journeymen painters, tanners, and milliners' girls. It is worth while to ask the reason why.

"A simple hearing is sufficient to answer the question, supposing that the hearer can also see. There never yet was a popular orator who did not talk more and better with his arms than with his tongue. Mr. Spurgeon knows this instinctively. When he has read his text he does not fasten his eyes on a manuscript and his hands to a cushion. As soon as he begins to speak he begins to act; and that, not as if declaiming on the stage, but as if conversing with you in the street. He seems to shake hands with all round, and put everyone at his ease. There is no laboured exordium, making you wonder by what ingenious winding he will get back to the subject; but a trite saying, an apt quotation, a simple allegory, or two or three familiar sentences, making all who hear feel interested and at home. Then there is no philosophical pomp of exposition, but just two or three catch-words, rather to guide than to confine attention. Presently comes, by way of illustration, a gleam of humour; perhaps a stroke of downright vulgarity—it may be, a wretched pun. The people are amused, but they are not left at liberty to laugh. The preacher's comedy does but light up his solemn earnestness. He is painting some scene of death-bed remorse or of timely repentance; some Magdalene's forgiveness or some Prodigal's return. His colours are taken from the earth and sky of common human experience and aspiration. He dips his pencil, so to speak, in the veins of the nearest spectator and makes his work a part of every man's nature. His images are drawn from the homes of the common people, the daily toil for daily bread, the nightly rest of tired labour, the mother's love for a wayward boy, the father's tenderness to a sick daughter. His anecdotes are not far-fetched, and have a natural pathos. He tells how some despairing unfortunate, hastening with her last penny to the suicide bridge, was stopped by the sound of psalmody, and turned into this chapel; or how some widow's son, running away from his mother's home, was brought back by the recollection of a prayer, and sits now in that pew. He does not narrate occurrences, but describes them with a rough, graphic force and faithfulness. He does not reason out his doctrines, but announces, explains, and applies them. He ventures a political allusion, and it goes right to the democratic heart. In the open air someone may interrupt or interrogate, and the response is a new effect. In short, this man preaches Christianity, his Christianity, at any rate, as Ernest Jones preaches Chartism, and as Gough preaches temperance. Is it any wonder that he meets with like success? or is he to be either blamed or scorned? Let it first be remembered that Latimer was not less homely when he preached before the king, nor South less humorous when he cowed Rochester; nor Whitefield less declamatory when he moved Hume and Franklin; nor Rowland Hill less vulgar though brother to a baronet. To us it appears that dulness is the worst fault possible to a man whose first business it is to interest; that the dignity of the pulpit is best consulted by making it attractive, and that the clergy of all denominations might get some frequent hints for the composition of their sermons from the young Baptist preacher who never went to college." This was more generous and reassuring, and before many days had passed certain of the writers who had suffered their feelings to bias their judgment may possibly have discovered that they had made a mistake. The Sun, The Morning Advertiser, The Evening Star, plainly showed that Mr.

Spurgeon was in no way responsible for the loss of life which had occurred; and hence it only needed the veteran divine and journalist, Dr. Campbell, to give his judgment to make the case for the defence of the young preacher complete. The Nonconformist organ spoke with no uncertain sound in regard to Mr. Spurgeon and his friends:—

"We repeat and contend that, instead of being held up to contempt and execration they deserve to be lauded for their marvellous courage, patience, and perseverance. Supposing them to have pursued a course directly contrary, such as the bulk of the Press, it appears, would have suggested; supposing them to have fled on the outburst of the storm, such flight would have increased the panic tenfold, and where there is now one death to deplore, there might probably have been a score or even twice that number. By the plan they adopted they did more than can be easily estimated to allay fear, inspire courage, and abate the tempest, and thus to prevent farther loss of life. There would otherwise, in all likelihood, have been a rush at all the doors, each contributing more or less—and all fearfully—to the mortality of the occasion! If, notwithstanding the unparalleled exertions of Mr. Spurgeon and his deacons, it was impossible so to quell the commotion as to admit of the resumption of peaceful worship, it may readily be inferred how easily the waves might have been lashed up into an all-devouring fury.

"Let Mr. Spurgeon and his friends, then, think on these things and be comforted; while they did nothing whatever to destroy, they did much to preserve the lives of their fellow-men. The death which ensued was a thing with which they were wholly unconnected; the life which was preserved, the result of an extraordinary exercise of all but superhuman manhood."

While the newspapers were thus commenting on what had occurred, and freely offering their opinions on the preacher himself and his pulpit methods, Spurgeon himself hardly heard even the faint echoes of the tumult in the quiet rural retreat to which his friends had taken him. For a time it seemed as though the powers of evil had broken loose and would overwhelm the strong man who had been recognised at so early an age as a champion of the truth. Dark and heavy was the cloud which hung over him; but suddenly it seemed to lift and pass away, He was in the garden of a friend's house, when, like a gleam of warm reviving sunshine, the truth suggested itself that Christ was still stronger than the devil, so that He who had a name which was above every name would, in the end, be conqueror. Mr. Spurgeon there and then gave thanks in prayer, and was himself again. He returned to his own house, where his wife, with her twin sons—then just about six weeks old—was the light of his home.

Chapter 29: Dr. Campbell's Estimate

Chapter 29.

Dr. Campell's Estimate

Reappearance of the Pastor at New Park Street—First Service in the Music Hall after the Accident—False Rumours—Death of Richard Knill—Spurgeon at Birmingham.

Although for the time it seemed as though the young pastor's mind would be unhinged by the terrible ordeal he had passed through, he was only absent from his pulpit for one Sunday—the last in October, when Dr. Alexander Fletcher preached at New Park Street Chapel. Mr. Spurgeon's voice was again heard in his own pulpit on November 2, when the chapel, was so densely crowded that two thousand persons are said to have been present. We find it remarked that "the greatest decorum was observed in every part of the spacious edifice, and throughout the whole of the service." It was announced that the fund on behalf of the injured sufferers, who numbered twenty-eight, amounted to £70. The sermon was founded on Php 2:9, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." In commencing, the preacher said:—

"Now, my dear friends, I almost regret this morning that I occupy this pulpit. I regret it because I feel utterly unable to preach to you to your profit. I have thought during the period of relaxation I have had since that terrible catastrophe which has befallen us, that I had thoroughly recovered; but on coming back to this spot again I feel somewhat of the same feelings which prostrated me before. Ton will therefore excuse me this morning if I make no allusion, or scarcely any at all, to recent circumstances; for were I to enter into the subject, and to bring to your remembrance that solemn scene, I should speedily be forced to be silent. It might not have been the malice of men so much as some have thought. It was probably the intention of the parties to disturb the congregation, but not to commit the terrible crime which resulted in the death of several individuals. God forgive those who did it! They have my forgiveness from the bottom of my soul. I may say, however, dear brethren, that we shall not be daunted at what has taken place; and I shall preach again in that place yet! God shall give us souls there, and Satan's empire shall tremble more yet; for I believe that God is with us, and who is he that can be against us? The text is one which has comforted me and enabled me to come here today in order to try and comfort you. I shall not attempt to preach from the text, I shall only make a few remarks; for I have been utterly unable to study, and I trust your loving hearts will excuse me." At the service preceding the communion in the evening, the chapel was, if possible, even more crowded than in the morning. On Tuesday afternoon, November 11, Mr. Spurgeon preached a sermon at the Tabernacle, Tottenham Court Road, his appearance in that pulpit being a part of the programme of the centenary commemoration of the chapel. The discourse was founded on Hab 3:2, "O Lord, revive Thy work;" and it may be read entire in The Baptist Messenger for February, 1856. When the Surrey Gardens Music Hall was engaged in the first instance it was for four Sundays; but in consequence of the catastrophe the meeting of October 19 was not taken into the reckoning. "The

directors of the Surrey Gardens Company acted most generously in regard to the unfortunate evening on which Mr Spurgeon made his debut in the Music Hall. They gave that night for nothing, the New Park Street congregation paying half the damage; and, consequently, yesterday was the first of the four Sundays for which the hall is engaged." The meeting on this occasion was a grateful contrast to the former one; for as one account says, "perfect order and sacred silence" reigned throughout. The members of the New Park Street congregation were admitted by ticket before the general public; but the latter did not muster in anything like the numbers of the first meeting, as the total assembly was not supposed to exceed eight thousand. A strong body of police was in attendance; great precautions were taken to prevent any recurrence of panic; and in case of any false alarm being given, people were advised to keep their seats, and, if possible, to detain the offenders. The newspapers of the time call attention to "the enormous pulpit," which at that time was quite of a novel pattern, being in reality a platform with a low desk, which allowed the preacher sufficient space to move about. This first service, after the terrible affair of four weeks previously, was no doubt a severe trial to the young preacher; and it was evident that memories of October 19 were still afflicting him. In the course of the general prayer Mr. Spurgeon said:—

"Wherever people are assembled to worship God, that place is sacred, whether beneath the magnificent canopy of the blue sky, or in a building such as that in which we are assembled; every place is sacred when devoted to such a purpose, for God is everywhere. May God be in our midst at this time! Let nothing frighten His sheep. Grant that they may feed in quietness. Grant that the preacher may preach with that earnestness which becomes a man who must soon stand before his Maker's bar—a dying man to dying men. May this be a time of great display of the grace of God. Let sinners be saved. Let the people be saved, and glory be gotten to the name of the Most High God by this service. Thou who hast shown us great troubles wilt quicken us again and bring us from the depths of our woe. Thou who hast smitten us and wounded us to the quick, lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us, and multiply Thy blessings amongst us. Grant that music, sweeter than is often heard here, may arise, even the music of the penitential sigh, and the aspiration of the breaking heart, mourning over its own wickedness." The quaint way in which the preacher announced the portion of Scripture to be read, attracted much notice. "Let us read that ancient story of the God who became flesh and dwelt among us, and was crucified for our sins; the story of the crucifixion as it is contained in the 15th chapter of Mark's Gospel." It was thought that the comment was coloured by the recent strictures of the Press on the preacher himself in connection with the disaster of a month before.

"Our Lord knew the dignity of silence. He is a wise man who can hold his tongue. 'In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin.' Our Saviour bore insults, endured scorn, obloquy, and calumny, but 'opened not His mouth.' Let us learn to do the same; for often it is the best way to contend with our enemies to keep our swords in their scabbards. It is the best way to win battles to refuse to enter the lists with our enemies. If men speak evil of us, it is the height of folly to wage battle with them. True knights fight only with true knights. So let true men think it folly to fight with liars. If they lie against us, we are too great to repulse them." Further on it was added that the cross they had to bear was only a wooden one, though it may be painted in colours of iron; and in any case crown-wearers would have first to be cross-bearers.

Among the exaggerated rumours which had gone abroad since the attempt to preach in the Music Hall, was one relating to the vast dimensions of the new chapel it was proposed to erect. On this

theme Mr. Spurgeon made a statement which corrected some misapprehensions:—

"There have been a great many rumours abroad respecting the new chapel, the building of which has been contemplated by a number of my friends. It has been asserted that we want to build a Tabernacle capable of holding 15,000 people. With respect to that I will only say that some truthful person has thought fit to put a '1' before the '5,' for we have never entertained even a thought of building such a place. It has, however, been thought that a place of worship capable of accommodating about 5,000 persons was necessary. For my own part I have no wish for such a place, only I cannot bear to see, Sabbath after Sabbath, as many people go away as enter the chapel where we have been accustomed to assemble for worship. It is the will of people to come in large multitudes to listen to my feeble proclamation of the truths of the Gospel. I have not asked them to come, it is their own free will; and if it is a sin in me that they should do so, it is at least an uncommon sin, which many others would like to commit if they could. It has been said, 'Let those who wish to hear me pay for their seats.' That would defeat the object I have in view. I want to preach to those who cannot afford to pay for seats in a chapel, and it is my wish to admit as many of the general public as possible. There will be no collecting-boxes passed round today; but as there are necessarily expenses attending the celebration of Divine worship in this hall, the contributions of such as are disposed will be received at the doors on leaving. Do not think we are begging. If you think so, we would not have your money as a gift. It is open for all to do just as they like. Many of my friends, I know, are most anxious on the subject of a larger place of worship than we have at present, and would give double what they have done if they could afford it. It is proposed to hold a service here on the three following Sunday mornings. It is much to the inconvenience of my congregation to attend here. We have a comfortable place of worship elsewhere. There we are very happy together; there I have a congregation, and as many members as any mortal man can desire. It is only with a view of winning souls to God that wo have come to this larger place, and should we be accused of other objects the judgment-day will lay bare what our motives have truly been."

There can be no doubt that the disaster at the Music Hall had the effect of increasing Mr. Spurgeon's fame, great as it had been before; and very strong evidence of this is seen in the number of newspaper and other articles which appeared even after the excitement of the accident had passed away. One of the chief among veteran journalists who defended Mr. Spurgeon on all occasions, and towards the end of the year 1856 published several articles in a separate form, was the Dr. Campbell, from whom we have quoted, and who was then editor of one or two monthly magazines as well as of The British Banner, which paper he relinquished at the end of 1856, however, to start on his own account The British Standard. Born in 1795, the doctor was nearly forty years older than his friend of New Park Street, so that there was some propriety in his standing forth as a defender on the one hand and offering advice on the other. At first he had regarded Spurgeon as an upstart. Throughout a large section of the religious world Dr. Campbell's opinions were received with the deference due to one of such ability and character. Some weeks after the Surrey Gardens calamity the doctor gave an elaborate review of Spurgeon as a preacher. The subject, he remarked, had drawn forth much from observers or critics who had too slight a knowledge of the subject to warrant their being heard. In any case, the pastor of New Park Street had a manner which was his own, and those who disliked it were not obliged to sit as hearers at his feet:—

"Mr. Spurgeon is, in all respects, an original—a preacher of heaven's own formation; and hence all is nature and all is life, while that life and that nature are among the millions a power. Is he abrupt, blunt, direct? It is nature. Is he idiomatic, colloquial, playful, dramatic? It is nature. But it is needless to dwell on these subordinate points. 'Every man in his own order,' whether he there stand as an individual or one of a multitude. Nature is power, artifice impotence. Without nature no man can please much and please long. Nature responds only to nature; it turns a deaf ear to all that is contrary. Art may captivate the fancy; nature alone can subdue the heart."

Deserved or undeserved, the popularity of Mr. Spurgeon was a fact which no one could deny; no other man had such a hold of the people. It was not for such a man to cut his locks to suit his critics. The doctrines he preached were identical with those preached by the fathers of a former generation. How was such popularity to be accounted for?

"He owes nothing to the pomp and circumstance of priesthood. There the youthful preacher stands in all the simplicity of his unsophisticated character. He owes nothing to relation or rank, or the accidents of life, which have sometimes contributed to great temporary popularity. What, then, is the source of this unprecedented attraction? It lies partly, but not merely, in the externals of his eloquence; it is primarily in the soul of the man—a soul large, liberal, and loving; a soul stamped by the characteristics of a little child, while putting forth the powers of one of David's 'mighties.' He is one of a favoured class, few in number but great in importance. He belongs to the noble fellowship of the Berridges, the Grimshaws, the Whitefields, the Hills, and the Wilkses. Mr. Spurgeon has much in common with all these men, and sustains to the public of his time substantially the same relation as they did. In the name of justice, then, let Mr. Spurgeon have the benefit of their history. If despised, ridiculed, and calumniated by their contemporaries, men unworthy to live in the same age with them, they have had ample justice done them by succeeding generations, who have acknowledged their greatness, revered their virtues, and have acknowledged slowly, yet frankly, the signal, the unparalleled services they were honoured to render in their day and generation.

"Let it be remembered that none of the worthies above named had, at the same age, and during the first two years of their ministry, aught to show in the way of evangelical trophies to be compared with even the ascertained results of Mr. Spurgeon's ministry. Nay, it would be no violation of truth if it be affirmed that all of them united could not have presented, in the shape of ascertained conversions, so much fruit."

Quite apart from his preaching, it was a fact that the chapel at New Park Street was often quite crowded at a prayer-meeting; and the production of such a meeting and its sustentation was a striking evidence of the power of his ministry. The multiplication of such preachers would be the greatest blessing the country could receive. Then follow some comparisons between Spurgeon and such old-time preachers as Bunyan and Whitefield:—

"Since the days of Whitefield no man has excited so much attention in this metropolis as Mr. Spurgeon; and the result, as in a former age, has been great diversity of sentiment. In the daily press, The Morning Advertiser was the first to give a just, or, perhaps, a generous account of this extraordinary young man. "While with much discrimination it set forth his surpassing excellence in his own line, it was not silent upon his defects, but tendered such counsel as the case required in a spirit calculated to render it palatable. Another daily paper has recently favoured the public with an

estimate of Mr. Spurgeon's capabilities, and a portraiture of his performances, displaying more capacity than charity, and a gift fitting rather for the criticism of the theatre than of the house of prayer. Such things, however, would seem, as in the case of Whitefield, only to help him onward. When Foote, of unhappy memory, wrote The Minor, bringing Whitefield on the stage in the character of Dr. Squintum—for the great orator was marked by that visual peculiarity—he did much further to excite public attention and confirm Whitefield's hold of the better section of society. Mr. Spurgeon has been the subject of discussion even in the American Press, where he has been most shamefully caricatured. He has made several appearances in Scotland, where he has been well received, and where a portion of its comparatively pure and upright Press has done him justice.

"All such opposition and misrepresentation only tend to further the popularity it is sought to check. It operates like air on the furnace, which would languish and die but for the action of the atmosphere. Mr. Spurgeon's popularity is a mystery, both in the Church and in the world. The enlightened but unreflecting onlookers in both are at an utter loss to account for it. They only seem attracted to his peculiarities, which, viewed through the medium of taste, are defects to be regretted, and, by others, to be shunned rather than imitated. The secret of his power with the masses consists, however, not in these, but in something hid from the mere vulgar eye. In his mighty effusions there is a substratum of Christian truth which he pours forth in an unbroken stream; or, rather, it may often be likened to a cataract bearing down everything before it, and subduing the largest assemblies. Mr. Spurgeon is no negative theologian. Whitefield, in this, as in other respects, had much in common with Spurgeon. The former had vastly more acting, so called, than the latter, and quite as much dry humour, by which congregations are ofttimes excited to laugh; but there was this peculiarity which distinguished him from Spurgeon, that they were as frequently melted into tears.

"Essences must not be confounded with accidents. The peculiarities which often distinguish great men have no necessary connection with the truth which they hold and propagate in common. A firm friend of Whitefield has left it on record that, whether he looked grave or gay, it was nature acting in him. His laugh was hearty, his weeping 'loud and passionate,' and, while his manner was natural, his language was simple—John Bunyan's English. It was, indeed, his boast that he used 'market language;' and, as to the looseness of his harangues, his defence was, 'You complain of my rambling; you ramble more than I do, and I must ramble after you.' Spurgeon, too, we repeat, is in everything a child of nature; he is everywhere at home. His air, his accent, whether he rebuke or woo the soul, all is natural; and his illustrations are generally such as, without wounding the taste of the multitudes, come home to their breasts. He is in sympathy with his audience and with mankind. A master of dialogue, he is not less master of powerful declamation—the two great things for which Whitefield himself was remarkable. What he spoke he felt. Everything found its way to the heart of the assembly. Whitefield's defects, such as they were, were mainly confined to his earlier career; and if it be remembered that he commenced at the age of twenty-one, much allowance is to be made for him. Why not then for Mr. Spurgeon, who had filled the land with his fame long before he had attained to his majority? We say, then, let Mr. Spurgeon have justice. He is working a great work, and let no man hinder him! No other living preacher can command the ear of the millions as he commands it; and we submit it is only fair to bid him God-speed. Time and circumstances will do much to perfect that which needs emendation." On the second day of

January, 1857, Mr. Spurgeon's old friend, Richard Knill, died at Chester at the age of about seventy years. He had laboured in Chester since the opening of 1848, and under his pastorate the church had increased fourfold. He was in all respects a remarkable man, whose influence was very far-reaching; and his service through the Press was no less extraordinary than his preaching. Thus we find it stated that "No man ever had so many of his tracts circulated as Mr. Knill. Between six and seven millions of them have been printed in England; translated into ten different languages, they have been scattered over the whole world. In America more than seven millions have been printed, so that between the two countries more than fourteen millions have been put into circulation." He laboured on till the last with apostolic fervour. The heavy and continued strain of preaching at the Surrey Gardens, besides conducting special services during the week in different parts of the country, began to tell on the pastor's strength. While proceeding with his sermon in the Music Hall on Sunday morning, February 15, when, by the way, he had a bishop among his hearers, Mr. Spurgeon's voice failed, and he was compelled to conclude "somewhat abruptly," as the contemporary account tells us. The congregation appeared to be much concerned on account of the preacher's apparent suffering. In the ordinary course that sermon would have been No. 117 of the regular weekly issue, but it did not appear, and a discourse given at New Park Street some months before had to take its place. The visit to Birmingham early in the year 1857 was a notable occasion. The curiosity to hear the orator appears to have been very great, as he had never spoken in the town before. The first sermon, in the afternoon, was on the Name of Jesus; and that which followed in the evening was on the text, "To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." On the following day two services were held in Mount Zion Chapel, one discourse being on self-examination, while the other was on seven texts, "I have sinned," or the same that had been given in the Music Hall on January 18. Thus to visit a great town and conduct four exhausting services was a fair example of the way in which Mr. Spurgeon worked at this time. He laboured on in the most self-denying manner, all the while living in accord with the injunction which he had seemed to hear on Midsummer Common, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not."

Chapter 30: The Services At The Royal Surrey Gardens

Chapter 30.

The Services At The Royal Surrey Gardens

Unique Popularity—The National Review—A Sunday at the Music Hall described—A Hoax—The Daily Press—Remarkable Letter in The Times—Adverse Opinions—Collecting for the Tabernacle.

The Sunday morning services at the Royal Surrey Gardens had now become one of the chief attractions or wonders of London. As we learn from The Nonconformist, Lord Palmerston was prevented by illness alone from being present on one of the Sundays of January:—

"Mr. Spurgeon's popularity does not seem to be at all on the wane. Lord Mayors and Lord Chief Justices jostling journeymen carpenters in the same religious assembly; peers and peasants listening to the Word of Life from the same lips, and joining in the same chorus of praise, to the tune of the glorious Old Hundredth which rises from eight or ten thousand voices, present a novel and instructive spectacle, however the phenomenon may be explained. What may have been the Premier's motives for taking a ticket for the Surrey Gardens Music Hall last Sunday, of which, however, his old enemy the gout prevented him from availing himself, it is not for us to conjecture. It may be hoped that it was something beyond mere curiosity. At all events, the Cabinet is committed, and it is not easy to see how it could now consistently advise the Crown to withhold from the Dissenting divine the sanction of its presence, at least, in a quiet and unostentatious way. Old George the Third, when at Windsor, used now and then to slip in incog. amongst the congregation of that excellent Nonconformist minister, the father of the present Dr. Redford, and in due time, we daresay, amongst the thousands of female head-dresses at the Music Hall, a modest little bonnet will find its way, beneath which will be the evidence of the Royal countenance afforded, in spite it may be of mitred protests, to the uncanonical ministrations which have taken such a hold of the lieges." The number of notices of Mr. Spurgeon in newspapers, magazines, and reviews now abundantly testified to his increasing and unique popularity. Even The National Review for January had something to say on the all-engrossing topic, and while showing no sympathy with the preacher's Calvinism, the reviewer believed that the doctrines preached largely accounted for the success achieved:—

"Mr. Spurgeon's style appears to us quaint and grotesque, with a strong dash of genuine humour. He is obviously to the last degree vivacious and susceptible. There is nothing vulgar, for example, in the following, though it is as grotesque as a gargoyle: 'Oh, may God awaken us all, and stir us up to pray: for when we pray we shall be victorious. I should like to take you this morning, as Samson did the foxes, tie the firebrands of prayer to you, and send you in among the shocks of corn till you burn the whole up.' The following has a sort of rough energy and force of conviction which is not unlike many of the stories told of Luther and his conflicts with the devil: 'A poor tried countryman said the other day, I have been troubled with that old devil lately, and I could not get rid of him for a long while; until at last, after he had been adding up all my sins, and bringing them

all before my remembrance, I said to him, "You rascal you, did I not transfer all my business to Jesus Christ long ago, bad debts and all? What business have you to bring them here? I laid them all on Christ; go and tell my Master about them. Don't come troubling me." "Well, I thought that was not so bad. It was pretty rough, but it was gloriously true.' A man who had always considered his sins as so many debts in the strict sense of the word, and whose mind is habitually occupied with small business transactions, shows a very forcible and genuine conviction by this kind of language. In fact, if his language is to be genuine and striking at all, it must be taken from the subjects which are familiar to him. To say 'You rascal, don't trouble me; you must speak to my Master,' is a phrase which has, at any rate, a positive, definite meaning. A man who should say on a similar occasion 'I dwelt on the all-sufficient sacrifice,' or 'I rejoiced in the blessed blood which cleanseth from all sin,' would speak, in our opinion, far less sincerely and far less reverently. The one man believes in a real master, a real legal obligation, a real devil in the likeness of a harsh creditor, and a discharge such as he could plead in the county court; and the other, in a great proportion of cases, only expresses an indefinite feeling in conventional language. The common feelings which form the lasting bonds of human society are generally definite in proportion to their strength. Conjugal and family love, friendship, a sense of duty, a sense of honour, may be described in the very simplest language, and the fact that it is usually considered reverent to speak of God, Christ, heaven, hell, the devil, and the feelings which they excite, in an obscure and indefinite manner has always appeared to us one of the strongest proofs of the prevalence amongst us of an unacknowledged scepticism. To speak of such matters very seldom and very plainly, would seem to be the course pointed out, both by reverence and common sense; but if we must choose between the two, we do not know whether it is not less bad to handle spiritual truths as yon would handle a bullock, than to handle them as you would handle a mist. No Italian friar was ever more perfectly at home in the legends of the saints than Mr. Spurgeon is in what he calls the three R's—Ruin, Redemption, and Regeneration." The writer in The National Review was evidently desirous of dealing fairly with the subject, but he was one of those who caricatured the Calvinistic doctrines through misunderstanding them. It seemed strange, moreover, that while seeking to account for amazing success, nothing was said about the wonderful voice and powerful imagination which were such striking characteristics of the preacher.

Thus the services at the Music Hall created extraordinary and ever-widening interest. Among the many sketches, the brochure of "An Eye-Witness," issued in the spring of 1857, attracted some attention. This writer found that the ticket system was enforced to prevent the entrance of thieves and disreputable characters. His estimate of the building was that it would seat 9,000 and allow of standing-room for 5,000 more. He remarks that "even so early as ten o'clock all the seats on the floor and first gallery were occupied, and one only succeeded in procuring seats on the second gallery, and that on the fifth row from the front." At half-past ten, when the doors were opened to the public without tickets, there was "not one seat in the huge hall unoccupied." Meanwhile, the spectacle from the centre gallery was an extraordinary scene—"We heard a strange noise, it sounded like the rushing of mighty waters; and, on looking down, we saw that it was caused by the rushing in of immense crowds of excited and hurried people. In ten minutes' time every inch of standing-room was occupied." Dr. Livingstone sat on the platform, and the Princess Royal, as well as the Duchess of Sutherland, was said to be present. The hymn, "All hail the power of Jesus' name," was sung with overpowering effect. On coming to the close, Mr. Spurgeon remarked, "Dear friends, whilst you are singing this last verse, elevate your hearts to heaven, and let your

innermost prayer be that you may join the angelic throng in hymning your dear Redeemer's name. Fancy that you hear the ten thousand times ten thousand that are, at this moment, swelling the anthem above, and feel as if you were mingling your voices with theirs in chanting His praise." The prayer is described as being of "the most spiritual character... as if Mr. Spurgeon was standing on Pisgah's top, gazing in ecstasies on the promised land." The petitions for persons of all sorts and conditions showed how thoroughly in earnest the preacher was. The way in which he sought strength for himself was also characteristic. "O Lord! help, help thy servant to preach the Gospel to this vast multitude. Fill his soul with heavenly fire. Thou art mighty, but thy servant is weak; make him, O Lord, the honoured instrument in thy hands of converting many here. Thou, in times past, madest the sound of a ram's horn level to the dust the hard, strong, and fortified walls of Jericho; make, I beseech thee, thy servant like a ram's horn on this mighty occasion, so that the hard and strong hearts in thy presence may melt and tumble down at the sound of thy Gospel as proclaimed by him, and that heaven may ring with the hallelujahs of victory." When the people opened their Bibles to find the text, "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen, and Amen" (Psa 72:19), the rustling resembled the "pattering of a heavy hailstorm on the leaves of trees." During the sermon, everybody could hear perfectly in all parts of the building, even when the voice was allowed to sink low. The preacher, then under twenty-three years of age, is described as being pallid, without whiskers, his hair being long, and parted nearly in the middle. The desire to hear him became stronger, so that the ordinary tickets of admission had been raised to five shillings a month. "An Eye-Witness" is of opinion that the "cavilling and raising frivolous objections to his preaching, simply proves that unrenewed human nature is just what it was eighteen hundred years ago." He adds that Spurgeon "is stirring up all classes, and proving most conclusively that if the Gospel be plainly proclaimed, there will be no lack of hearers." In the early part of May, 1857, someone found pleasure in imposing a silly kind of hoax on Mr. Spurgeon's former friends in the Fen country. The town-crier of Soham, and also the town-crier of Ely, received a parcel of printed bills from the "Society for the Diffusion of the Gospel, 28, Park Street, London," announcing that Mr. Spurgeon would preach on the Horsefen at three o'clock on Sunday, May 10. It was a clumsy invention, for at this time the preacher rarely indeed ventured to leave his own people on Sunday.

Among those attracted to the Music Hall was a correspondent of The Sun, who wrote:—

"If what we heard last Sunday be a specimen of Mr. Spurgeon's usual preaching, there was certainly nothing at all more extravagant than would be heard from most of the Evangelical clergymen and Dissenting preachers in the country. There were no outrageous descriptions of divine anger and future punishment, or any wire-drawn refinements on the theology of repentance. His statements on the latter point were characterised by remarkable common sense; they were forcibly expressed and illustrated, as were his arguments for the necessity of repentance. Indeed, there was little in which preachers of all creeds would not have concurred. His voice is a noble one, filling the whole place with the greatest ease; at the further end of the building we did not miss a syllable. His manner was perfectly unrestrained, but not irreverent. His command of language is very considerable, but does not lead him, for an extempore speaker, into verbosity. His style is unfettered, homely, forcible, and abounds in pointed remarks. There was a total absence of anything humorous or ludicrous, if it has been his habit to indulge in such things. The secret of his popularity, taking last Sunday as a specimen, appeared to us to be something very different. It was impossible not to feel that the preacher was absorbed, not in himself, but in his audience. The

formal separation of the pulpit did not separate him from his hearers. He conversed with them—he was one of them. He did not lecture them ex cathedra, or indulge in disquisitions on topics out of their line of thought, but spoke with them as he would have done on a solemn subject in their own houses. Most of our pulpits 'die of dignity,' but, while there was nothing unbecoming on Sunday, the preacher placed himself on a level with all. Of course, a vivid fancy, and considerable powers of expression, aided by a first-rate voice, will account for much, but we think what we have pointed out was the chief reason why, among so many thousands of hearers, we could not, and we looked carefully, detect a single sleeper.

"Our more dignified preachers might study with advantage the phenomenon of this youth's popularity. We can only say that, for our part, his manner disarmed criticism, and we could think only of his probable usefulness to the thousands present, who, we are confident, by their appearance, are not listeners to our customary pulpit prosaics. Lord Chief Justice Campbell, with his son, was present on the platform, and seemed to take the same view with ourselves; he remarked several times to one of the managers after the service in our hearing, and also to Sir Richard Mayne (Commissioner of Police), who was likewise present, 'He is doing great good, sir, great good! London could find room for twenty such preachers; they are just what the populace needs.'" The London daily Press, which had treated Mr. Spurgeon so badly in the matter of the Music Hall catastrophe, now began to make some amends. It was soon seen that in regard to the character of the preacher himself, a mistake had been made; and among the first to make reparation for the wrong done in passing a too harsh and hasty judgment was The Times. In those days that great journal commanded a truly national influence, so that its publication of the famous letter by "Habitans in Sicco," accompanied by a leading article, marked that turn of the tide in the young preacher's favour which was sure to come sooner or later. Extracts from this letter have frequently been given, but few persons of this generation will ever have seen it entire, although it is necessary for such a production to be read as a whole for its true significance to be understood. It was one of the most amusing things of the kind which ever appeared in the leading journal:—

"Sir,—One Sunday morning about a month ago my wife said, 'Let us fend the children to St. Margaret's to hear the Archbishop of——preach on behalf of the Society for Aged Ecclesiastical Cripples, which is to celebrate today its three hundredth anniversary.' So the children went, though the parents, for reasons immaterial to mention, could not go with them. 'Well, children, how did you like the Archbishop of——, and what did he say about "the Aged Ecclesiastical Cripples"?' Here the children—for it was during their dinner—attacked their food with great voracity, but never a word could we get out of their mouths about the spiritual feast of which they had just partaken. No! not even the text could they bring out. The more they were pressed the more they blushed, and hung their heads over their plates, until at last, in a rage, I accused them of having fallen asleep during the service. This charge threw my first-born on his defence, and he sobbed out the truth, for by this time their eyes were full of tears. 'Why, papa! we can't say what the Archbishop of——said, because we could not hear a word he said. He is very old and has got no teeth; and do you know I don't think he has got any tongue either, for though we saw his lips moving, we could not hear a single word.' On this I said no more, but I thought a good deal of 'the Aged Ecclesiastical Cripples' and their venerable advocate, and being something of a philologist, I indulged in dreamy speculations on the possibility of an alphabet composed entirely of labials; and if my wife had not roused me by some mere matter-of-fact question, I almost think I should have given my reflections

to the world in the shape of a small pamphlet entitled 'The Language of Labials; or, How to preach Sermons without the Aid of either Tongue or Teeth: published for the benefit of the Society of Aged Ecclesiastical Cripples, and dedicated, of course by permission, to the Archbishop of——.'

"Now listen to another story. A friend of mine, a Scotch Presbyterian, comes up to town and says, '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 yesterday morning to the Music Hall in the Surrey Gardens. At first I felt a strange sensation of wrong-doing. It was something like going to a morning theatrical performance on Sunday; nor did a terrific gust of wind which sent the 'Arctic Regions,' erected out of laths and pasteboard in a style regardless of expense, flying across the water of the lake, tend to cheer a mind depressed by the novelty of the scene. Fancy a congregation, consisting of 10,000 souls, streaming into the hall, mounting the galleries, mumming, 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 the 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 breath of everyone 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 everyone 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 appear 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 'mumbles 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 this 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 these 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 that 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 sake of the music which follows it.

"But I am not, I am sorry to say, examining chaplain of the Archbishop of——, so I can only send you this letter from the devotional desert in which I reside, and sign myself, "Broad Phylactery, Westminster.

"Habitans in Sicco." In the course of a leading article, The Times itself found something to say on the subject of the above letter:—

"It is not surprising that the sudden phenomenon of a monster preacher excites some astonishment, and if our correspondent, 'Habitans in Sicco,' regrets that the Church has not the benefit of similar services, it is quite natural to ask why should such demonstrations be confined to Dissent? Why cannot the Church have a monster preacher drawing its crowds?

"Physically speaking, there can be no reason why the Church should not have, at any rate, once or twice in a generation, a natural orator in its clerical ranks endowed with a voice as loud as Mr. Spurgeon's, and, if she has, there can be no cogent reason why she should not use him. A loud voice is a decided gift, an endowment; it may be thrown away, in the prodigality of nature, upon a man who has no purpose to turn it to, no thought to utter from that splendid organ; upon a man, in fact, who is a mere pompous stentor in a pulpit; but give it to one who has a thought and a purpose, and see the effect. How is it, then, that the Church never has a monster preacher?

"The reason is, that a loud voice requires its proper material to exert itself upon. The voice is notoriously the most sympathetic thing in nature. It cannot be loud and soft indiscriminately. Some things are made to be shouted and others to be whispered. Nobody shouts out an axiom in mathematics; nobody balances probabilities in thunder—Nemo consilium cum clam ore dat. There must be a strong sentiment, some bold truth, to make a man shout. In religion there must be something rather extravagant in the shape of doctrine. The doctrine of conversion or of irresistible grace can be shouted, but if a man tried ever so hard to shout in delivering a moderate and sensible doctrine on freewill he would find himself talking quietly in spite of himself. A laud voice, then, must have 'loud' doctrine to develop it. But the Church of England has rather a distaste for 'loud' doctrine; her general standard is opposed to it; her basis is a balanced one, mixing opposite truths, and qualifying what she teaches with judicious protests and disclaimers. She preaches Catholicity with a protest against Rome, and Protestantism with a protest against Geneva.

"This is very sensible and very true, but it is not favourable to popular preaching. Of the two parties into which she is divided one thinks it wrong to shout as being against the principle of reverence. This school specially contrasts itself in this respect with the 'rude world,' which is supposed to be always shouting and doing everything that is noisy and vulgar, and with heretics who are audacious and immodest; and it plumes itself on its refinement and good taste in the delivery of religious truth, which it thinks ought to be done in a sort of veiled and fragmentary way, so as to reach the sensitive ears of the good and pass over those of the profane. All this is very excellent and refined, but it is against popular preaching. So much for one party. The other party might speak loud if it liked; it has no theory against it, and its doctrines admit of it, but it does not like the trouble. And besides, this party, though it professedly holds strong doctrine, practically tempers it considerably, and bends to the moderate standard of the Church.

"Thus, what with the fear of criticism, the deference to a recognised standard, idleness, reverence, and a great many other things; what with some thinking it heretical to shout, and others thinking it

impolite to be popular, there is no monster preaching in the English Church. It does certainly admit of a question whether in our general policy we are not over-cautious, and gain greater theoretical correctness at the cost of much practical efficiency. It admits of a question whether a little extravagance and a little onesidedness might not be tolerated for the sake of a good, substantial, natural, telling appeal to the human heart. We should have no objection, for our part, to an Evangelical clergyman, with a strong voice, doing what Mr. Spurgeon does. The doctrines of the two are in reality much the same, and that being the case, why should fear of criticism prevent the Evangelical school from making themselves as effective as they can? But such is the influence of a conventional standard, which, like conscience, 'makes cowards of us all.'" At this time meetings were held now and again in aid of the building fund of the proposed new Tabernacle. What was called the first of a series of such meetings had been convened in the Tabernacle, High Street, Hoxton, on March 10, when Mr. Spurgeon gave a discourse from the words of Psa 102:16, "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His Glory." He also gave an account of his first coming to London, with some reference to the blessing which had attended his ministrations. On Monday, March 23, another meeting came off at New Park Street, and the speech of the chairman, Mr. W. Joynson, of St. Mary Cray, had an excellent effect on account of "its fervour, spirituality, and practical common sense." From a contemporary account we learn that "he repeatedly challenged the meeting to contribute sums equal to those he himself offered conditionally to give; and during the evening his own donations in this form amounted to nearly one hundred and seventy pounds, in addition to a previous donation of twenty-five pounds. Mr. Spurgeon made a fervid and eloquent appeal to his own congregation, such a one as they will never forget." The following is an extract from the "Appeal to the Christian Public" issued at this time:—

"The great and almost unprecedented success which, under the Divine blessing, has accompanied the labours of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon during his ministry at New Park Street has rendered it imperatively necessary that a new chapel of large dimensions be erected forthwith....

"Shortly after the accession of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon to the pastorate, in May, 1854, the numbers attending the chapel rapidly increased, until it was deemed absolutely necessary to enlarge the chapel. This object was effected in May, 1855, at a cost of £1,800. No sooner was the chapel reopened than every sitting was engaged, and hundreds of applications were refused for want of room. The church also increased at such a rapid rate that the chapel was found to be inadequate for the reception of the members at the Lord's table, the members being upwards of 860 persons, more than 550 of whom have been added during the period of two years and nine months."

Meanwhile the services at the Music Hall so increased in public favour that large numbers had to be turned away from the doors on every occasion, after the last standing-place was occupied. On Sunday, May 17, more than a thousand persons were thus disappointed. Many lords and ladies, whose titles are mentioned, were present, Lady Franklin, the widow of the ill-fated Arctic explorer, being of the number. Others were present whose experience was of more interest to the ordinary members of the congregation. There was, for example, a man there who had been an active advocate of Secularist opinions at Norwich; but having been converted from the error of his ways at one of Mr. Spurgeon's services, he had not only embraced the Christian faith, but had publicly burned all his infidel publications. Another man had not attended a religious service for thirty years.

Referring to the service of Sunday, August 9, The Morning Advertiser says that the congregation was held "in a state of breathless attention." The subject of the sermon was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Mr. James Grant appears to have been present, for it was remarked in his paper, "We never heard a subject handled in a more masterly manner." The discourse was a practical one; and it is added that, "in choosing occasionally such themes for his ministrations, Mr. Spurgeon only follows the example of his Master, whose preaching was remarkable for its preceptive character." The chief defect of the ordinary preaching was that it was either too exclusively doctrinal or too practical. The preacher at the Music Hall happily blended the two; and the suggestion is made that the discourse should be widely circulated. It is added that "there was not one single passage in the sermon to which anyone, be his denominational or theological opinions what they may, could take exception; and yet it was faithful, bold, and searching beyond any pulpit address of the kind to which it ever was our lot to listen. Were the world at large to embody habitually in their lives and conversation the great ethical duties which Mr. Spurgeon enforced with such intense earnestness and transcendent power, we should at once witness the advent of a great social and moral millenium."

While opinions similar to the above were harboured by an increasing number of friends, however, there were still many who professed to see nothing attractive in Mr. Spurgeon apart from a fine voice. His preaching, they held, was vulgar, while his gifts were not above mediocrity. It is even probable that in 1857 no small proportion of the young preacher's brother ministers would have partially agreed with such an estimate as the following:—

"On the pulpit, or rather the platform, Mr. Spurgeon imitates Gough, and walks up and down, and enlivens his sermons with dramatic representations. He is 'hail fellow well met' with his hearers. He has jokes and homely sayings and puns and proverbs for them. Nothing is too sacred for his self-complacent grasp; he is as free and unrestrained in God's presence as in man's. Eternity has unveiled its mysteries to him. In the agonies of the lost, in the joys of the redeemed, there is nothing for him to learn. His 'sweet Saviour,' as he irreverently exclaims, has told him all. Of course at times there is a rude eloquence on his lips, or, rather, a fluent declamation, which the mob around takes for such. The orator always soars with his audience. With excited thousands awaiting his lightest word, he cannot be passionless and unmoved. Words and thoughts are borne to him from them. There is excitement in the hour; there is excitement in the theme; there is excitement in the living mass; and, it may be as the preacher speaks of a physical hell and displays a physical heaven, some sensual nature is aroused, and a change may be effected in a man's career. Little causes may produce great events; one chance word may be the beginning of a new and a better life; but the thoughtful hearer will learn nothing, will be induced to feel nothing, will find that as regards Christian edification he had much better have stayed at home. At the best Mr. Spurgeon will seem to him a preacher of extraordinary volubility. Most probably he will return from one of Mr. Spurgeon's services disgusted with the noisy crowding, reminding him of the Adelphi rather than the house of God; disgusted with the commonplace prayer; disgusted with the questionable style of oratory; disgusted with the narrowness of the preacher's creed, and its pitiful misrepresentations of the glorious gospel of the blessed God; disgusted with the stupidity that can take for a divine afflatus brazen impudence and leathern lungs. Most probably he will come back confessing that Mr. Spurgeon is the youngest and the loudest and the most notorious preacher in London—little more; the idol of people who dare not go to theatres, and yet pant for theatrical

excitement.

Mr. Spurgeon's older friends at the Metropolitan Tabernacle are able to call up in memory many things relating to the preaching excursions into the country which were then constantly being undertaken. An intimate friend of the late pastor, and one who was for many years associated with him in Christian work, Mr. George Goldston of Hastings, has supplied the following pleasant countryside reminiscence, which at heart tends to prove that, despite what superfine critics in the Press might say, Spurgeon was pre-eminently the favourite preacher of the common people :—"In the early days of his ministry Mr. Spurgeon was peculiarly happy when surrounded by large gatherings of country people, to listen to the Gospel, as he preached to them in the green fields or country meadows. But of late years he had been compelled to avoid the risk of exposure to the open air; consequently, but few of his addresses so delivered are to be obtained from the printers of his sermons.

"Some of the old members of the church under his charge, however, can call to remembrance the wonderful scenes they witnessed on such occasions. What throngs of country folk, and from what distances they came, the variety of carts, vans, waggons, gigs, and carriages of almost every description!

"It was on such an occasion, in the summer of 1857, that several thousands of people met in a meadow of Mr. Jas. Rawlings, at a little village called Melbourne, a few miles from Cambridge. This lonely village, probably, was never so disturbed before; for more than a week previously busy hands were making preparation. Triumphal arches of evergreen, intermixed with bright flowers, surmounted with mottoes or words of welcome, greeted us from the village green and other open spaces. The shops displayed such bunting as their keepers possessed, while many of the cottages of the poor gave lively signs of the interest felt concerning the visit of the youthful preacher.

"At last the day arrived, and the weather being all that could be desired, the people came in from Cambridge, Royston, Baldock, Hitchin, and many other places round, until the meadow (a very large one) in which the service was to be held was nearly half filled with vehicles of various sorts and sizes, from the humble donkey cart to several superb carriages, drawn by valuable horses. When the preacher saw these carriages as he stood in a waggon from which to address the patient multitude, many of them having been waiting for hours, he said: 'I think our friends would do well to have the horses taken out of the carriages. We cannot edify the horses, but the carriages will be a great comfort to the occupants.' This being done, and it being now three o'clock, the time announced for the service to commence, Mr. Spurgeon, in full and clear voice, prayed; every heart seemed touched, a solemnity came upon the people, and attention to what would follow was evidently secured. Then came a cheerful hymn, sung so heartily that every face amongst that great gathering of people was lighted up with joy.

"And now followed the address, so sweetly simple, so full of tender earnestness—the Gospel put in language that all could understand; the appeals so direct that many felt the words were intended for themselves individually.

"The meadow having been cleared, preparation was made to have tea in the open air; and another address was given in the evening. It was estimated that eleven hundred persons took tea in the

meadow that afternoon, a very small proportion being able to sit down.

"In the evening the congregation consisted for the most part of the working people living within a few miles of the place, the carriage folk who had come from a distance having returned. Yet the numbers seemed not less than in the afternoon. And there was the same eagerness to hear: such is the attractive power of the Gospel over the human mind. The service, which lasted until dusk, was most impressive; and many hearts in Melbourne were made glad that day. A selected few accompanied the beloved preacher to the house of a friend where he was entertained; being one of the company, it is with vivid recollection that I think of the family gathering for prayer that night, when a blessing was sought for every helper in the day's work, as well as every hearer." In preaching away from home, Mr. Spurgeon now usually made it a condition that a collection should be taken for the building fund of his new Tabernacle. At first it was thought that a sum of £12,000 would suffice for such a chapel as was needed; but when, in the autumn of 1857, £5,000 had been collected, a total of £20,000 was being asked for; and not until half that amount had been secured would building operations be commenced. The Metropolitan Tabernacle eventually cost nearly £32,000, a sum which would have inspired feelings akin to despair if it had been known from the first that such an amount would be needed.

Chapter 31: A Sermon In The Crystal Palace

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A Sermon In The Crystal Palace

Spurgeon's Popularity still an Enigma to many—The British Quarterly Review—A Thanksgiving Meeting—Day of Prayer on Account of the Indian Mutiny—Spurgeon Preaches at the Crystal Palace—Reports concerning the Preacher—Spurgeon at Lowestoft,

The reaction of public feeling in Mr. Spurgeon's favour seemed to become more and more marked as the year 1857 advanced. The eager crowd at the Music Hall Sunday after Sunday so far increased in volume that, on every occasion of the doors being opened, a multitude which would in itself have constituted a large congregation had to turn away disappointed, unable to gain admission. The unique spectacle was a phenomenon which the town and its quidnuncs still professed to be unable to understand. Some, however, were knowing enough to find an explanation—it was the easiest thing in the world to command an audience in London, and if any doubted that simple truth it could be put to the test by their standing still for a time in Cheapside. Still, such reasoning as this went but a very little way; for anyone with common sense was well aware that for a preacher to attract and then keep a crowded congregation was really one of the most difficult of achievements. Competent judges who were not in full sympathy with Mr. Spurgeon's teaching, but who, nevertheless, wished to write impartially, saw this and made generous allowance in the preacher's favour. Some went further, and in what was being done recognised the hand of God. Thus, in the course of an article on the two annual volumes of sermons already published, a leading Quarterly remarked:—

"We believe ourselves that, to explain the fact presented in the Sunday meetings at the Surrey Gardens, we must go beyond the personal as found in the preacher, beyond the scheme of truth which he propounds, and beyond the nature to which he propounds it—that we must rest in nothing short of the Divine hand itself. The All-wise has often worked by instruments, and in ways, which would seem to have been chosen for the purpose of making a mock of the world's wisdom. He did so when he founded Christianity—he may do much like it again."

Certain characteristics which had contributed to Mr. Spurgeon's success have some reference made to them, such, for example, as his elocution, his dramatic power, his unflagging earnestness, and his faith in the Gospel to supply all the needs of man. The subject is then summed up:—

"But here comes a man—no Whitefield in voice, in presence, in dignity, or genius, who nevertheless, as with one stroke of his hand, sweeps away all this sickly sentimentalism, this craven misbelief. It is all to him as so much of the merest gossamer web that could have crossed his path. He not only gives forth the old doctrine of St. Paul, in all the strength of Paul's language, but with exaggerations of his own, such as Paul would have been forward to disavow. This man knows nothing of doubt as to whence the Gospel is, what it is, or wherefore it has its place among

us. On all such subjects his mind is that of a made-up man. In place of suspecting that the old accredited doctrines of the Gospel have pretty well done their work, he expects good from nothing else, and all that he clusters about them is for the sake of them. The philosophical precision, the literary refinements, the nice discriminations between what we may know of a doctrine and what we may not, leaving us in the end, perhaps, scarcely anything to know about it—all this, which, according to some, is so much needed by the age, is Mr. Spurgeon's utter scorn. He is the direct, dogmatic enunciator of the old Pauline truth, without the slightest attempt to soften its outline, its substance, or its results—and what has followed? Truly Providence would seem once more to have made foolish the wisdom of this world. While the gentlemen who know so well how people ought to preach are left to exemplify their profound lessons before empty benches and in obscure corners, the young man at the Surrey Gardens can point to his 9,000 auditors before him and ask—Who, with such a sight before him, dares despair of making the Gospel, the good Old Gospel, a power in the great heart of humanity?" The business of collecting funds for the erection of the new Tabernacle still went on. Any person walking along the Southwark High Street on Monday, September 7, would have noticed bills announcing a meeting for that evening at New Park Street for the purpose "of returning thanks to the Most High for the success that has attended the labours of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon in his endeavours to obtain the means for erecting a large Tabernacle where the masses may assemble to hear the Word of Life." On this occasion Mr. Spurgeon himself made a statement of some length which enabled all who were interested in the movement clearly to understand the situation. Reference was made to the services which had been held in Exeter Hall—services which had been derided and scouted at the time as undesirable innovations; but which had been fruitful in conversions, and otherwise so successful that the bishops of the Established Church were then doing the same kind of thing on their own account. Having then shown that the enlargement of New Park Street Chapel had been of little use, for the services were as crowded as they were before, he continued:—

"In order to assist in raising a fund for that purpose, a second series of services was commenced in Exeter Hall, which were being conducted with as great success as the first, when they were told, for some reason mysterious to him, that they could have the hall no longer. He did not wish to impute motives to anyone in respect of that matter, but he could never yet understand the reason why the hall was refused them, and why they were obliged to discontinue their services in it. That being the case, however, what were they to do? It was no use going back to their old chapel, as it could not contain the half of the numbers who came to attend the services, and the Surrey Music Hall having been found to be eligible, it was resolved to secure it, and try the holding of the services there as an experiment. He would not pain their feelings by alluding to the untoward circumstances attending their first meeting there. It was a painful prelude to most magnificent results, and Satan never met with a greater failure than he did in that attempt at coercion. Had it not been for the lamentable accident which took place on that occasion, so many thousands would never have been brought within the sound of the Gospel. That accident was the means of causing their meeting there to be known among the highest of the land; and although he considered this of little consequence, many of these had since attended their service, and heard the Gospel in its simplicity. Their meetings there had been eminently successful; but, in order fully to carry out their object, they must have a place of worship of their own, where they could have service when they pleased, and which would afford sufficient accommodation to those who might attend. At the present moment he could with certainty state that, had they such an edifice, 5,000 seats, at the

least, would find occupants, and he did so from seeing far more than that number, Sunday after Sunday, regularly hearing him in the Surrey Music Hall. They were, in fact, regular attenders, occupying always the same seat, and might be safely calculated on as hearers in a new place of worship had they one erected, and he had no doubt that could they effect their object, they would have the best and strongest church in London. To carry out that object then, a committee had been appointed, who had been unremitting in their labours to procure money for the erection of the building, and a site on which to erect it. Some three months ago he had the honour of breakfasting with Sir S. M. Peto, who promised him a hundred pounds donation when the foundation-stone of such a building was laid, and another hundred pounds when it was finished, besides a promise of further assistance. He also told him that he would cause his agent to look out for a site suitable for the erection of such a structure, in respect of which he was to communicate with the committee, but as he understood Sir M. Peto had been in Portugal mostly ever since, no conclusion had been come to in that respect." At this time some £4,000 appeared to be in hand, more being promised; and nearly £600 of the total had been collected by the pastor himself in. the way of collections after his services. During the preceding week he had secured £179 by such means, but then he had had to travel long distances, and to preach twice each day. The object of the meeting was to inspire the people with the enthusiasm in the enterprise which animated the pastor. The chief preaching occasion of the year was the great service at the Crystal Palace on Wednesday, October 7, which was set apart as a day of humiliation and prayer on account of the Indian Mutiny. Younger persons of the present generation will not be able to realise the intensity of feeling which the atrocities of that outbreak aroused; and even so good a friend as Dr. Campbell thought that Mr. Spurgeon spoke in too vindictive a strain. It was not always easy to be calm when reading details of the horrors which characterised the action of the rebels. The day was too wet and cold for the convenience of those who wished to turn the occasion into a holiday; but a sermon in the transept of the palace of glass at Sydenham had attraction for thousands. The trains commenced running at half-past seven in the morning; and by noon an immense congregation had assembled. The pulpit erected at the north-east corner of the transept was the one which had already done such good service at the Surrey Gardens. In the course of a brief prayer, the preacher commended to God those who had suffered through the mutiny—the widows and the fatherless. As regarded the soldiers he prayed God "to hid them remember that they are not warriors merely, but executioners, and bid them go with steady tramp to battle, believing that God wills that they shall utterly destroy the enemy that has defied Britain and denied themselves among men." The people sang a second time, the volume of sound producing a grand effect in the vast building; and then came the sermon, which was founded on Mic 6:9, "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." In the course of a sermon which lasted thirty-five minutes, the preacher said he looked upon the events in India as a national punishment inflicted upon this country by means of the Sepoys, who had voluntarily joined their standard, and had taken the oath of fidelity to her Majesty and her officers, and who had no cause to find fault, because they had been always petted and dandled on the knee of favouritism. If the people of India revolted, they might think they had patriots in their midst who sought to relieve their country from a tyrannical nation; but it was only men who were actuated by lust and ambition that had risen against them. They had now rebels to be executed, and he looked upon every gallows as a fearful evil, and regarded every gibbet as a dreadful visitation upon the land. Whenever the arm of the ruler was outstretched for the punishment of death, it must always be looked upon by the country as a serious affliction; but these men must be

punished; both heaven and earth demanded it. He did not believe this was a war at all in the proper sense of the term. Their troops were not fighting with the troops of an enemy, but were going forth against revolted subjects, who, by their crimes and murders and other unmentionable sins, had incurred the punishment of death. It was a horrible and dreadful thing to think of taking away the lives of their fellow-subjects, and they had that day to bemoan, amongst

Mr. Spurgeon Preaching at the Crystal Palace other evils, that the sword must be taken from the sheath to cut off their fellow-subjects by thousands. He saw God's hand in this war, and he hoped He had only ordained this evil in order that great good might follow from it. The sins of the Government of India had been black and deep; and those who had heard the shrieks of the tormented natives and the cries of dethroned princes might well prophesy that it would not be long before God would unsheath His sword to revenge the oppressed. Had it been the Indian nation that had revolted, he should have prayed to God that they might be brought under British rule again, for the sake of civilisation; but they should not preach a crusade against them lest they should be smiting patriots who were endeavouring to succour an oppressed country. He considered that the Indian Government should never have tolerated the religion of the Hindoos; but they had aided and abetted the folly for which God now visited them with His punishment. It was said that one part of the cause of the evil was the sin of the English people themselves, and there were certainly sins in the community that should never have been allowed. The horrible nuisance of Holy well Street had been long allowed to exist, although it was now pretty well done for; but what did they see in Regent Street and the Haymarket? If there was a crime for which God should punish England, it was the crime of allowing infamy to work out its designs in such places before their eyes. They knew likewise that lords and ladies sat in playhouses and listened to plays that were far from decent; and those sins of the community had in part brought the rod upon them. He also attributed the evil to the acts of those who only thought of their fellows as stepping-stones to gain. But he could not enumerate all the evils that had led to it. The Christian Church, in his opinion, had been remiss in its duty; but he hoped that its revival had begun, because last year had seen more preaching than any year since the days of the Apostles. They prayed that day; but when victory came to them, they would praise God by buying fireworks, by firing off rockets, and by illuminations, as they had done at the close of the late war. The preacher made a strong appeal on behalf of the sufferers in the mutiny. "Lives there a man who will refuse his help for those of his countrymen who have suffered? No, there does not live such a man; at least, none such in Britain. Was there such a miserable miscreant without a heart, who would, when God had given him enough, shut up his bowels of compassion? No! he would not slander them with the suspicion. He could not think there was such a monster present. When the plates were handed round let them give their pence if they could not give pounds; but let all give in accordance with their means." The collection for the Indian Belief Fund amounted to £675 16s. 111/2d., including £200 from the Crystal Palace Company out of the day's proceeds. Mr. Spurgeon's services were understood to be gratuitous. The "Hallelujah Chorus" and the benediction closed the service. The number of persons who entered the building was 23,654. This service was acknowledged to be the most notable thing which took place in connection with the fast day; but that class which can never be satisfied with anything, found plenty of reason to find fault. It was a dexterous dodge on the part of the Crystal Palace Company on the one hand; on the other hand it was not a becoming thing to make a religious service a chief attraction in a place devoted to amusement. Dr. Campbell stood forth as Mr. Spurgeon's defender. No reasonable objection could be raised; the place was a

proper one to preach in on such an occasion. The collection was not far short of all the other collections in London put together; while "the assembly was the largest ever addressed by a preacher of the Gospel in Europe or the world."

Having thus spoken on behalf of his friend, and expressed his satisfaction at the tone of the several pulpit utterances generally, Dr. Campbell went on to disclaim sympathy with the spirit of the prayer offered at the Crystal Palace, a part of which has been quoted. It was thought that the young preacher "somewhat forgot himself," which was much to be regretted. "For Mr. Spurgeon, however, large allowances ought to be made," it was added. "Had his profession been that of arms, he would probably have made a second Havelock, if not a Napoleon I. He has a soul within him equal to great enterprises But the idea of military butchery is most incongruous with the exercise of devotion." On Sunday, November 22, Mr. Spurgeon preached from Rev 3:19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." He stated that through the death of a child he was somewhat disqualified from preaching, and had almost felt that he would be unable to be present. The discourse was spoken of as "not so vigorous as usual;" but the congregation was in hearty sympathy with the pastor, and the hall was densely crowded in every part. The London correspondent of The Glasgow Examiner happened to be present at this service, and some kindly references to the preacher and his work appeared in the paper of that same week. Scottish readers were told that Mr. Spurgeon had preached from the text in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth;" and having thus quoted the wrong text, the Scottish journalist proceeded to make a somewhat singular comment upon it. "Mr. Spurgeon now lives in a splendid mansion," he remarked, "keeps a handsome one-horse carriage, and a large retinue of servants—four female and two male servants. His income is said to be a long way over a thousand pounds. His works will now considerably augment his stated income." Of course, good Dr. Campbell wished that people should beware of accepting such statements. They entrenched "a little on privacy." In this case the report was supposed to be "too good to be true;" but if it was correct, no man, it was averred, better deserved what had fallen to this young pastor's lot.

Tuesday, December 1, was a memorable day at Lowestoft, for Mr. Spurgeon preached twice in the town on behalf of the Baptist Chapel, and the collections amounted to almost £100. The services were held in the Continental Goods Depot of the North of Europe Steam Navigation Company, and three thousand persons were present on each occasion. Being carried at low fares, people came from the surrounding country in large numbers. The late Sir S. Morton Peto, the vicar of Lowestoft, and many of the clergy and Dissenting ministers, were also present, as were also representatives of the principal families resident in the district.

Chapter 32: "A Contradictory Gospel"

Chapter 32.

"A Contradictory Gospel" The Strict Baptists again—James Wells refuses to Preach with Spurgeon—Various Opinions—"The Saint and his Saviour"—Sample Extracts—A Prophecy.

During the year 1857 the doctrines preached by Mr. Spurgeon were again subjected to the criticisms of the Strict Baptists, who were also extreme Calvinists. The leader of the attack was no other than James Wells himself, who, as the ablest man of his denomination, was the recognised champion of his party. The veneration this eloquent preacher inspired was extraordinary; the influence he exercised was that of an apostle. "James Wells is sent of God to bring His people out of bondage," remarked one of his disciples; "this is his peculiar work; and where is there a man that can knock down a 'duty-faith' fabric and wheel away the rubbish like him?" In the spring of 1857 Mr. Wells had engaged to preach for a brother minister at Brighton, but when he learned that Mr. Spurgeon was invited to preach in the same building, the Strict Baptist teacher declined. He disavowed harbouring any unkind feelings towards Mr. Spurgeon, some things in whose ministry were right enough, although on the whole his teaching was "divided against itself." Hence, it would be more comfortable to keep "at an honest distance," as that was better than hypocritically professing to receive his message, and then to do as many had done, go and backbite the preacher. The man who could speak thus had no manner of sympathy with "the reproachful things said in the public papers of Mr. Spurgeon's ministry;" for he believed such things arose "from ignorance, envy, and prejudice." After all, the New Park Street pastor was honest and outspoken in uttering what he believed to be the truth. Mr. Wells then showed in brief in what sense he understood Mr. Spurgeon's preaching to be faulty when tested by the touchstone of Scripture. "Mr. Spurgeon informs us that he cannot reconcile Mat 11:20-21; Mat 11:23-24, with verses 25, 26, or with verses 28, 29, 30; so that by exalting mere Ninevite repentance (first five verses) into that repentance which God alone can bestow, he hereby makes the Holy Ghost a self-contradictory witness. He thus preaches a suicidal Gospel, a Gospel divided against itself. This is that piece of delusion which softens the great truths of the Gospel down to the taste of the carnal mind; and from such a Gospel I do most solemnly and conscientiously differ; and however this may tend to my unpopularity, a good conscience before God is with me a greater treasure than all the world can give."

Mr. Wilkins, the pastor at Brighton, to whom this was addressed, protested that he had no more sympathy with anything short of "a full, free, and effectual Gospel" than Mr. Wells himself. He might not agree with all that was taught at New Park Street, but there was too much of sovereign grace in the young pastor's teaching to allow of its being altogether rejected. "Seeing the many thousands in this metropolis regardless of God, the Bible, or the Sabbath, as I saw them yesterday in Whitechapel and elsewhere, I could say, 'Would to God a thousand Spurgeons were raised up to attract the multitude to hear the Word of Life.'"

Mr. Wells, however, was deaf to all entreaty to visit Brighton; he could have no fellowship with one who believed in duty-faith, or who held that men perished because they refused to believe in Christ. "Though I receive not the mark of error in my forehead so as openly to avow that error, yet if I give the right hand of fellowship to it, I do hereby receive the mark of error, though not in my forehead, yet I receive it in my hand." To talk about "a thousand Spurgeons" to preach to the crowds of East London was of no avail. Popularity counts for very little; it was "the hugeness of Popery, Church of Englandism, Wesleyanism, Mahometanism," which had awed so many into submission. Beyond that, "the nearer the counterfeit is in weight and appearance to the real coin the greater the danger, and the more complete the deception." The publication of the letters which were written by Mr. Wells and Mr. Wilkins produced many others which showed in what light Mr. Spurgeon was viewed by the straitest section of the Strict Baptists. One representative writer said:—"It may suit the giddy million to make sport with the bewitching philosophy of dramatic display, and to riot in the amusing freaks of art's airy-footed lore; but are the 'children of light' to be caught in the snare of popular talents and to be cheated by mere pulpit eloquence? Are dreams and delusions to captivate Zion?... I have not a particle of prejudice against the young and amiable aspirant after pulpit fame; but I have read his sermons, heard his preaching, and closely observed the profession and conduct of his followers; and upon the face of these things I see not the lively features of a healthy child." A number of letters having appeared, Mr. Wells returned to the subject; and after an examination of several sermons, the statements of which were compared with Scripture, the conclusion arrived at was, "Mr. Spurgeon belongs to the duty-faith class of preachers.... He preaches a self-contradictory Gospel." Mr. Wells then adds:—"Poison is generally given in something good; or else who that wished not to be poisoned could be so deceived as to take it? Duty-faith is a doctrine which secretly and in a most deadly manner poisons the mind against the very truths in connection with which it is preached. Some of the old duty-faith churches have become the greatest enemies to the truth which the truth has ever known; and yet because Mr. Spurgeon unconsciously throws this poison into the food, or that he does not believe it to be poison, I am to be hated because I will not join in partnership with such unscriptural trading. Be it so; I am content with my lot; and hope to my latest breath to prove the sincerity of my decision."

It would be a mistake to suppose, however, that the whole of the Strict Baptist denomination agreed with Mr. Wells. Many had their prejudices strengthened by what he said; but others honestly believed him to be altogether mistaken. Mr. C. W. Banks, as preacher and editor, had cordially welcomed Spurgeon to London in 1854, and he was still the young pastor's friend. "We have bidden him God-speed in all that was godlike, and of a true Gospel character," wrote Mr. Banks. "In these things we have had an advantage, perhaps, over Mr. Wells, who has, we believe, never either seen or heard Mr. Spurgeon."

It was towards the end of the year 1857 that Mr. Spurgeon's first book, apart from the published sermons, appeared. The work consisted of twelve chapters, and was entitled, "The Saint and his Saviour: the Progress of the Soul in the Knowledge of Jesus." The copyright, which was far more valuable than the author suspected, was sold for £50, and notwithstanding the extensive sale of the work, that modest honorarium was never supplemented. I could never quite understand how such a bargain came to be made at a time when the writer was already phenomenally popular. Being in the study at Helensburgh House, some years ago, I ventured to ask for some explanation, and the answer was, "At that time I thought £50 to be a good deal of money." More than twenty

years after its production, Mr. Spurgeon had the opportunity of buying back the copyright for £80; but he refused the offer, with the remark that he preferred writing a new book to giving that amount for an old one.

Although, as he tells us, Mr. Spurgeon prepared his work "chiefly for the Lord's family," there are passages in it addressed specially to unconverted readers. Taken altogether, the book is of great interest; for not only have the pages the freshness of youth upon them, but one may see who were the authors who had attraction for the preacher at the age of twenty-three. He gives attention to Byron and Thomson, Tennyson and Herbert, among poets; Seneca also has some share of attention; while among divines, Gill and Charnock, Udall and Chandler, are referred to. Like some of the early sermons, the book might have been the production of a man of long and wide Christian experience; and hence we find one reviewer saying that the book excites surprise when the author's age is remembered. There are also many passages in it which extreme Calvinists would have said were the offspring of duty-faith. The success of the book was immediate, and a steady sale appears to have continued until the present time. A passage or two may be given as examples of Mr. Spurgeon's early written style. This passage on the duty of not neglecting to look after penitent sinners shows his wide sympathy:—

"We find an excuse for inaction in the fancied hopelessness of sinners; while fastidious delicacy, by the fear of pollution, seeks to mask at once our indolence and pride. If we had right views of ourselves, we should judge none too base to be reclaimed, and should count it no dishonour to bear upon the shoulders of our sympathy the most wandering of the flock. We have amongst us too much of the spirit of 'Stand by, for I am holier than thou.' Those whom Jesus would have grasped by the hand, we will scarcely touch with a pair of tongs; such is the pride of many professors that they need but the name to be recognised at once as the true successors of the ancient Pharisees. If we were more like Christ, we should be more ready to hope for the hopeless, to value the worthless, and to love the depraved. The following anecdote, which the writer received from the lips of an esteemed minister of the Church of England, may perhaps, as a fact, plead more forcibly than words. A clergyman of a parish in Ireland, in the course of his visitations, had called upon everyone of his flock with but one exception. This was a woman of most abandoned character, and he feared that by entering her house he might give occasion of offence to gainsayers, and bring dishonour upon his profession. One Sabbath he observed her among the frequenters of his church, and for weeks after he noticed her attention to the Word of Life. He thought, too, that amid the sound of the responses he could detect one sweet and earnest voice, solemnly confessing sin, and imploring mercy. The bowels of his pity yearned over this fallen daughter of Eve; he longed to ask her if her heart were indeed broken on account of sin; and he intensely desired to speak with her concerning the abounding grace which, he hoped, had plucked her from the burning. Still, the same delicacy of feeling forbade him to enter the house; time after time he passed her door with longing look, anxious for her salvation, but jealous of his own honour. This lasted for a length of time, but at last it ended. One day, she called him to her, and with overflowing tears which well betrayed her bursting heart, she said, 'Oh, sir! if your Master had been in this village half as long as you have, He would have called to see me long ago! for surely I am the chief of sinners, and therefore have most need of His mercy.' We may conceive the melting of the pastor's heart, when he saw his conduct thus gently condemned by a comparison with his loving Master. From that time forth he resolved to neglect none, but to gather even the 'outcasts of

Israel.'"

He refers in one place to the friend at Newmarket from whom he learned much of his theology:—"The writer confesses his eternal obligations to an old cook, who was despised as an Antinomian, but who in her kitchen taught him many of the deep things of God, and removed many a doubt from his youthful mind." The following refers to losses by death:—

"We remember to have heard a preacher at a funeral most beautifully setting forth this truth in parable. He spoke thus:—'A certain nobleman had a spacious garden, which he left to the care of a faithful servant, whose delight it was to train the creepers along the trellis, to water the seeds in the time of drought, to support the stalks of the tender plants, and to do every work which could render the garden a Paradise of flowers. One morning he rose with joy, expecting to tend his beloved flowers, and hoping to find his favourites increased in beauty. To his surprise, he found one of his choicest beauties rent from its stem, and, looking around him, he missed from every bed the pride of his garden, the most precious of his blooming flowers. Full of grief and anger he hurried to his fellow-servants, and demanded who had thus robbed him of his treasures. They had not done it, and he did not charge them with it; but he found no solace for his grief till one of them remarked:—"My lord was walking in the garden this morning, and I saw him pluck the flowers and carry them away." Then truly he found he had no cause for his trouble. He felt it was well that his master had been pleased to take his own, and he went away smiling at his loss, because his lord had taken them. So,' said the preacher, turning to the mourners, 'you have lost one whom you regarded with much tender affection. The bonds of endearment have not availed for her retention upon earth. I know your wounded feelings when, instead of the lovely form which was the embodiment of all that is excellent and amiable, you behold nothing but ashes and corruption. But remember, my beloved, the Lord hath done it; He hath removed the tender mother, the affectionate wife, the inestimable friend. I say again, remember your own Lord hath done it; therefore do not murmur, or yield yourselves to an excess of grief.' There was much force as well as beauty in the simple allegory: it were well if all the Lord's family had grace to practise its heavenly lesson, in all times of bereavement and affliction."

One notable passage is really autobiographical; for it refers to that distressing time, just after the Surrey Gardens catastrophe, when the preacher was unable to continue his daily work, and when to his friends it seemed that reason herself would be dethroned. I have heard Mr. Spurgeon refer to that time, and whenever he spoke of what he then passed through, he would vividly picture his experience. Here are the passages relating to this period as given in his first book:—

"On a night which time will never erase from my memory, large numbers of my congregation were scattered, many of them wounded and some killed, by the malicious act of wicked men. Strong amid danger, I battled the storm, nor did my spirit yield to the overwhelming pressure while my courage could reassure the wavering or confirm the bold. But when, like a whirlwind, the destruction had overpast, when the whole of its devastation was visible to my eye, who can conceive the anguish of my spirit? I refused to be comforted; tears were my meat by day, and dreams my terror by night. I felt as I had never felt before. 'My thoughts were all a case of knives,' cutting my heart in pieces, until a kind of stupor of grief ministered a mournful medicine to me. I could have truly said, 'I am not mad, but surely I have had enough to madden me, if I should indulge in meditation on it.' I sought and found a solitude which seemed congenial to me. I could

tell my grief to the flowers, and the dews could weep with me. Here my mind lay, like a wreck upon the sand, incapable of its usual motion. My Bible, once my daily food, was but a hand to lift the sluices of my woe. Prayer yielded no balm to me; in fact, my soul was like an infant's soul, and I could not rise to the dignity of supplication.... Then came the 'slander of many'—barefaced fabrications, libellous slanders, and barbarous accusations. These alone might have scooped out the last drop of consolation from my cup of happiness, but the worst had come to the worst, and the utmost malice of the enemy could do no more. Lower they cannot sink who are already in the nethermost depths. Misery itself is the guardian of the miserable. All things combined to keep me for a season in the darkness where neither sun nor moon appeared. I had hoped for a gradual return to peaceful consciousness, and patiently did I wait for the dawning light. But it came not as I had desired, for He who doeth for us exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or think, sent me a happier answer to my requests. I had striven to think of the immeasurable love of Jehovah, as displayed in the sacrifice of Calvary; I had endeavoured to muse upon the glorious character of the exalted Jesus; but I found it impossible to collect my thoughts in the quiver of meditation, or, indeed, to place them anywhere but with their points in my wounded spirit, or else at my feet, trodden down in an almost childish thoughtlessness. On a sudden, like a flash of lightning from the sky, my soul returned unto me. The burning lava of my brain cooled in an instant. The throbbings of my brow were still; the cool wind of comfort cooled my cheek, which had been scorched in the furnace. I was free, the iron fetter was broken in pieces, my prison door was open, I leaped for joy of heart. On wings of a dove my spirit mounted to the stars—yea, beyond them. Whither did it wing its flight? and where did it sing its song of gratitude? It was at the feet of Jesus, whose name had charmed its fears, and placed an end to its mourning. The name—the precious name of Jesus—was like Ithuriel's spear, bringing back my soul to its own right and happy state. I was a man again, and what is more, a believer. The garden in which I stood became an Eden to me, and the spot was then most solemnly consecrated in my most grateful memory. Happy hour, thrice blessed Lord, who thus in an instant delivered me from the rock of my de pair, and slew the vulture of my grief! Before I told to others the glad news of my recovery, my heart was melodious with song, and my tongue endeavoured tardily to express the music. Then did I give to my Well-Beloved a song touching my Well-Beloved; and oh! with what rapture did my soul flash forth His praises! but all—all were to the honour of Him, the first and the last, the Brother born for adversity, the Deliverer of the captive, the Breaker of my fetters, the Restorer of my soul. Then did I cast my burden upon the Lord; I left my ashes and did array myself in the garments of praise, while He did anoint me with fresh oil. I could have riven the very firmament to get at Him, to cast myself at His feet, and lay there bathed in the tears of joy and love. Never since the day of my conversion had I known so much of His infinite excellence, never had my spirit leaped with such unutterable delight. Scorn, tumult, and woe seemed less than nothing for His sake. I girded up my loins to run before His chariot, and shout forth His glory, for my soul was absorbed in the one idea of His glorious exaltation and divine compassion." This shows that the young pastor's mind was near upon being unhinged by the experience he passed through during this season. He was never quite the same after the catastrophe that he had been previously. Until the age of twenty-two he had hardly known the meaning of illness; but after the year 1856, his ailments were many and frequently severe. When it appeared at this time, the book struck certain critics as being a curious production. "It is not a didactic treatise," remarked one reviewer, "it is, in fact, not a treatise at all, but a leviathan sermon, addressed to a mixed congregation, comprising a variety of classes,

between whom there is an intimate relation.... The thunder and lightning, the rant and rapture, by which he rules supreme over a mixed audience of any magnitude, have no place here. All is calm and gentle and tender. To attain the success which, in this respect, marks the effort, has doubtless been no easy matter; the work may be designated Mr. Spurgeon's penance volume. His talents, tastes, and habits all look in an opposite direction, and go some way to unfit him for literary effort in solitude."

While confessing that the work had been composed amid other incessant toils, and that writing was to him the work of a slave, the author still expressed the hope that he might serve his Master with the pen as well as the voice, but he was told by the critic just quoted "to moderate his expectations in this quarter;" and then it was shown how small was the number of eminent men who had succeeded with both tongue and pen. It was not likely that the eloquent pastor of New Park Street would be any exception as a mere orator to a number of illustrious men who were named. "Their indisposition to use the pen increased with time; and so will his," we find it remarked; "and to such a length did their self-created incapacity grow on them that they became almost incapable of correspondence; and so will he. We believe he is well-nigh so now." Probably, a prophecy more wide of the mark was never made. The truth is that the love of authorship grew on Mr. Spurgeon as he advanced in life; and the number of his books and magazine articles, apart from sermons, would represent quite a respectable lifework had he been nothing more than a littérateur. He also wrote a larger number of private letters than any great man I ever heard of, or than one might have thought possible in the case of a public servant who constantly had a thousand other calls on his time and energy.

Chapter 33: A Great Missionary Program

Chapter 33.

A Great Missionary Sermon The Strict Baptists at the Surrey Gardens—Further Notices by Dr. Campbell—A Disaster at Halifax—Annual Sermon for the Baptist Missionary Society—Services on Epsom Racecourse—An American Visitor's Description—Services in Cambridgeshire—Visit to Ireland—Illness—Meeting at New Park Street Chapel.

The year 1858 was remarkable for many things. It had a great comet, the like of which modern sky-gazers had never seen; there was a nearly total eclipse of the sun; there was a great Revival in the United States, and some awakening at home, especially in connection with the continued services of Mr. Spurgeon at the Surrey Gardens. The strain of this work now began to tell on the young preacher, however; and before the close of the year we shall find him overtaken by his first serious illness. At the opening of the year the bank had a sum of £5,000 in hand on account of the new Tabernacle, £2,000 being promised in addition. In regard to the services, conversions were reported to be very numerous, additions being made to the Church every month. At this time Mr. Spurgeon himself baptised the persons accepted for Church membership, a practice he was compelled to relinquish in after years. On one memorable week-night evening at New Park Street Chapel, after the pastor had immersed eighteen, a young person was also immersed by a Pædobaptist minister, who was present as representing an Independent congregation at Kennington. While thus practising adult baptism by immersion, however, the Independent, from the baptistery, stoutly defended the practice of infant baptism as being in accordance with the teaching of Scripture. The popularity of the preacher was now quite unparalleled so far as the English-speaking race was concerned; the crowds continued to be phenomenal whenever and wherever he was announced to preach; and Spurgeon had become an attractive subject for newspapers both at home and in the United States, where his published sermons commanded an immense sale. Dr. Campbell pronounced this popularity not only to be "a great fact," but "the most remarkable thing of the sort on the face of the earth."

We can well suppose that it was not altogether pleasing to certain of his compeers to see Mr. Spurgeon monopolise the Music Hall as though no other preacher was competent to preach in such a building. Just after the Christmas holidays, therefore, street placards announced that Mr. James Wells would give a discourse in the place on Sunday evening, January 10, 1858. While speaking on St. Paul's address to Felix in the morning of that day, Mr. Spurgeon's voice gave some signs of failing. When Mr. Wells ascended the pulpit there were over 10,000 persons present to hear him. He mentioned thirteen charges which the Holy Spirit brought against the human race, and which had been met by Christ. Some of his followers, who were even more strict in their notions than James Wells himself, were very angry at such an experiment being made. Mr. Charles Waters Banks, as editor-in-chief of the body, quite approved of the Surrey Tabernacle being closed for once, especially as the great assembly at the Surrey Gardens contributed £50 to the funds of the Christian Blind Relief Society. The congregation was as large as Mr. Spurgeon's

in the morning, and though held in a dark winter evening, passed off without the slightest hitch.

Early in February Dr. Campbell again favoured the world with a review to date of Mr. Spurgeon's work and writings. The young preacher had marked out a path for himself, his one unselfish aim being to do good. He did not, as some had done, get up a number of sermons with care, preach them all over the land, and then publish them; he preached as well as printed for usefulness. The discourses were divinity for the million; while as an orator the Music Hall preacher had outdone Erskine himself, who spoke three volumes of published speeches in three weeks. "Nothing like this has been heard of since the world began," it is added. "The man who preaches ten times weekly has no leisure for the manufacture of glittering paragraphs and polished periods." Of the discourses already published it was remarked: "There are no other volumes in the English tongue from which the preacher may obtain so much insight into the most efficient methods of addressing mixed multitudes." A reference was also made to the United States:—

"The Americans of the present hour may be received as standing somewhere between the living generation of Englishmen and the generation to be born; and it is not improbable that the judgment they form will be substantially the judgment of posterity. They are far removed from the scene of strife, where there has been, in relation to this subject, such a display of ignorance and folly, and misapprehension, misrepresentation, and falsehood. Mr. Spurgeon has, beyond question, been the best abused and the most exalted man of this generation; but there is reason to believe he has been very little influenced by the one or the other." The catholicity of the sermons is also warmly commended:—

"Thorough Baptist though Mr. Spurgeon is, and ever ready to avow it where circumstances, in his view, require it, he is not one of those who preach the Gospel knee-deep in water. The New Park Street pulpit is perfectly dry. Only in one instance the Baptist appears, and even then but for a moment, and neither his aspect nor his utterance is at all offensive. Many and terrible, however, are the thrusts dealt out to bitter bigotry of every description." The English of the sermons is pronounced perfect; "so fine and so idiomatic that it would scarcely lose by comparison with the writings of John Bunyan himself." Another peculiarity is then pointed out—the sermons were "an extraordinary mixture of prose and verse. They comprise a larger amount of poetic fragments than any other in any language published. We doubt if the memory of any other living man be the depository of so much sacred poetry. Were all the collections extant to be burnt to-morrow, Mr. Spurgeon, we think, would have no difficulty in producing from memory one or more every way sufficient for all the purposes of worship. But it will be perilous for any man, in this respect, to imitate Mr. Spurgeon without the possession of his peculiar powers. However telling these poetic pellets may be, well selected Scriptures in the lips of Mr. Spurgeon would be infinitely better; and Mr.

Spurgeon, even, without diminishing his exaction from the poets, would greatly improve his preaching by drawing more extensively on the prophets and apostles." On April 7, in what was really wintry weather, Mr. Spurgeon visited Halifax, where a disaster occurred which might have surpassed in evil consequences the panic at the Music Hall, had it happened a little earlier in the day. "We are not prepared to say that the accident arose from any defect in the temporary building erected for the occasion in the Peace Hall," says a contemporary account; "but as the occupants of the gallery were dispersing, a number of boards or planks gave way with a loud noise, and a

host of people were thrown heavily upon one another. Frightful screams were heard from the women, and a report was circulated that the gallery had given way." A high wind and a heavy fall of snow appear to have been the cause of the accident. A man and a woman were carried away, each with a broken leg, and some inconvenience was caused by thieves. That no lives were lost was always attributed by Mr. Spurgeon to providential interposition. The increasing popularity of the pastor of New Park Street Chapel led to his services being more often sought for special occasions. Whatever may have been thought of him before he was fully "received" by the London ministers, it no longer answered to ignore a man as an adventurer who could achieve what was far beyond the power of any other living preacher. It occurred to the committee of the Baptist Missionary Society to ask Mr. Spurgeon to preach the annual sermon on behalf of their cause, and this he consented to do, the result being that the occasion surpassed anything that had ever been known in the history of the denomination. It was arranged for the service to be held in the Music Hall at the Surrey Gardens on Wednesday morning, April 28, and before the time for commencing the vast building was densely crowded with an expectant audience, who put £150 into the plates at the collection. Dr. Campbell, who would appear to have been present, describes the meeting as "a magnificent affair." He also remarks that "the great preacher was, as usual, completely at home, full of heart, vivacity, and business." What a contrast the scene was to the anniversaries at Surrey Chapel in years before, when one or another leading minister gave a "great" sermon. "Mr. Spurgeon cannot devote weeks, if not months, to the preparation of such a sermon, and then take a fortnight's rest to recruit his strength before the great day. All his days are great, and they come in such rapid succession as to exclude the possibility of finish and elaboration, even if he aspired to it. But with him there is no aiming at greatness; exhibition has no place in his thoughts. In the proper sense he preaches, and preaches not to the ministers but to the people, and he has his reward." The sermon was founded on Psa 46:8-9, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire." In opening his subject the preacher described what had already happened in the world, giving some account of the origin and progress of the society for which he pleaded. He then went on to speak of what would ultimately be achieved. As regarded the desolations which had happened from time to time in the world's history, all had in the course of God's good providence worked for good:—

"War and tumult were but the rough physic which God used to purge the world. As it was in the beginning, so should it be until the end; the blood of their sisters would be avenged, not by the sword, but by the Gospel. In India the arm of God would be felt, the name of God would be acknowledged. Let them not, therefore, now tremble, for all things would work together for good. The preacher then called the attention of the audience to the desolations of false worship, passing in review the idolatry of Babylon and Assyria, observing that, to a large extent, their worship had been broken down, and they had become memorials of past ages. He then called their attention to the idols of Rome, remarking that they had long ago been east to the moles and the bats. The attention of the audience was then called to the desolation God had made in false philosophy, noticing in order the various descriptions of infidelity, in the course of which he said he believed that he one day should see the last infidel buried, and at the funeral there would be some other person to start up a new system. This text, he said, had special reference to the desolations of war. If they went through the world, everywhere they would see what war had done and the desolations it had made. The people of India should be subdued, not by the sword, but by the

Gospel. The shot of the Gospel should be fired against them. The time he believed was coming when the statue of Nelson on the top of the monument would be upset, and that of Whitefield would be placed up instead; when the statue of Napier would be thrown down and John Wesley erected there. There was a day coming when every statue representing this world's greatness in London would be sold for old iron or old brass. They gave all honour to those men now, but these were the days of their ignorance; when the Gospel superseded them they would be enlightened, and they would then be forgotten. They were to look at the text as a prophecy that it was to be fulfilled. They were to look at the figure of the text. Some day he thought they would be awakened, and one would say to another, 'Come, behold the works of the Lord; what desolation He has made in the earth.' They would see their soldiers march rank and file and lay down their arms. Someone, he was sure, would see it; and happy he who was permitted to do so. The preacher closed with an earnest desire that all those churches who were not connected with the Baptist Missionary Society—and he knew there were many—would speedily become so. He thought there was not enough interest taken in missions. Many, he believed, never thought anything about them till the annual sermon was preached, when they, on that day, put the very smallest piece of coin—a threepenny-piece—in the plate. They liked the mission; but they were like the girl that never told her love; and when there was anything to be done they pinched and screwed the mouth of their purse to the smallest possible point. Mr. Spurgeon then referred to the want of missionaries for foreign lands, remarking on the various things they required. It was the want, he said, of true religion at home that prevented them from looking for any great success abroad. They wanted the brethren to be more earnest in prayer, more earnest in labour. He did agree with those who said the former days were better than these. They wanted an outpouring of the Divine Spirit at home. They were to begin to preach the Gospel at home and then go abroad; and then the Gospel would spread, like a sea of glory, from shore to shore."

What was called "An Ecclesiastical Duty Day" came off on Friday, June 11, when Mr. Spurgeon preached in the saloon of the Grand Stand on Epsom racecourse on behalf of a chapel at Epsom. "The appearance of such a man in such a place is a new thing in the earth—another remarkable sign of the times," remarked Dr. Campbell. "We shall not be surprised next year to find Mr. Spurgeon a chief performer on the Derby Day! He is clearly born for deeds of daring, and nothing seems beyond his devout ambition, or above his singular powers." The day was long remembered as a remarkable one; about 1,500 persons attended at the afternoon and at the evening service, and a sum of £60 was collected for the chapel fund. On Sunday, June 13, Henry M. Field, one of the editors of The New York Evangelist, visited the service at the Surrey Gardens, and of course sent home his impressions. Spurgeon was described as "one of the lions of London—a rather young lion to be sure; but one who, since his appearance in the field, has roared so loudly as to make all the nation hear; and every stranger who wishes to 'do' the sights of Babylon, must, for once at least, see and hear him." The description of the preacher's appearance was by no means true to life; but justice was done to his matchless voice, which rang through the hall "like a clarion," The singing was especially grand on account of the multitude of voices. Before the sermon commenced a little scene occurred which must have awakened the sympathy of the whole assembly:—"Mr. Spurgeon announced that a telegraphic despatch had just been received, calling for a person who was supposed to be present, and who was summoned away by a severe domestic calamity. The man whose name had been called came forward much agitated to the pulpit, to receive the message." The sermon was on the Wicked Man's Life, Funeral, and Epitaph,

the text being Ecc 8:10. The American visitor had gone to the service with some misgiving, but he came away perfectly reassured:—

"I had seen Mr. Spurgeon criticised and ridiculed in the English journals as a clerical mountebank, and I did not know but he might appear as a theatrical performer in the pulpit. But the critic who can deride Mr. Spurgeon as a charlatan must be insensible to any demonstrations of oratorical power.... The same evening we heard him again in his own chapel in New Park Street, and after the service we saw him in the vestry and had a very pleasant interview. I had a natural apprehension that he must be breaking down from excessive labour. But he assured me that he was in robust health. He said that his constant speaking was the best exercise for him, and that he should die if he did not preach ten or twelve times a week. I asked him when he found time to study, to which he replied that he could give but little preparation to his sermons, often entering the pulpit with not more than fifteen minutes' previous thought of his subject.

"But he has lately contrived to have some degree of leisure. He has taken a house out by Clapham Common, at several miles' distance from his church, to avoid interruptions. His deacons do all his visiting, and hence, in the intervals of his public duties, he is able to snatch a few hours for study and books. I suspect, too, that he has read largely in former years. He appears to be very familiar with the old divines, especially with Bunyan, whom he calls the greatest of Englishmen.... I think he would have been injured rather than benefited if he had been educated at one of the universities, and spent the years in studying Latin and Greek which he has turned to much better account in studying Bunyan and the people of England." On July 2 we find Mr. Spurgeon again preaching in the pretty Cambridgeshire village of Melbourne, on behalf of the Baptist Chapel, of which a young man, Mr. E. Bailey, educated in the College, and at that time not twenty years old, was the pastor. Tents were erected, and 600 persons sat down to tea, though the weather was unsettled. The services appear to have been held in the open air. About 3,000 assembled in the afternoon, and over double that number in the evening, when the text was, "Come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." A year before, services had been held in Melbourne, and the collections for the great Tabernacle in London exceeded in amount any collection that had been made, with the single exception of that given at Sheffield. The success of young men like Mr. Bailey encouraged the founder of the Pastors' College to persevere in his enterprise. On Tuesday, July 6, Mr. Spurgeon was at St. James's Hall, where he preached the centenary sermon of the Orphan Working School, Haverstock Hill. At this time a report was circulated that the Music Hall at the Surrey Gardens was about to be opened for amusements on Sunday evenings, in which case, it was intimated, Mr. Spurgeon would refuse to use the hall in the morning. At the same time it would be necessary to find some other spacious place in which those who flocked in such multitudes to hear the Gospel could be accommodated; for the young pastor publicly announced at the Surrey Gardens that he would not attempt to preach at New Park Street more than once on the Sunday, and he even spoke of going to America if no suitable building were found for him at home. This called forth a letter from the manager of the Surrey Gardens Company, intimating that the directors had no intention of opening the great hall on Sundays for any other purpose than that of divine worship.

During this summer an interesting visit to Ireland came off; and from particulars given by observers, Mr. Spurgeon's preaching was hardly more successful with the Irish of certain classes than it had been with the equally critical Highlanders. Dr. James Morgan, who was the pastor of

Fisherwick Place Church, Belfast, attended several of the services, and he remarks:—

"August 28.—We have had a visit from Mr. Spurgeon, of London. He preached four times, and I heard him thrice, and must say I was not disappointed, although the mass of the people were so. His sermons were sound and able, and interspersed with good and appropriate anecdotes. There was sometimes more humour or drollery in them than suited the solemnity of the pulpit. Still, one charm of his services lay in these. Had they not been used, I question if his popularity would have been so great, or, indeed, have existed at all. His elocution is very good, and his voice most admirable. When he preached, as he did once, in the Botanic Gardens, he was well heard by 7,000 persons—the number said to have been present. I trust good results may be gathered from his ministry. He was well received, and deserved to be so, for his plain, honest, and good preaching and deportment. I much question, however, if his influence was so good as that of Mr. Guinness, who preceded him by a few months. There was a great contrast between them. Mr. Spurgeon was gay, lively, and humorous; but Mr. Guinness was solemn and earnest and very reserved. Mr. Spurgeon is by far the abler man. Yet were there a poll to-morrow in Belfast for the two, it would be in favour of Mr. Guinness. Deep seriousness and earnestness go far—very far. I have no doubt they were very prominent in our blessed Lord. I have traced happy and gracious results to the ministry of Mr. Guinness." On the last Sunday of September, Mr. Spurgeon was able to acquaint his congregation with the fact that at length a site, near the "Elephant and Castle," had been secured for the new Tabernacle, for which the owners, the Fishmongers' Company, would receive a sum of £5,000, so that it was desirable for all to continue their efforts in collecting for the building fund. While all were thus working for the erection of a house in which the multitude could hear the Gospel in London, it must have been a great joy to the young preacher to know that a chapel suitable to the needs of the villagers was being erected at Teversham, where, only about seven years before, he had preached his first sermon. Another cause of satisfaction at this time was the success of Mr. James Spurgeon, who was attracting very large congregations in the North of England, and who, some thought, would become as popular as his brother. As regarded the chapel at Teversham, a desire was expressed to undertake the enterprise in the year 1855, but the design was not completed until 1858. It was proposed that the little sanctuary should be named Spurgeon Chapel; but when that was mentioned to Mr. Spurgeon he did not at all fall in with the idea. In reply to an invitation to preach at the opening in September—the suggestion of the name being also mentioned in the letter—the following reply was received by the secretary:—

"Clapham, August 7, 1858.

"My Dear Brother—

"There is a little mistake somewhere about opening the chapel at Teversham. I told Mr. Vinter that I would preach there to clear off any debt that might remain, but I never thought of opening it. September is long since over with me as to any promises or engagements. I am prepared, however, to give a service, say in the summer of next year, on that account; as to the name, that was but a freak of my fancy. It is true there are one or two chapels here and there which I have mainly built, and these bear the builder's name, but this was done by French leave and without any desire on my part.

"I feel a veneration for the old house in which I first preached, and I confess I am silly enough to believe that the fact will not be forgotten, but I have no desire to have that commemorated which

will not be forgotten. Treat that as one of my jokes, and, above all things, do not do it; especially as some stronger brethren would not like it.—I am, ever yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon." As already intimated, it was in the fall of this year that Mr. Spurgeon was overtaken with the first serious illness since his coming to London. He preached at the Surrey Gardens on Sunday, October 10, but did not occupy the pulpit there again until November 7. Meanwhile, very alarming reports were current concerning the gravity of the crisis. It was evident that the preacher had been drawing too heavily on his strength, and that the breakdown was the result of overwork. "We confess to the most entire and intense sympathy in this matter," wrote Dr. Campbell. "The accounts we heard were of so grave a nature that we could not rest satisfied without making special inquiry, which, we regret to say, resulted in the confirmation of nearly all that we had heard; but we rejoice to add, it was also found that the worst was apparently past, and that there is now good ground for hope for a perfect, although it may be a slow, recovery. The marvel is not that Mr. Spurgeon, unparalleled in the present century, should at length have been reminded that with all his mental and moral might and physical capability, he is still mortal." A few days later the sufferer was reported to be rapidly gaining strength; and on the first Sunday in November the familiar voice was once more heard ringing through the Surrey Gardens Hall. By this time the site for the new chapel had cost altogether £5,400, and a large board erected on the spot invited subscriptions. On Monday evening, December 13, a tea-meeting to report progress, at which 900 persons sat down, was held at New Park Street Chapel. A sum of nearly £10,000 bad been collected. The congratulations on Mr. Spurgeon's recovery were many, and all rejoiced that, after very tedious negotiations, a freehold site had been secured. It is curious to find thus early the question being asked, "What would become of the great Tabernacle if the pastor should die?" One who was present answered, "That the same God who had sent Mr. Spurgeon would send his successor." Mr. Spurgeon himself said:—

'I do not feel in speaking order to-night, because I feel to have something in my heart so big that I am not able to get it out, and I do not think I can add anything to what has already been said. I cannot, however, resist the temptation of saying a few words on a topic which you may think far remote from the object of the meeting. The times in which we live are most wonderful; and I wish that this church should be in the future what it has been in the past—the advance-guard of the times. I cannot help observing that during the last four or five years a wonderful change has come over the Christian mind. The Church of England has been awakened. How has this been accomplished, and what means have been used? Great services have been held. I cannot help remembering that God honoured us to let us stand in the front of this great movement. From our example the blessed fire has run along the ground and kindled a blaze, which shall not soon be extinguished. "When I first heard that clergymen were to preach in Exeter Hall, my soul leaped within me, and I was ready to exclaim, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.' When I heard that Westminster Abbey was opened for the preaching of the Gospel, and then St. Paul's Cathedral, I was overwhelmed with gratitude, and prayed that only the truth as it is in Jesus might be preached in these places; that the ministers might travail in birth for souls; that Christ might be found in them the hope of glory. I never felt such a union to the Church of England as I now do. The fact is, that when a youth in the country, I was accustomed to associate with the name of clergyman that of fox-hunting and such-like; I abhorred them, for I thought they were all like that. Now I see them anxious to win souls to Christ, and I love them. I can't help loving them; and as long as they go on to feel the value of souls I shall continue to pray for them. Now, seeing that the

Lord has thus honoured us, we must lead on; our movements are observed and we must not take one step backwards. We must progress with our movements. I don't like to hear anything said in our disparagement; we must still lead the van. What if God should spread the late revival, and let the New Park Street Church still go on as the advanced guard? Now, as to the Tabernacle. I am quite certain that it will be built, and that I shall preach in it; and I have no doubt that the money will be forthcoming—that is no burden to me. Some of you have done a very great deal, but you ought to have done a very great deal more. There are others who, if measured by 'oughts,' ought not to have done so much, while others have spared themselves and kept their unholy mammon. Yet we have not done so badly after all; for after purchasing the site we have a balance in hand of £3,600. I hope that you will all agree that the spot is a most eligible one; though some recommended Kensington, others Holloway, and others Clapham." The year 1858 thus came to a close happily. The future was bright with promise. Eventually one friend in the west gave £5,000 to the building fund, while another lent a large sum free of interest, so that there should be no difficulty in paying the accounts.

Chapter 34: "De Propaganda Fide"

Chapter 34.

"De Propaganda Fide"

Lecture for the Young Men's Christian Association at Exeter Hall—Spurgeon in a New Character—Passages from the Lecture—The Preacher's Growth—Arrangements for visiting the United States—Visit to Scotland.

On Tuesday evening, January 4, 1859, I had the happiness of being one of the crowd that had assembled at Exeter Hall to hear Mr. Spurgeon's lecture to the Young Men's Christian Association entitled "De Propaganda Fide." The winter course of lectures had opened on November 17, the 300th anniversary of the accession of Queen Elizabeth, and taken as a whole the series appeared to be of somewhat exceptional interest. The appearance of the name of the young preacher of the Surrey Gardens Music Hall among the other literary or reverend magnates whose services had been secured awakened very general curiosity. This was partly accounted for by the fact that Mr. Spurgeon would appear in a new character, for since his coming to London he had not ventured to appear before the public as a lecturer. Then the title of his lecture struck people as being quite as odd as the circumstance of his lecturing at all. He was asked, "How on earth came you to choose a Latin title for your lecture?" Others who took even a more serious view of the matter asked, "What does he know about Latin?" adding with the authority of well-informed observers, "He may know a little about Saxon, but of Latin he knows nothing." Still, the lecturer, who had already begun to have more confidence in his own judgment than in that of his critics, thought there was wisdom in the phrase; and evidently he did not care to have it altogether monopolised by the Roman Catholic missionaries. Hence, when he had consented to speak to the young men of London, and was asked what the subject would be, he at once replied, "De Propaganda Fide!" The lectures had all been well attended; but no one present on this occasion could ever forget the extra excitement and the additional crowding. Long before the time of opening the doors the crowd was assembled, and the stairs leading to the great hall were blocked by the eager and expectant audience. When he came on to the platform, Mr. Spurgeon was perhaps even more cordially received than usual, for he had only recently recovered from what had been the most severe illness from which he had ever suffered. It was meet, also, to give some rounds of cheers, expressive of a little extra enthusiasm, when a young man of twenty-four was about to enter upon a new department of service. Never did a popular orator, in face of a vast audience, appear to be more self-possessed. Mr. Robert Bevan occupied the chair, and sitting beside him were such well-known personages as Dr. Campbell, Lord Ebury, the Hon. A. Kinnaird, Mr. George Hitchcock, and others.

Mr. Spurgeon remarked at the outset that he felt he should have to give a sermon, such being the force of habit in one who had contracted a strong habit of preaching; but the subject was so far a convenient one that if he wandered from it the people would be able to say that he did not understand his title. The first thing to be done was to explain what was meant by the Propagation

of the Faith, a question which needed to be answered, first negatively and then positively:—

"By the Propagation of the Faith he did not mean the nominal Christianity of nations; to bring people merely nominally under the bond of the Covenant was nothing. It was in vain they were Baptists, and had Christian names given them—Chaos made way for John, or Lucius was displaced for Mary. While the Spirit of God was not in it, all was useless. The Romanists tried this, but all in vain. If it were possible to-morrow to gather all Mahomedans and heathens to bow down to the name of Christ; if they could dash down the Crescent and exalt the Cross; if all the gods of the heathen should be displaced by the idolatries of Rome, Christianity would not be advanced one inch. The Propagation of the Faith meant nothing of that sort. Nor did he mean the bringing of large numbers to make a profession of love to Christ, however pleasant that might be in the eyes of a pastor. There were some churches, he regretted to say, which, in the paroxysms of a revival, relaxed the discipline, and were not so cautious as to the character, motives, and habits of those who applied for admission, as they otherwise would have been. Now it was, indeed, of small account that they should multiply their churches, unless they were genuine Christians—if they had not the grace of God in their hearts, they were better out than in. For the effect of such a course was perilous in the extreme; first, it was a sedative to the mind of those who embraced the fallacy; it was a kind of armour with which these persons surrounded themselves when addressed as sinners: 'Oh, we are members of a Christian church.' Again, addition was not always increase. They might add much of the wrong materials, then the Church was not increased, but adulterated; they would break her down, not enlarge her; have defiled her, not increased her. The wider the gulf could be kept between the Church and the world, the better. He did not mean by the Propagation of the Faith the mere conversion of people from one sect to another. When the Church was increased, she must be increased from the world, and not from herself. Any one could see that. He had heard of an American who was so cute that he had made ten per cent, on his money by putting it out of one pocket into the other. He was sure they could not increase the Church by simply taking them out of one church into the other. If a regiment of cavalry wanted recruits, that sergeant would be a fool, and would perpetrate a robbery on her Majesty, were he to recruit from the infantry. Perhaps the army might be greatly improved by removing men from one section to another as a last resource, but to look at that first was the very height of folly. First they must 'go out into the highways and compel them to come in and fill the place.' They were to bring them to the Bible, and after that set the other matters right. To bring up their sectarianism at the present time would be absurd. If in the great movements for the cause of Christ they should say, 'Whose shall these be—shall they belong to the Episcopalians, Presbyterians, or Independents?' it would be useless to strive for the Propagation of the Faith. No, they should rather say they shall belong to Christ first, and then let them, as shepherds, take some little trouble to put them into the best pastures fully suited to them. The Propagation of the Faith was a person. They might ask one another's religion, but he would reply, the Gospel was a person—something solid on which they could rest. If the twelve apostles had been asked what their faith was, they would have replied, not in a long sermon, but by pointing to Christ, whose life was the Alpha and Omega of the Christian, and save in which no summary of Christianity could be obtained."

Thus to spread abroad the faith was to diffuse a knowledge of Christ; it was not an affair of cold logic, but of the heart. William Huntington and John Wesley represented the extremes; but who would dare to say that each did not effect great good? The lecturer then went on to take a review

of Christian work as it was at that time, and to give some sort of an answer to the question, Was it declining or progressing?—

"There were many favourable signs, but there were many others unfavourable. The most favourable, perhaps, was the immense congregations assembling every Sabbath day to hear the Word of God. If only seven years ago they had been told that St. Paul's Cathedral would have been crowded every Sabbath evening, and Ludgate Hill blocked up, they would have disbelieved it. A pleasing feature in this had been the unity of all denominations. Nor was this all. He believed that all the Churches were more awake than ever they had been. He often wanted to steal a march on his brethren, but was unable. He wanted to do something new, something attractive; but before his idea was matured it was commenced elsewhere. In every district it was the same, and nothing was so conducive to spiritual progression; it was a neck-and-neck race who should do most good. Another good thing was the increased unity of the Church. The objects the Evangelical Alliance had been hammering at for so many years were achieved. The Dissenter thought the Churchman might have retained him if, in bygone times, the latter had been more gentle. Let them, however, now cease to talk of men being out of their pales; they should have no pale faces at all, but all be healthy and in unison. There was one thing he did not like in the special services, and that was the taking of things for texts not in Holy Scriptures. Let every man do as he chose; but he did think his brethren might find enough in the Bible alone for their use. It seemed to him a degradation, to say nothing else, of God's truth. All he knew was, that if some preachers had attempted this a few years ago, they would have been scouted as infidels. Then again there was the subject of prayer meetings. He knew there were still some large assemblies, nor did he think that the Spirit of God was not useful in them; but he was afraid to speak of their ordinary meetings, he knew they were very poor affairs. Again, preaching was faulty; the preacher lacked earnestness; he was not like Baxter, who spoke—

'As though he ne'er should speak again, As dying man to dying men.'

Again, in the Church itself there were faults; they were too worldly; there were among them men who would not keep open their shops on Sunday for fear of damnation, but who would yet hold shares in a railway whose dividends were made out of Sunday traffic—who would shrink from any false action in private, but who needed looking after when they and a few others got together." The matter of worldly conformity was then touched upon, and it was thought that there was too much of it among Christian people. Mr. Spurgeon did not profess to be a Quaker in the matter of dress, to favour the "broad brim," and so on; but nevertheless he found some satisfaction in looking back on the days when a Christian could be known, not only by the cut of his coat, but by his very brogue. He then made reference to the old Quakers, and to the then prevailing fashion of extended crinoline petticoats. "I would rather dress myself that way"—i.e., like a Quaker—"than I would wear the things some men do; and I would rather see my sisters in Christ habited as the Quakers, than that they should magnify, enlarge, and increase themselves as they now do." This produced a commotion of approval on the part of the men which seemed as though it would never end, and, as one remarked, it ought to have put an end to such a fashion. In a leading article on the meeting Dr. Campbell remarked, "The stroke was the most electric one ever witnessed in that hall. The ladies who were present—and the number was not inconsiderable—were placed in a plight most pitiable. The good-natured, yet deeply derisive, cheering was tremendous, and long, very long, continued. If that vast assembly might be taken as a fair representation of the young men of

England—and we believe there can be no doubt of it—the ladies of the nation stand reprehended, laughed at, and ridiculed by gentlemen from John O'Groats to the Land's End." This matter of dress was regarded as an indication of there being something wrong; but as the ladies appeared "to have had enough of it," the lecturer went on to show that as the prophecies were sure, the triumph of the faith was sure. They must all do their part; individuals must work as such; and it mattered nothing whether the preachers came from the colleges or from St. Giles's. A somewhat gloomy view was taken of the work abroad. One thing he never could bear or tolerate, and that was the argument used whenever England went to war, "It was a providential opening for the Gospel." For his own part, he could not understand how the Devil could make way for Christ. What was war but the incarnation of all that was wicked and fiendish? To

"Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war,"

and then say that this was to make straight a highway, knee-deep in the gore of human beings, for the truth of the Lord, was a monstrosity. God assuredly did evolve good out of evil, but he confessed he could not see how war ever made a way for Christianity. Let any other nation go to war if it chose, and if England then sent missionaries, all well; she was not then accountable for the devastation, not having caused it; but for an English cannon to make way at Canton for an English missionary was a falsehood too glaring for him to believe. He could not, he confessed, make it out. If other nations would go to war, let them; but he blushed for his countrymen when he saw crimes committed in China—for what was the opium traffic but a crime, an enormous crime, out of which a war arose?—regarded as means by which the Gospel was to be forwarded. If he were a Chinaman he would assuredly ask the missionaries what this Christianity was like—was it anything of the opium sort? It was not this sort of propagation that foreign countries required for the propagation of the faith; they must learn to feel and believe that England loved peace; that the English nation did not delight in blood, and that its only desire was—in return for the liberty with which God had blessed it—to maintain that liberty abroad; and that if the lion was sometimes roused it was not for blood, but because it believed it was bound to defend liberty. If the world believed that, England would be everywhere regarded as the defender of the liberties of the race; but whatever they did, let them put an end to this doctrine of "opening up" places to missions. He must, however, confess that the spirit was inherent in the English nation; it was of a pugnacious spirit. If he was passing along the street and saw two boys or two dogs fighting, he always felt disposed to stand and look on, and admire the stronger in both cases. At the close of his address, Mr. Spurgeon was cheered with a good deal of enthusiasm, and it was generally thought that he had well maintained his prestige in the new character in which he had appeared. The discourse was characterised as being neither lecture nor sermon, and yet, for that occasion, something better than either.

Observers of Mr. Spurgeon's growth and progress in the Christian graces thought that he had made some advances since the illness which had overtaken him in the fall of 1858. In earlier days it had been remarked that he had shown the strength of Whitefield without that great preacher's tenderness or pathos. A change for the better had been observed in the Music Hall services, and also in the course of the "De Propaganda Fide" lecture. He seemed anxious to speak a good word to all classes while he condemned abuses and bad customs. At or about this time Mr. Spurgeon was expecting to be able to make a tour through the United States, and the Americans were eagerly anticipating the expected visit. "Mr. Spurgeon is as much an object of interest in the United

States as in his native land, and there is an intense desire to see him," remarked one journal. "Our readers must not be surprised should they shortly hear that an offer has been made him of £10,000 to preach four discourses in the splendid and spacious music hall of New York." Later in the year The Baptist Messenger, which was then regarded as the organ of New Park Street Chapel, announced as a fact that the American trip would be undertaken, but the next month it was given out that the journey was abandoned "for the present year." Everybody thought that the visit was only postponed. "It is probable that he will by-and-by cross the Atlantic, but it will be on a wholly independent footing." When money was so urgently needed to pay the builder of the great Tabernacle, would it not have been easier to preach four times in New York for the magnificent honorarium the Americans offered, than toilsomely to travel about the British Isles making small collections? Mr. Spurgeon acted quite unselfishly in the matter. If he had secured any princely sum from the New World, he would not have used even a small portion of the amount for himself; all would have been given to the building fund; and if the collections were small at home, he still had the satisfaction of preaching the Gospel to a far larger number of people.

If it was not advisable to cross the Atlantic, something might be got in Scotland; and, accordingly, in February, 1859, another visit was paid to the North. At this time there was considerable excitement in the country on the question of Reform, the Administration of the then Earl of Derby having a Bill in hand which promised to be of more than usual interest as the production of a Conservative Government. Accordingly, the discourse at the Surrey Gardens on Sunday, February 13, was on Reform; but it was so far from being a political sermon that its leading ideas had nothing in common with the comprehensive scheme which Mr. Disraeli propounded in the House of Commons twelve days later. Mr. Spurgeon's Reform was sufficiently indicated by his text (2Ch 31:1), "Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all." On the following Sunday the familiar voice was not heard in the Music Hall; Mr. Spurgeon was preaching in Scotland, where he secured nearly £500 for the building fund of the Tabernacle. The Scottish tour, with its preaching engagements, occupied about all the week-days of a fortnight, the services being held chiefly in Edinburgh and Glasgow. On his return, before commencing his sermon, the preacher remarked that he had been addressing large assemblies, and that the Spirit of God had been present to bless. Mr. Spurgeon remarked further, "In visiting the North, the main object I had in view was the assistance of the fund for the new building which we propose erecting for the accommodation of the crowds who flock to hear me Sabbath after Sabbath. It always was and always will be my constant care to obtain the requisite sum, and I think I may faithfully appeal to your sympathies to help forward the project. The building would have been erected long ago if everyone who attends my ministry had acted as they ought to have done. If each would give the smallest sum, it would not be long before a building was raised where God's truth would be proclaimed for ages to come."

It was no small matter for a preacher who had such a congregation as that at the Surrey Gardens to be away from his pulpit for only one Sunday; but it was not expected to happen again soon, and when it did occur the greatest possible care was taken to obtain a suitable supply. The crowd showed no signs of falling off; eminent personages were still present, while "carriages and vehicles of all sorts, as usual, thronged the surrounding thoroughfares."

Meanwhile the young preacher's popularity was tested in various ways, and it became increasingly evident that it was growing rather than declining. On Tuesday, March 1, at noon, he attracted a full house at Whitefield's Tabernacle, Moorfields, the service being on behalf of the London City Mission. In the evening he preached again in the same place for the same object, when the crowd was so overwhelming that "to prevent conflict and confusion at the doors the gates were early closed." With such a vast enterprise in hand as the building of the great Tabernacle for his own congregation, however, Mr. Spurgeon at last found it advisable to alter his methods somewhat; and it was announced, therefore, that it was the young pastor's wish to appear in the principal chapels in London, first for the purpose of preaching the Gospel, and then of collecting funds on behalf of the vast undertaking. The influence of Mr. Spurgeon was now being felt in various ways in all evangelical denominations; and welcome evidence was seen in the great "special services for the working classes" which were becoming fashionable. The outcry, which could even make itself heard in Parliament, that the Church itself was being "Spurgeonised," found little or no sympathy with the public. St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, Exeter Hall, and St. James's Hall each attracted a full congregation, some leading man preaching in each instance. These services were spoken of as representing a most remarkable feature of English religious life, and as being an evidence of progress. The movement then extended to ordinary parish churches, and the wonder was not so much that full congregations assembled as that the working classes and the poorer kind of people generally were actually attracted. Thus, when the late Dr. Tait, as Bishop of London, preached in a West-end parish church, the vicar was able to report: "All St. Giles's turned out. The church as full as it could hold; all the doorways and middle aisle blocked up with persons standing, and many had to go away. Every variety of the labouring class was here this evening." On June 26 a violent thunderstorm passed over the southern suburbs of London; a tree was struck by lightning on Clapham Common, and a man who had sought shelter from the rain beneath the branches was killed. It occurred to Mr. Spurgeon that an effective way of impressing people with the solemnity of this occurrence would be to give a sermon on the spot and make a collection for the widow of the deceased, for whom much sympathy was felt. Accordingly, a notice was circulated to the effect that the pastor of New Park Street Chapel would address whoever liked to come beneath the fatal tree at three o'clock on Sunday, July 10. About 10,000 persons assembled, the preacher being accommodated with a wagon for a pulpit. After a striking prayer, Psalm C. was sung to the Old Hundredth tune, and the discourse was founded on the words, "Be ye also ready." The collection for the distressed widow, whose fourth child was only a few weeks old, amounted to £27 10s. 4d. A deep impression was evidently produced; and as the great concourse quietly dispersed, much sympathy was expressed with the object of the meeting, and all appeared to be thoroughly well pleased.

Chapter 35: The Metropolitan Tabernacle

Chapter 35.

The Metropolitan Tabernacle

Interest in the Great Chapel—Laying the Foundation-stone—Speeches of the Pastor and several Eminent Personages.

Soon after the work of collecting funds for the great Tabernacle was commenced, prizes appear to have been offered for designs, the building committee selecting the one which would be adopted. After a large number had been examined, the design which gave most satisfaction bore the motto, "Quod erat faciendum"—Which was to be done. Mr. Pococke was the architect. A large number of designs were sent in, for three of which, I believe, premiums were given. When it was generally known that a large chapel was really to be built for the young preacher, great popular interest in the enterprise at once showed itself. The novelty of such an enterprise occasioned it to be written of and talked about in a way that the present generation would hardly understand. It was "a mammoth undertaking," "a denominational wonder," and in a sense a new thing under the sun, peculiar to the times.

While things were thus progressing in London as the best friends of Mr. Spurgeon desired, things were also happening elsewhere such as could not fail to gladden his heart. While the foundations of the Metropolitan Tabernacle were being dug, a subscription had been commenced at Southampton towards the fund for the enlarging of Portland Chapel, of which Mr. James Archer Spurgeon was pastor. The chapel was so excessively crowded that numbers were compelled to leave the doors on Sunday evenings. At this time also took place the conversion and baptism of Thomas Cooper, the ex-Chartist, who had travelled up and down the country as a Free-thought lecturer. The Radical politician and Mr. Spurgeon became good friends, and from time to time Mr. Cooper gave lectures at the Pastors' College which tutors and students heartily appreciated. The land on which the Metropolitan Tabernacle is erected was purchased, as has been said, from the Fishmongers' Company; and it had been the site of almshouses which the Company had put up in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The main building was called St. Peter's Hospital, and this, as an asylum of the Fishmongers' Company, has been re-erected at Wandsworth. The forsaken ground was an uninviting spot until the new buildings were erected upon it. The preliminary services in connection with the ceremony of laying the foundation-stone were commenced at New Park Street Chapel on Monday evening, August 15, when the prayers were offered and addresses given by Mr. Spurgeon and his father—the latter being at that time under fifty years of age—and others. There was another prayer meeting on Tuesday morning, the 16th. About three thousand persons attended the ceremony in the afternoon, and most of them were in their places by two o'clock. There was little or no display with flags and decorations. One inscription on white calico—the letters being formed by laurel leaves—was, "Christ is the Cornerstone;" and one other ornamented with evergreen boughs read, "You are Truly Welcome." Mr. Spurgeon called on the audience to "raise a glorious song of praise to the God of heaven by

singing to the Old Hundredth tune the hymn, 'Before Jehovah's awful throne.'" The crowd appeared to show more than ordinary interest in the stone-laying ceremony. Sir S. Morton Peto, who occupied the place of honour, was cheered with some enthusiasm. Mr. B. Carr read a history of the church from the beginning, which he had himself prepared; and although "the reading of this admirable document elicited frequent and hearty cheers," it was no doubt a relief when the reader came to the end, and so made way for Mr. Spurgeon to come forward with a bottle to be deposited beneath the stone. As something lighter was needed after the literary elder's solid historical statement, Mr. Spurgeon was equal to the occasion:—

"This bottle contains not the current coins of the realm; for we have none of them to spare. It contains no newspapers, for, however much we may appreciate the newspaper Press, we still think it inappropriate to place papers in such a place. It contains the Bible, the old-fashioned Baptist Confession of Faith, which was signed by Benjamin Keach, your former pastor; the declaration of the deacons which you have heard read, written on parchment; an edition of Dr. Rippon's Hymn Book, as published before he died; and lastly a programme of this day's proceedings. These will be for the perusal of the New Zealander who is to sit on the ruins of London Bridge, when this great nation has gone to decay—if ever it does so; and if such is the case, I have no doubt that they will eventually be stored up in some Australian or American Museum." At that time Sir Morton Peto was a man of commanding influence among the Baptists, and was otherwise generally respected on account of the liberality with which he subscribed to philanthropic enterprises. To the worthy baronet it was like entering on a new era; and after showing that the new building was a necessity, he went on to say that he rejoiced to hear that the church, though strictly denominational, would be in no respect sectarian. While believing that there was no other mode of baptism than that prefigured in the Scriptures—being buried with Christ in baptism—his friend, Mr. Spurgeon, would at the same time proclaim that truth in such a spirit that all who might differ from him would only regret the difference, while they loved him not the less. He wished also to state to his Christian friends that this church would not only be their church, but would be a point from which Christian influence would radiate to the furthest ends of the world. His friend, in preaching the Gospel there, would not forget upon every fitting occasion to urge the claims of the heathen upon the attention of his church; and he rejoiced to know that while the hearts of the congregation would be sufficiently expansive to grasp the whole world, those who were perishing at our own doors would not be forgotten or neglected. There was a great work yet to be done, and many who were connected with other churches had gladly come to their aid and assured them that they would do all in their power to assist them in their undertaking. He could not but rejoice that this would be something of a cathedral to his denomination. It was quite right that they should have a Tabernacle in which not only the largest congregation could assemble, but which should, when schemes of Christian usefulness were to be promoted, be placed at the disposal of persons of any other denomination. This Metropolitan Tabernacle would therefore have claims upon other denominations. Those whom he addressed had a large and heavy burden to bear, and they were delighted to bear it, because it enabled them to evidence their love to Christ; still he could not but feel that Mr. Spurgeon and his deacons had a very strong claim for assistance upon all other Christian churches of the metropolis and of the kingdom at large; and he trusted that when Mr. Spurgeon ascended the pulpit for the first time, he would be able, while preaching a full, free, and finished salvation, to say that he did so in a chapel entirely free from debt.

Mr. Spurgeon complimented the baronet by saying that that was not the first time he had borrowed light from him, as he once received from him a reading-lamp which had often enabled him to read while on long railway journeys. All had reason to be satisfied with the receipts of the afternoon; for one anonymous friend at Bristol had sent a cheque for £3,000 to be laid upon the stone, in addition to which others gave £1,000 each. The speech of the occasion was, of course, that in course of which Mr. Spurgeon himself referred to the enterprise in hand:—

"I never answer slanders against myself, and very seldom answer any questions about them whatever, and I never mean to do so. When I have done wrong, it is always enough for me to have my own condemnation. I am quite satisfied with that, although I have plenty. If I am wrong, I will be accountable to my own Master, and to no other person living or breathing. This place, I said some time ago, when our brethren were half afraid—It is to be built, and God will fill it with His presence. There is no doubt about the money being raised. I have a solid conviction that the money must come. I give my hearty thanks to all that have helped me, and to all that have not helped me—they all mean to do so, and therefore I will thank them beforehand. There is one gentleman who is going to speak after Mr. Dowson, and the best speech will be made with hid hands. He will give a donation of £3,000. He would not like me to mention his name, and therefore I shall not do so. And now, my dear friends, the place that is to be erected—I have a word to say about it. It is a matter of congratulation to me that in this city we should build a Grecian place of worship. It seems to me that there are two sacred languages in the world. There was the Hebrew of old; there is only one other sacred language—the Greek, and that is dear to every Christian's heart. We believe in the five great points commonly known as Calvinistic. We look upon them as being five great lights which radiate from the cross of Christ. I like to preach pure Gospel truth; but still, at the same time, I am no Antinomian, I belong not to that sect that is afraid to exhort the sinner to Christ; and while we are Baptists also—and we cannot swerve from that—we must have one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, and dear to our hearts is that word—the communion of saints. Whosoever loves the Lord Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth has a hearty welcome to communion with the Church of Christ. I see around us our Independent brethren, and I see also before me a Strict Communion brother, and he will address you. I have some of my dearest friends ministers of the Church of England, and I glory in the fact that, however firmly a man may hold the truth, he can give his hand to every man that loves Jesus Christ. And now with regard to our prospects. We are about to build this place, and I hope it will be paid for; and if our friends do but give well now, then when the chapel is built, those of our friends who want seats can buy them. There is not a chapel in London used up as ours is; they always hack it up; they say, We will hear all we can, and they never give me a chance of getting into the seats. Our brother told us last evening that churches should be like a man who milked the cow, and after she was milked she was so fond of it that she wanted to be milked twice a day. God sparing my life, I will not rest till the dark county of Surrey be filled with places of worship. It is only within the last six months we have started two churches, one in Wandsworth and the other in Greenwich, and we will do so to the one hundredth time, God being oar helper."

After the stone-laying ceremony was over, and after the young pastor had himself thanked each contributor who came forward with a gift, between two and three thousand persons adjourned to tea in the adjoining Horse Repository. The great repast was served without hitch or confusion; and the otherwise not very inviting interior was decorated with flags and flowers, mottoes and

illuminated lamps, until it presented quite a pleasing appearance. By the time that the Lord Mayor arrived to take the chair at the evening meeting, the popular enthusiasm was shown by the great crowd in the street which was eager to enter the already well-filled building. After the hearty cheers which greeted him had subsided, the Lord Mayor (the late Alderman Wire) referred to the advances made since olden times, and said he looked on Mr. Spurgeon as one who was called to accomplish a great work for God. When the pastor looked round on his friends on that memorable day, he saw a strong muster; but while James Grant, of The Morning Advertiser, was present, Dr. Campbell was unfortunately absent, having made another engagement on the understanding that that meeting was postponed. Mr. Spurgeon thought that, as an editor, his friend had lived long enough not to believe things which he saw in the papers:—

"At any rate, my friend ought not to believe in those paragraphs unless he knows of his own knowledge that they are true. For my own part, I only wish I could compel the papers to make good their statements except when they are abusing me. Some of the papers have discovered that a magnificent fortune has been left to me, of which, however, I have myself no knowledge whatever.... I approve of ministers getting a good salary for preaching; and in this respect I would cordially say I am, for my own part, perfectly satisfied; but if anyone should leave ministers a large sum of money, they generally lose their voice or get an attack of bronchitis, or something of the sort, which puts an end to their preaching."

Mr. Spurgeon added, in regard to the Press, that he cared not how he was attacked, or his doctrines combated; he would come out all the stronger for opposition: it was when the newspapers praised him and friends surrounded him that tears came into his eyes, and he felt the more need of divine support. To notice all the speeches that were made on the occasion would too greatly extend this chapter; but some were too important to be altogether passed by. Thus, the father of the young pastor, who was a comparatively young man himself, confessed that he was there to acknowledge a fault. He had thought that his son had done wrong in not going to college, and again in coming to London; but he now saw that God had opened the way. The speaker continued:—"This is one of the happiest days of my life. I feel beyond myself when I think of the kindness shown to my son when but a youth; and I ask all to go home and pray that God will preserve him from temptation. A meeting like this is enough to carry any man away, but the grace of God is all-sufficient. Several told me that my son would not do in London; he had not sufficient education; but he had, after all, the best education, for God had been his teacher. If anything could have crowned my happiness, it would have been to see my son's grandfather present. He is always speaking about him."

Mr. Spurgeon senior then told the anecdote about the way in which his wife had prayed for her son Charles, and said he attributed much to her prayers. Mr. James A. Spurgeon also spoke, and said he felt he was "taking up no sinking cause;" and if there were "sermons in stones," there was surely a good one in the stone they had laid that day.

One of the most forcible of the addresses given at the evening meeting was by the Rev. George Smith, who was then Secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. A few sentences may be given; for they indicated how completely the tide had turned in Mr. Spurgeon's favour:—"I am here to testify on behalf of myself, my people, and my brethren generally, the very high regard we have for that gifted young man, not thirty years of age, whose name has become of

world-wide reputation, and who everywhere has been honoured of God in turning multitudes from darkness to light—from the power of Satan unto God. I think we are all, whatever portion of the Church we belong to, deeply indebted to Mr. Spurgeon. For myself, I never had any doubt about him from the beginning. I never entertained a suspicion of him from the commencement. I never uttered one unkind word about him from the time when he commenced his ministry. I always thought Mr. Spurgeon was raised up of God to a great and good work; and we may well rejoice if men are raised up in a way rather different from what we had anticipated.... Every prediction about unsoundness, about erratic conduct, about failing in power, has utterly fallen to the ground."

Judge Payne was also present, and there were roars of laughter at his witty allusions, all being concluded according to time-honoured custom by the indispensable "tail-piece." Mr. Spurgeon held this friend in high esteem on account of his Christian character and self-denying labours as a chief ally of Lord Shaftesbury in the earlier days of the Ragged School movement; but he was not regarded as a model judge, because he showed a disposition to pass sentences which were at times believed to be too severe. One or two passages from his address at the evening meeting after the stone-laying ceremony may be given:—

"Among all the beautiful decorations there is one I do not see, but I have it before my mind's eye; I mean the three letters C. H. S. What do they mean? Why, first, Charles Haddon Spurgeon; but I do not mean that. C. H. S. means Clear-Headed Speaker who is Clever at Handling Subjects in a Cheerful-Hearted Style. He is a Captain of the Hosts of Surrey; he is a Cold-Hating Spirit; he has Chapel-Heating Skill; and is a Catholic Humbug-Smasher. He is a Care-Hushing Soother; he is a Child-Helping Strengthener; he is a Christ-Honoured Soldier, and a Christ-Honoured Servant. These are all the C. H. S.'s, and a very good lot of C. H. S.'s they are.

"I said he is a preacher that does not mumble; he is also a man that does not grumble. I have heard him say how pleased he is with the salary given him by the people of Park Street. There was once a bass singer at a cathedral, and he sang in such a way that the dean did not like it, so he said to him, 'I recommend you to sing better; you are very careless.' 'Sir,' said the singer, 'I sing at the rate of £10 a year, and if yon want me to sing better, you have only to increase my salary.' Our friend, Mr. Spurgeon, does not say that. He is perfectly satisfied with what he gets, although it is not half that he deserves. He is also a preacher that does not stumble. Did we ever see a man walk more firmly than he does before the world and the Church? He walks firmly, physically, morally, and religiously, and sets a good example to his flock. He is a good shepherd, or, if you like, a bellwether sheep, whom you may follow. It is said that if one lives next door to a lame man, one very soon learns to walk lame also. Mr. Spurgeon is not a lame man at all, but walks well; he walks holily and happily, and those who follow his steps will do the same. Then he is a preacher that will not crumble. The man himself will die—many, many years let it be before that consummation is arrived at—but the reputation and character of a faithful preacher of God's free and glorious Gospel will never die. We may address the character and reputation of such a man in the language of the poet and say:—

'The stars shall fade away, the sun himself Grow dim in age, and nature sink in years. But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth, Unhurt amid the war of elements, The wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds.'"

Thus did this ever-memorable day come to a close. Mr. Spurgeon had just commenced the sixth year of his work in London, and he was beginning to reap the full reward of his labours. The great chapel which had entered into the day-dreams of certain enthusiasts soon after the young preacher had settled in London was becoming a fact; and the promise seemed to be that the work which would there be carried on in the future would be one to attract the attention of the entire Christian world. It was a supreme moment in the experience of a man, especially when that man was only twenty-five years of age. In this case there was no self-elation or ambition, however; the great preacher was even more humble and self-possessed than some of his friends and followers. He had a work to accomplish, and he was determined it should be done; but he was entirely unselfish. He was still true to what may be called the motto of his life—"Seekest thou great things for, thyself? seek them not!"

Chapter 36: Last Days At The Surrey Gardens

Chapter 36.

Last Days At The Surrey Gardens

Extreme Inconvenience of New Park Street Chapel—Prospect of leaving the Surrey Gardens—Open-air Services—A Visit to Cheltenham—A Deliverance on Slavery—A Missionary Meeting—Remembering Faces—Last Service in the Music Hall—Reappearance at Exeter Hall—Death of John Angell James—Spurgeon's growing Influence.

While an army of workmen were engaged in rearing the Metropolitan Tabernacle, the young pastor of New Park Street Chapel and his congregation were feeling even more than they had previously done the extreme inconvenience of not having a building of their own large enough to accommodate the vast congregation. As regarded New Park Street itself, it became more inexplicable how such a site could have been chosen by shrewd Nonconformist leaders for their religious home. "A more dingy, uninviting, and repelling region than where the chapel is situated I have seldom explored," remarked one visitor. "It is within a short distance after you have crossed Southwark Bridge from Queen Street, in a gloomy, narrow street, surrounded with small, dirty-looking houses. Within a minute's walk of the chapel you see written up at the corner of a little street, 'Bear Garden.'" Of old this was a disreputable quarter, and though its character may have improved, squalid streets and busy hives of industry did not render the surroundings any more attractive. To make matters worse, there was a prospect of the Surrey Gardens Music Hall being used for Sunday evening concerts, in which case the building would cease to be available for Mr. Spurgeon's morning congregation. On one or two previous occasions the directors had thought of attempting to replenish their exchequer by opening the hall for such entertainments, and had been checked by the intimation that in such a case Mr. Spurgeon's Sunday morning congregation would find accommodation elsewhere. At length, however, the managers appear to have supposed that the Sunday evening amusement would pay them better than the morning worship, and they resolved to carry out their scheme. It was a mistake which ended in disaster; for not only was a large rental, out of which a dividend had been paid to the shareholders, sacrificed, but a beautiful building, which some had said could not even be set on fire, was at length burned to the ground.

It would, of course, be impossible to notice even a tenth part of the services in various parts of the country which Mr. Spurgeon at this time was continually holding. Writing at the time in reference to the "immensely crowded congregations," a correspondent remarked, "He seems as if standing on Pisgah's top, 'viewing the land that is afar off,' though in sight; his soul mounts up as on 'eagle's wings' to the very throne of God." It was thought to be no cause for wonder that such a man should have many ardent admirers on the one hand and detracting enemies on the other. "His heart-probing appeals to sinners, and his stern and unflinching rebukes of their sinfulness are sure to bring down upon him an avalanche of wrath from those who prefer the world to Christ, and are still wallowing in the mire." When the season and the weather permitted, Mr. Spurgeon at this time frequently preached in the open air when visiting country districts where the buildings available

were small; and when a sermon in the afternoon was followed by another discourse in the evening, a part of the day's programme was a monster tea-meeting in a marquee on the greensward. An example of what pretty frequently occurred was seen at. Carlton, Bedfordshire, early in October, 1859. In the afternoon the great preacher spoke from the words, "Come unto Me," to four thousand persons in a field. As the days were shortening, the service concluded at four o'clock, when the eager crowd hastened to the tea-tables which were set in the meetinghouse, in the schoolroom, and in a large booth. Having finished this repast and enjoyed an hour's pleasant conversation, all again turned out into the field, when another sermon was preached by Mr. Spurgeon from Hos 2:14. A notable visit to Cheltenham was made towards the end of October, when Mr. Spurgeon preached at Cambray Chapel for his friend James Smith, who, besides being himself a famous preacher and voluminous writer, had been a predecessor in the pastorate at New Park Street. It was on this occasion that the young Baptist preacher met with the present Dr. H. Grattan Guinness, who was about to give a valedictory address prior to his departure for America, while Mr. Spurgeon's object was to make a collection in aid of the debt on the Baptist Chapel. The Cheltenham Examiner thought that the visit to the town of two such preachers at the same time was a striking occurrence; while "the electric shocks of their eloquence" had "already fired many a soul to a sense of its proper position." The vast crowd which assembled to hear Spurgeon in the afternoon gave ample evidence that the preacher's popularity was not on the wane. Mr. Smith assisted in the service; and Mr. Spurgeon's discourse was founded on Hos 2:14,. "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." As this sermon was an admirable example of the preacher's early style, a passage which came in towards the close may be given:—

"'I will allure her.' Many souls are brought to Christ, not in the storm, but in the calm; some in the tempest and some softly floating in. Of such a description as the last is this, 'I will allure her.' I must explain this term 'allure.' I frequently observe from my house, coming down the road, especially on a Sunday morning, a number of men with small cages containing birds, which they use as 'hirers' to catch the wild birds in the fields. It is only the other day I noticed one of them had a little robin redbreast, which was singing to allure other birds from the liberty of which it had itself been deprived. I thought that was a lesson for me, and I remembered this text, 'I will allure.' The birds were not caught, they were enticed, and so got into the possession of the fowler. The fowler did not put a cat to catch the robin, but he used a robin because he wanted to catch robins. And so the Lord took me a sinner and set me there preaching, that one sinner might bring other sinners. I am, then, the lure bird; I am one of yourselves and have sinned much against God. 'But,' one would say, 'I am unworthy to be saved.' So think I. Another would cry, 'But if I wont to Jesus He would reject me.' And so I thought, and much I now grieve to know that I should have slandered Christ by thinking so. 'But,' says another, 'I would go if I thought He would have mercy on me.' So I said; but I did more, I put it in practice. I said I would go to the King of Mercy; I was resolved to try, for if I stayed away, I knew I must for ever die. And God did not reject the poorest of mankind. He would receive him, put away his sin and say, 'I have blotted out thine iniquities, thy sins are forgiven thee, go and sin no more.' Would to God that some of you would go and try for yourselves. Every Christian ought to act the part of the 'allure bird.' Some would bring others to the truth, but without this many must have a sad fate. Many people would say, 'To be a Christian is to be miserable;' but it is a mistake; you must seek by a cheerful and happy conversation, and a holy and consistent walk, to entrap others to come to Christ; you are left here to do a work for Him, therefore must

endeavour to allure many for Christ. But the text says, 'I will allure.' That is God Himself. A mother had a little child which she desired to teach to walk. She knew it would not be made to walk, it could only be done by teaching, which in its turn must be effected by 'alluring.' The child is placed against a chair, fearing to trust its little feet; the mother holds out to it an apple or a sweetmeat; the child looks, and at last makes the first toddling step; the mother is reached, and there stands the child at rest, the marvellous feat performed of walking the first time in its life. Oh! what is not a mother's love? And what the love of God "to His children? Are they conscious of their own weakness? He said, 'Come to Me and take the first step.' His mercy will bo about them; another step and another will be taken, until they are brought to Him. Jesus said, 'Come to Me, come! come!' I beseech you, therefore, resist not His allurements; despise Him not that speaketh. One would say, perhaps, 'If He would but threaten me I should be saved; if He were full of terror I think I could come to Christ.' Nay, nay, come! He allures you; He stretches out His hands and says, 'By these nailed prints come to Me; by this thorn brow come; by My bloody sweat, and by My cross and passion, come. Shall it all be in vain?' I pray the Spirit of God may now go forth among you, that you may freely come to Christ. The more abject, ruined, and undone you are, the greater reason that you should go to Christ to have your guilt removed and your miseries cast away. Oh! come ye to Christ. 'Even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so shall the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever looketh on Him may not perish, but have everlasting life.'" To those who are old enough to remember the strong man in his prime, when his matchless voice was not in any degree broken, such an example of his preaching as the above will awaken some delightful memories. It is an echo of the good old times when Spurgeon, in a physical sense, was at his best. In regard to the preacher's anti-slavery sentiments there was never any doubt, although when the quarrel between North and South in the United States became a matter which could only be settled by the sword, the slave-holders would have been glad, had it been possible, to claim Spurgeon as a sympathiser, or even as a "moderate" compromiser. How far he was removed from this, however, was shown at a meeting at New Park Street Chapel on December 8, 1859, when, after the usual week-night lecture, John Andrew Jackson, a fugitive slave from South Carolina, was allowed an opportunity of giving an account of himself. The story of this man's wrong awakened lively interest, while his sentiments drew forth outbursts of applause which were peculiarly English. He spoke for an hour, and did so from the pulpit; and when the ex-slave had finished, Mr. Spurgeon himself expressed satisfaction at what he had heard, and gave his opinion on American slavery in general. He alluded to the insurrection under John Brown, and said that if that leader were to fall a sacrifice to the cause he would die a martyr's death. The pastor continued:—

"Slavery is the foulest blot that ever stained a national escutcheon, and may have to be washed out with blood. America is in many respects a glorious country, but it may be necessary to teach her some wholesome lessons at the point of the bayonet—to carve freedom into her with the bowie-knife, or send it home to her heart with revolvers. Better far should it come to this issue, that North and South should be rent asunder, and the States of the union shivered into a thousand fragments, than that slavery should be suffered to continue. Some American divines seem to regard it, indeed, with wonderful complacency. They have so accustomed themselves to wrap it up in soft phases that they lose sight of its real character. They call it a 'peculiar institution,' until they forget in what its peculiarity consists. It is, indeed, a peculiar institution, just as the Devil is a peculiar angel, and as hell is a peculiarly hot place. For my part, I hold such miserable tampering

with sin in abhorrence, and can hold no communion of any sort with those who are guilty of it."

Among the pleasant gatherings which came off during the fall of the year 1859 may be included a visit which Mr. Spurgeon paid to the City, being entertained by the friends of the Fox and Knot Ragged School. The occasion appears to have been valued by the pastor, because it gave him an opportunity of meeting friends whom he might not otherwise see from one end of the year to another. Mr. Cutler, one of the chief speakers, had for long been associated with the New Park Street Church, and remembered well the days of decline and of difficulty before Mr. Spurgeon came to London. He it was, moreover, who had enjoyed the privilege, in a scantily attended church meeting, of proposing that the young preacher of Waterbeach should be invited to the pastorate.

Meanwhile New Park Street Chapel was often used for other purposes than the ordinary services which the pastor himself conducted. At one time the late W. G. Lewis, of Westbourne Grove Chapel, would give his popular lecture on the "Pilgrim's Progress," with the much appreciated lantern pictures; at another time you might walk in and find in progress a valedictory service on account of one or more missionaries going out to their destination. On Monday, October 17, Mr. Klockers, who was about to proceed as a missionary to China, was thus commended to the Lord in prayer. The late J. Howard Hinton, W. G. Lewis, and the missionary-elect himself, took part in the service, after which Mr. Spurgeon "gave the charge in a style peculiar to himself. He thought that the undertaking to convert four hundred millions was a human impossibility; if only a twentieth of such a number had been thought of, it would have been equally impossible; but, after all, if the Spirit of God was with the missionary, blessing him in his endeavours, who could tell what the results might be which would follow?" This meeting was long remembered by those who were present. At this time, and through his life, it was a characteristic of Mr. Spurgeon that he could remember people's names and faces in a most remarkable manner, although he was continually shaking hands with hundreds of new friends. An American friend, who was struck with this peculiarity, gives this amusing illustration: "In a throng of people an earnest man tried to grasp his hand, and at last succeeding, inquired in a very vehement manner whether the famous preacher did not recognise him. For once in his life the 'famous preacher' was at fault. He did not, however, hum and haw, and say, 'My dear fellow, the fact is I have forgotten your name, but your face is quite familiar to me;' but he owned right out that he had no recollection of him whatever. Whereupon the excited individual replied, very much to Mr. Spurgeon's amusement, 'Well, that is singular, seeing you rendered me the greatest service one man could render another—you buried my wife.' We must, of course, do the bereaved husband justice to suppose that he did not mean exactly what his words denoted; but nevertheless it was a good joke at the expense of the usually exact and careful pastor, and one that, I have no doubt, be must frequently have repeated with considerable relish." The last service in the Surrey Gardens Hall took place on Sunday, December 11, when the preacher enlarged on the text of Acts 20:26-27, "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Immediately on ascending the platform pulpit for the last time, Mr. Spurgeon said:—

"The service this morning will partake very much of the character of a farewell discourse and a farewell meeting. However sorrowful it may be to me to part with you, whose faces I have so long seen in the throng of my hearers, yet for Christ's sake, for the sake of consistency and truth, we are compelled to withdraw from this place, and on next Sabbath morning hope to worship God in

Exeter Hall. On two occasions before, as our friends are aware, it way proposed to open this place in the evening, and I was then able to prevent it by the simple declaration that if so I should withdraw. That declaration suffices not at this time, and you can therefore perceive that I should be a craven to the truth, that I should be inconsistent with my own declarations, that, in fact, my name would cease to be Spurgeon if I yielded. I neither can nor will give way in anything in which I know I am right; and in defence of God's holy Sabbath the cry of this day is, 'Arise, let us go hence!'" The congregation at the Surrey Gardens was now practically dispersed; for when, on December 18, 1859, Mr. Spurgeon again stood on the platform of Exeter Hall, his hearers probably, numbered only about a fourth part of what they had done for such a lengthened period in the great structure erected for M. Jullien's concerts. It appears that a sum of £15 was paid for each service held in the hall. In June, 1861, the famous structure was destroyed by fire. This sojourn at Exeter Hall continued throughout the whole of the year I860, and until March 1, 1861, when a removal was made to the new Metropolitan Tabernacle. When the services were recommenced in December, 1859, a hard frost prevailed, so that "the weather and the parks" attracted the usual attention. Mr. Spurgeon preached on the "Inexhaustible Barrel," and on the following Sunday, being Christmas Day, a seasonable sermon was founded on the words, "Unto us a child is born."

Some little time before, Mr. Spurgeon had made a visit to Brighton, and numbers who had been interested or edified on that occasion were somewhat dismayed on reading an announcement that the great preacher had changed his views by giving up Calvinistic doctrines. In common with some other journals, The Brighton Examiner gave the news, but in the following number the matter was set right by a few lines from Mr. Spurgeon himself:—"The statement you have made with regard to my recantation of Calvinistic doctrine is a fabrication from beginning to end, and one which could only have been invented for malicious purposes. I am the same in doctrine as I have ever been, and I hope to remain faithful to the same grand truth until death."

During this year the young pastor lost by death his good old friend John Angell James, of Birmingham, for whom he appears all along to have entertained the very highest regard. Mr. Spurgeon was continually attracting new friends, however, so that the inevitable passing away of old ones may not have been so severely felt as might otherwise have been the case. One notable man, who about this time was tempted to read for himself The New Park Street Pulpit, was the late Dr. James Morgan, minister of Fisherwick Place Church, Belfast, who, as a competent critic, wrote as follows:—

"I have procured a copy of Mr. Spurgeon's Sermons for the library, in five volumes, and resolved to read one every morning after dressing. Rising at six o'clock, I am ready to begin the sermon at seven, and it takes me more than half an hour to read it. I have gone over about twenty, and find the exercise profitable. Although the sermons are hastily sent forth, they are still very valuable, plain, sound, and practical, and well fitted to be useful. There is a tone of faithfulness in them that makes them powerful." The work to which Mr. Spurgeon had put his hand was now making way all along the line. The pastor, as a preacher, was an acknowledged power in the metropolis; while his congregation was a recognised institution with provincial and Continental or American visitors. There were still certain newspapers which spoke of him unfairly; but the majority were of a different mind, especially since The Times had come over to his side. In The British and Foreign Evangelical Review for 1859 will also be found an article, the writer of which gives the preacher his due, showing how manifest were his earnestness and self-denial. It is probable that the latter even

exceeded what could have been expected; for I believe that at this time he gave half, or even more, of his income to the work of the College. It was one of the most singular cases on record of an eminent man receiving a large income, and able to earn a much larger one, being content to live in the most frugal manner on far less than what hundreds of City clerks were receiving. This mode of living was really continued till the end; for although more was expended in later days, much more was also given away. The College was thus founded with the pastor's own money.

Chapter 37: Mr. Spurgeon And The Americans

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Mr. Spurgeon And The Americans

Interest in Spurgeon's Visit to Paris—The Question of Slavery—Altered Sermons published in America—The Pro-Slavery Journals and the English Preacher—The Open Air Mission.

At the opening of the year 1860 great interest was felt on both sides of the Channel in the matter of Mr. Spurgeon's visit to Paris, which was to take place in February. The excursion was not to be by any means a mere holiday trip, for it was arranged for several services to be held in different buildings, and the preacher would not consent on this occasion to be absent from his own congregation on a Sunday. In anticipation of the young pastor's visit Galignani's Messenger said, "It is impossible for him to be absent from the immense congregation of 10,000 persons in London to whom he preaches on Sundays—the largest concourse of people that was ever known to assemble on every consecutive Sabbath for years to hear the Gospel faithfully preached." The writer in the Paris journal was struck by the way in which the popularity which had been at once achieved had been retained, and like many others, he wished to account for it:—

"He had no prestige in any line whatever to form an introduction. He flashed like a meteor upon the public eye at once, but unlike the meteor he still remains visible and attracts the same attention.... The adaptation of his conceptions and style to all classes is surprising; for while the nobles of the land, and some of the most cultivated intellects of the forum and the bar, are constantly amongst his hearers, the poor hear him with evident pleasure. He is blessed with good health and great energy, and is no idler in the vineyard.... But the most noticeable trait in his character is his apparent unconsciousness of his gifts and the influence which he wields.... During his short ministry upwards of 3,000 have become consistent Christians, hundreds of whom had previously abandoned themselves to vice, wickedness, and infidelity.... No wonder, therefore, that Royalty and the Government look favourably upon his efforts to benefit the population, and many of the most distinguished professions attend his ministry." The better part of the French people were also charmed to learn that so young a man had resisted brilliant offers to change his sphere of labour, the most tempting offers of all coming from America. It was understood that the object of the visit to the French metropolis was simply to preach the Gospel to the people—to such as understood English; for although Mr. Spurgeon could read French, I am not aware that he ever attempted to give an address in that language. On January 7 of this year died Mr. Arthur Morley, the Nottingham philanthropist, for whose prize for an essay on Romanism Mr. Spurgeon had unsuccessfully competed eight years before, when he produced "Antichrist and Her Brood." Mr. Morley was only forty-eight years of age; and he died suddenly on the railway while on his way to Poplar to visit his sister, who was the wife of the Rev. George Smith, a well-known Independent minister of that day.

American slavery had now become one of the burning questions of the day; and from the fact that Spurgeon's Sermons were being issued in the United States with certain passages omitted which the publishers knew would be distasteful to their constituency, many inferred that the English preacher had changed his views on that question, or at least had greatly modified them. Mr. Henry Ward Beecher called attention to this fact; and it appeared like a challenge for the real truth to be made known. As one American anti-slavery journal said, "neither Mr. Spurgeon nor his publishers can afford to overlook the charge." Even the denominational organ in London said, "The charge is one which, cannot be treated with silence, and Mr. Spurgeon is too manly and too much the friend of liberty to allow it to remain unnoticed." Later on the work of suppression was shown to be the work of the publishers alone.

Thus it happened that The New York Independent and some other papers gave out that the great English preacher had changed his views on the question of slavery; and an entire absence from the published discourses of any unpalatable views on that question gave some colour of truth to the rumours. Passages relating to open communion were also taken out of the American edition of the Sermons. Determined to arrive at the truth, Mr. F. W. Chesson, of the Emancipation Committee, wrote to ask Mr. Spurgeon if he had given his "consent, to the publication of an expurgated edition of his sermons suited to the pro-slavery prejudices of Brother Jonathan." Mr. Spurgeon wrote in reply:—

"As the vile iniquity is not an English sin, I have not in my sermons been led to denounce it; and, so far as I am aware, there are no allusions to slavery in them, or, if any, they are so few that I cannot charge my memory with them. I do not see how the Americans can have expurgated the anti-slavery sentiments, for I do not think it was a subject which thrust itself in my way in the ordinary duties of my ministry. I have written a letter to an influential paper in America, and will see to it that my sentiments are really known. I believe slavery to be a crime of crimes, a soul-destroying sin, and an iniquity which cries aloud for vengeance. The charge against my publishers of altering my sermons I believe to be utterly untrue, and they are ready, as their best contradiction, to print a work on the subject if I can find time to write it, which I fear I cannot, but must be content with some red-hot letters." When he gave publicity to the above letter, Dr. Campbell advised that Mr. Spurgeon should publish something on the subject. It was not necessary that such a production should be voluminous. "A great book is not necessarily a great power. What is required is a thunderbolt—a concentration of truth and force such as Mr. Spurgeon well knows how to prepare." The "thunderbolt," or, as the author himself regarded it, the "red-hot letter," duly appeared in The Watchman and Reflector, and had the slave-holders been actually attacked with heated shots the excitement could hardly have been greater. One passage from this letter may be quoted:—"I do from my inmost soul detest slavery anywhere and everywhere, and although I commune at the Lord's table with men of all creeds, yet with a slave-holder I have no fellowship of any sort or kind. Whenever one has called upon me, I have considered it my duty to express my detestation of his wickedness, and would as soon think of receiving a murderer into my church, or into any sort of friendship, as a man-stealer. Nevertheless, as I have preached in London and not in New York, I have very seldom made any allusion to American slavery in my sermons. This accounts for the rumour that I have left out the anti-slavery from my American edition of Sermons. This is not true in any measure, for, as far as my memory serves me, I cannot remember that the subject was handled at all in any of my printed sermons beyond a passing

allusion, and I have never altered a single sentence in a sermon which has been sent out to my American publishers beyond the mere correction which involved words and not sense. However, if any think me capable of such double-dealing, I doubt not that they judge of me by themselves, and from such persons esteem is not desirable. I do not, therefore, regret the loss of it. I have this much to say to all who respect me in America—I did not want to be blaming you constantly, while there are sins enough in my own country, but I shall not spare your nation in future. I shall remember that my voice echoes beyond the Atlantic, and the crying sin of a man-stealing people shall not go unrebuked. I did not know that I had been so fully adopted a citizen of your Republic; but finding that you allow me to be one of yourselves, I will speak out quite severely enough, and perhaps more sharply than will meet with approbation." A Boston correspondent wrote:—"Our Baptist papers are overflowing with indignation, and call on all publishers and booksellers to banish the books of your worthy young friend from their counters.... The poor slave-holders are at their wits' end, and know not what to do to save their doomed system. The Montgomery Mail says the Vigilance Committee at that place is engaged in burning dangerous books, and that two volumes of Spurgeon's Sermons have been contributed for their bonfires, and that they will be burnt. The Mail calls for more, and I have no doubt that Sheldon and Co., Mr. Spurgeon's publishers, would be glad to furnish them." For the time being the anti-slavery controversy raged around the name of Spurgeon. At first the English preacher's sermons were exceedingly popular in the Southern States; but when his sentiments on this question were discovered, there was a turn in the tide. Out-and-out anti-slavery sentiments such as Mr. Spurgeon uttered were rare, even among those who professed to disapprove of slavery as an institution. Even The Watchman, which printed the young pastor's letter, did not do so without a half apology. Americans had more charity for those who were born the victims of the system; they had broader comprehension, and so on. This, however, was how a representative religious Southern paper referred to Spurgeon and his utterances:—

"If the editors of The Watchman and Reflector had any agency in procuring from Mr. S. such a letter, they are no better than he, and they all deserve the fate of Brown. We had just received a box of Mr. Spurgeon's Sermons to sell, but have sent them back to the publishers, Messrs. Sheldon and Co., New York, with all possible despatch. Will not every bookstore and colporteur in the south do the same so soon as they read this letter? Can any Southern men ever purchase another volume of a man's sermons who denounces him as no better than a murderer, and who virtually counsels the torch of the incendiary and the knife of the assassin as appropriate arguments for the extermination of African slavery? We sympathise with his American publishers, Messrs. Sheldon and Co., for they have shown themselves to be highly conservative patriots and Christian gentlemen. We shall be happy to correct the false position which Mr. Spurgeon has assigned them at the close of his letter, so soon as they will authorise us. Let the Press of the South universally pass Mr. Spurgeon round." Of course, it will not be inferred from such outbursts as this that the pastor of New Park Street Chapel was not as popular as ever with a large proportion of the American people. The fact was that the controversy which the friends of freedom had with the pro-slavery party of the Southern States became more fierce, and uncompromising in proportion as the inevitable final conflict, and which any shrewd observer was already able to foresee, drew nearer. The ignoble passions which were aroused and the brutal violence with which slave-holders resented the efforts of abolitionists can now hardly be understood unless we study the times in such a record as the Life of William Lloyd Garrison. Nor were the fierce threats

and angry words mere raving; the slave-holders and their leaders meant all that they said, and were at any moment ready to suit their actions to their utterances. In common with many others, Mr. Spurgeon found this out; but although the sale of the Sermons in the United States yielded a handsome return, he did not hesitate to denounce slavery more heartily than ever when the opportunity came, and this deprived him of supplies which he had given to the Pastors' College. Meanwhile a certain large-hearted American showed in a private letter how the English preacher was still revered by the better sort of people:—

"At the beginning I felt concerned for him, lest popularity might turn his head and lead him off, like Mr. Irving, into some vagary where his influence for good would be nullified. And ever since, as I have seen the height of the pedestal to which Providence has raised him, I have trembled lest something might topple him from that elevation, and hush his voice by the fall. Knowing human nature, his continued popularity and usefulness have been a mystery which I could not solve without reference to my original conviction that he is one of God's chosen agents to do an important work and the belief that he is under the special care of the Master whom he serves. He seems not to be ambitious of such fame; he evidently feels his responsibility; he caters for no man's taste; he preaches fully the most unpopular and unpalatable truths; he flatters no class; he spares no sin in high places or in low; he aims, not to wreathe his own brow with human honours, but to save as many of his hearers from perdition. If some are watching for the decline of his influence, thousands pray for him that he may be kept from temptation, and that his bow may long abide in strength. The preacher has not lived for a long period whose name was so widely known, or whose influence in six years affected favourably so many thousands. The whole evangelical ministry of the British Isles feels the throb of that warm earnest heart which beats in London, and there is an improvement in the preaching that is obvious to the stranger who has had the opportunity to compare the past and the present. The example of pulpit power has a widespread effect. The weekly sermon, accurately reported and quickly published, is read in all parts of the kingdom, thus multiplying many thousandfold the stirring impulse. Eternity alone will reveal the amount of good issuing, by the grace of God, from that one mind fired with the love of Calvary. I heard Mr. Spurgeon both at the great Music Hall and at his chapel in New Park Street, and was in no respect disappointed. He preached the truth of Gad as if he believed it, and was sure that others must believe it or perish for ever. If some forms of expression would not have satisfied the exact theologian, and if some things would have been considered as violations of the canons of a severe taste, they were few, very few, and not worth mentioning, in comparison with the clear, earnest, impressive exhibitions of saving truth. While I admired the originality, simplicity, and fervour of his utterances, I was impressed most of all by the prominence, which he gave to Christ and Him crucified. When, therefore, my opinion is asked respecting the secret of his power, I am unable to express it more definitively than by referring to this characteristic of his preaching. His pleasing expression of face, his perfect self-possession, his melody of voice, his fluency of utterance, his easy manner, free from all over-action, his whole air of deep, unaffected sincerity, are doubtless auxiliaries of no small importance; tut they will not account for the efficiency with which his labours are distinguished." The church of which he was the pastor is spoken of as being the largest in Europe, and 300 new members were added every year, the conversions being eminently sound on account of the humbling Gospel doctrines which he preached. Such a testimony at such a time under such conditions was no doubt very cheering; but one can hardly doubt that the slavery disputes had the effect of obliging Mr. Spurgeon to abandon his proposed

visit to the New World. He would have no wish to make a tour through a country divided against itself; and the fanaticism which led to the murder of the greatest of the Presidents might even have rendered public appearances unsafe to so distinguished an abolitionist. In a letter which appeared in an American newspaper at this time, Mr. Spurgeon gave a reminiscence of his own early days in connection with his late friend, John Angell James, who had died a few months previously:—"In an early part of my ministry, while but a lad, I was seized with an intense desire to hear Mr. James; and, though my finances were somewhat meagre, I performed a pilgrimage to Birmingham, solely with that object in view. I heard him deliver a week-evening lecture in his large vestry on that precious text, 'Ye are complete in Him.' The savour of that very sweet discourse abides with me to this day, and I shall never read the passage without associating therewith the quiet but earnest utterances of the departed man of God."

Mr. Spurgeon was always a strong advocate of open-air preaching, and in the course of his duties at the Pastors' College, he gave very carefully prepared lectures to the students on this practice. Those who founded or nurtured the Open-Air Mission appear to have enjoyed his friendship from an early period, and when the opportunity came they advocated the cause on the same platform together. At the end of January, 1860, the Southwark auxiliary of the Mission assembled at "The Horns," Kennington, when addresses were given by John Macgregor, the veteran "Rob Roy"—who has lately passed away, but who in his day did more to promote this service in London than any other man—Judge Payne, and others. The speech of the evening was given by Mr. Spurgeon, and though extremely brief, every sentence was telling:—

"I feel strongly with regard to this mission to the perishing thousands. If an angel was to fly over London to determine where such a meeting as this should be held, methinks he would stay here; for when churches and chapels were closed against the great Whitefield, and he could find no building large enough to hold the crowds who flocked to hear the Gospel from his lips, he preached in the open air on Kennington Common. If anyone were to ask me to defend from Scripture the practice of ministering only in certain buildings called sacred, I could not do so; but open-air preaching needs no defence—it stands of itself. It is necessary, because if we want to save souls, we must go where the souls are. It is the going after souls that constitutes our divine mission; and especially it is our duty 'to seek and to save that which was lost.' Open-air preaching reaches many who otherwise never would hear the Gospel. People talk sometimes about the dignity of the pulpit. That is very well. But I think the dignity of the pulpit must be measured by the number of converts chained thereto. I have my own ideas about colleges. A Canadian backwoodsman's letter came to me this morning, and it stated that colleges were machines, and the college men machine-made men—not at all fit for backwoods work. I don't hold with all this; but I do believe that the men of our colleges are not fit for much of the rough work. But there are men who are especially fitted for it—men who are born and bred among the people—who speak the people's language, and whose hearts beat with the same impulses as the people among whom they live. Such men are the Open-Air Mission supplies. God bless the Open-Air Mission, because it give us such ministers. But there is a large amount of responsibility resting on Christians. The great clouds of divine grace have been hovering over the United States; they have crossed the Atlantic to Ireland, and the droppings of the rain have been felt in Wales. Shall they, pass away without giving us a blessing, because we are not sufficiently earnest for the salvation of souls? Let it not be so. There is a great harvest gathering for us. The masses are in an incandescent stated.

Ye open-air preachers, strike and make the sparks fly, and weld the once cold iron. Stay not behind your bulwarks, but go out into the field, and fight for the Lord our God." The late Gawin Kirkham, of the Open-Air Mission, was present at this meeting. Mr. Kirkham was preparing for this work a sketch of Spurgeon as an Open-Air Preacher when death overtook him

Chapter 38: A Visit To Paris

Chapter 38.

A Visit To Paris A Visit to France—Preaches Five Times in Paris—Opinions of the French Pastors—M. Prévost-Paradol in the Journal des Débats—Deaths of Eminent Persons—A Day at Moorfields—Dr. Campbell as a Journalist.

Mr. Spurgeon made a flying visit to Paris in the early part of February 1860; and as he would not consent to be away from his congregation at Exeter Hall or New Park Street for even one Sunday, the trip represented a very hard week's work, although to outsiders it may have appeared like a pleasant excursion. The subject of the discourse at Exeter Hall on the first Sunday morning of the month was, "Mr. Evil-Questioning Tried and Executed," the evil question on which it was founded being, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" (2Ki 5:12). The sermon was an unusually long one, and taken as a whole it was one of the most remarkable examples of the preacher's early style. It was very much of an allegory; and as Mr. Evil-Questioning and his large circle of family connections—all being descendants of Mr. Human-Reason—were brought to the front and examined, the spellbound audience must have thought that John Bunyan the Second was speaking to them. On the following morning, February 6, Mr. Spurgeon appears to have crossed the Channel. He had been invited to Paris by an Episcopal clergyman, who was of opinion that a series of services conducted by such a preacher would be fruitful in the best results. The expectation appears to have been in a large measure realised, the appearance of the young pastor being anticipated in the gay capital with the most lively interest. Five services were held, two at the Church of the Oratoire, and three at the chapel of the American Ambassador. The eagerness to be present was great, many persons of fashion, foreign visitors of rank, ministers of all Protestant denominations, as well as a large number of Roman Catholic priests, being among the hearers. The preacher spoke with all of his accustomed force and earnestness, and the effect was such as had hardly been seen in Paris since the days of the Reformation. One gentleman of high position told the New Park Street deacon, Mr. James Low, that he had never in his life before felt so much interest in a religious service; the touching illustrations and searching appeals so affected him that he concealed himself behind a pillar in the church and there wept. The various pastors of Protestant congregations were of opinion that the visit would leave permanent good results.

Each evening during his stay in the city Mr. Spurgeon was invited to the house of some resident of social position and influence, and on each occasion a large number of friends were also invited, so that these salon gatherings were as remarkable in their way as the public services. Neither Scotland nor Ireland at first had shown such interest in the English preacher, while the French geniality Was altogether charming. The visit to the college at Passy, where a number of students were being educated for missionary service, was a memorable event in connection with this visit. The young men were as much interested as Mr. Spurgeon himself, and appear to have expressed themselves as being very grateful for the visit. The address given to the students was translated

by the President.

Various leading inhabitants of Paris were so struck with the effects of this visit that they hoped it might be repeated at an early date. A sum of nearly £70 was collected at the American chapel for the debt on the building; but the managers refused to keep the money, and insisted on its being given to the building fund of the Metropolitan Tabernacle; and in order that it should be sent without deductions, 400 francs were subscribed for the preacher's personal expenses. Two other good collections were also made for the poor of the city. The comments of the Paris newspapers were as remarkable as they were satisfactory: for mere literary men as well as Roman Catholic writers were charmed with the exhibition of Gospel truth by this young man of twenty-six. Dr. Grandpierre, of the National Protestant Church, told the late Dr. Steane, of Camberwell, how greatly he was struck with the young English preacher's voice and distinct enunciation at the Oratoire. Although it was a Protestant church, much of the teaching given forth in its pulpit was of a very doubtful kind. Dr. Grandpierre himself was an Evangelical, and so also were some others who preached in turn with him; but others who had access to the pulpit are said to have been Arians, if not actually Socinians. To hear Spurgeon in such a place, therefore, was like the opening of a new Reformation. The French pastor just named was also impressed with the even flow of Mr. Spurgeon's eloquence, the logical development of his thoughts, and with his facile and always elegant language. Another of Dr. Steane's friends, Dr. Frédéric Monod, was chiefly delighted with the young English preacher's catholicity. Dr. Monod was at that time one of the most devoted of French Protestant ministers, and he had left the National, to join himself with the Free or Congregational, Church. In Spurgeon this ardent reformer saw a man who took into the pulpit no pet theories of his own; he had no system, he wanted to gain no partisans for this or that denomination; his one and only desire was to win converts to Christ. "Mr. Spurgeon is a new proof that God does nothing by halves. If He calls one of His servants to some special work, He gives him the special endowments necessary for it. So in this case; not only have intellectual and spiritual gifts been bestowed, but physical faculties as well: a clear musical voice, an indomitable constitution, and strength which ten sermons a week from year's end to year's end can neither subdue nor exhaust. I have heard him converse, after having been engaged in the pulpit for nearly three hours, with a voice as fresh and clear as before he entered it." It was said that many remarkable conversions occurred as a result of the services. In England no one was more delighted at the result of this visit than Dr. Campbell, who insisted that the voice of Paris was virtually the verdict of Protestant France. "Gold is the same all the world over," exultingly exclaimed the friendly editor. "Latitude, longitude, clime and season, have no effect on its weight, sound, or lustre. So it is with a genius for Christian eloquence. Sect and nationality, manners and politics, affect it not. It controls them all. Mr. Spurgeon furnishes an illustration. No matter where he may appear.... all do homage to the truth, the nature, the attraction, and the power of his preaching." As coming from two of the leading Protestant teachers of France the utterances of Pastors Monod and Grandpierre attracted some attention. In the course of an article on Mr. Spurgeon, the former wrote:—

"In hearing him you forget man, you forget the preacher, and think only of the truths he utters. You are not under the false spell of a vain and high-sounding eloquence, but the heart is touched, the conscience is awakened, and that which thus subdues you is the power of the truth of God. You are not tempted to applaud and cry 'Bravo!' but you feel constrained to retire into yourself, to pray

for yourself and for others, and to say from your heart, 'Amen! Lord! Amen!' The basis of the doctrines drawn by Mr. Spurgeon from the Bible is what we call Calvinism; he believes, and he preaches, that the Bible teaches the election of grace and the final perseverance of the saints. But how admirably practical is this Calvinism, how broad and grand it is! He would never straiten the limits of the infinite mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Without reserve, he calls all men to the foot of the cross, and tells them in his Master's words, 'Whosoever cometh shall in no wise be cast out.' His Calvinism is as far removed from Antinomianism as it is from self-righteousness, and would rather lead to holiness, without which no man can see the Lord."

Pastor Monod then enters with some enthusiasm into his subject, and like all other inquirers had done, he asked what was the reason of such astounding success in one who was still so young, and whose church members had increased in six years from 150 to 1,500. He would not have it that imagination, voice, wealth of anecdote, etc., would account for such moral phenomena. It was rather the man's faith that accounted for the thing; the words spoken were mighty because they were founded on eternal truth:—

"His eloquence consists not in the mere clatter of words or in the pleasant arrangement of studied phrases; and if Joseph de Maistre had heard him, he would not have retired, saying, 'A Protestant minister is a man dressed in black, who says soft things.' No; Mr. Spurgeon is powerful because he possesses the faith which he teaches, and that faith possesses him; because he has tested in his own experience the reality and efficacy of those truths he preaches; and because, like John the Baptist, he is willing that Christ should increase and that he should decrease. He speaks because he believes and loves; and one feels that his eloquence has been learned on his knees before God and His Word, and has not been studied in any school of rhetoric. He preaches the truth, all the truth, in all the fulness in which he knows and loves it, because this truth, and this alone, is able to save the soul. Add to this a rare and perfect independence of character—he fears not men, he seeks not their favour; he shrinks not from their anger, but announces 'all the counsel of God' as he finds it revealed in His Word. He knows no other limits than those prescribed by the Gospel. He never asks, 'What will be said of me?' but rather, 'What is the truth, what is the will of God?' and then, when he sees clearly the road which God has marked out for him, he walks in it resolutely, and nothing can stop or hinder him. And is not this the only right way of doing good to men? We have heard of a bishop who, one day addressing the celebrated actor Garrick, said, 'How is that you, who represent only fiction, yet produce such lively impressions upon the people, while we, who preach of realities, too often leave our audiences cold and indifferent?' 'My Lord,' said Garrick, 'perhaps it is because we speak of fiction as if it were reality, while in the pulpit realities are treated as if they were but fiction!' Here then is the secret. When Mr. Spurgeon speaks of sin, of hell, of heaven, of Jesus Christ, of His cross and His blood, of pardon, of salvation, and of life eternal, one feels that these are all realities—aye, as real and earnest as the facts of everyday life. He cries to souls to flee from the wrath to come just as he would cry to a man asleep in a burning house to awake and save his life." The expositions of the Scriptures are said to be as interesting as the sermons, the explanation of Psalm xxiii. at the American Chapel being referred to as especially striking. What struck the Parisians as being chiefly remarkable, however, was the unaffected simplicity and freedom from pride which were characteristic of the young genius. Pastor Monod then gives this interesting passage:—

"Just think for a moment what strong temptations to pride must beset this young preacher of twenty-six years! Not only week after week, but day after day, thousands of eager listeners crowd around his pulpit! From all parts of Great Britain and the United States he receives the most urgent solicitations to go and preach the Gospel. God blesses his words to the conversion of very many souls. His name is a 'household word,' his portrait is sold everywhere, his sermons, taken down in shorthand, are published every week, and then bound in volumes, which are rapidly translated into nearly all the European languages. Now, we ask, seeing a young man in this exalted and dangerous position, do we not expect to find in him—and should we not be even ready to pardon—a certain consciousness of his importance and superiority? But one is most delightfully surprised to find in him a brother full of simplicity and cordiality, possessed of a cheerful, amiable disposition, and without the slightest trace of affectation or pride. This was the impression of all who saw Mr. Spurgeon in private, but especially of those who on Wednesday and Thursday evenings met him at the house of M. Grandpierre, who kindly procured for the numerous friends who desired to be better acquainted with Mr. Spurgeon the opportunity of speaking a few words with him and pressing his hand. He seemed not to be aware that he was the one object of interest to all present, and had a stranger entered that crowded drawing-room, he would have had some difficulty in ascertaining who amongst that motley group formed the chief attraction."

Pastor Grandpierre also gave an article on the same subject in L'Espérance, of February 15, and from this a short passage may be quoted:—

"Spurgeon is truly a poet, and without having heard him one cannot even form an idea of the richness and power of his conceptions, and this, too, without even swerving from the simplicity which beseems the Christian pulpit, or the dignity which becomes a minister of Jesus Christ.... Both before and after his sermons, public and private prayer-meetings were held to invoke the blessing of God on his labours, and we are sure that souls were converted and believers edified, nourished, renewed in their inner life, and stirred up to fresh activity. Our dear and honoured brother received a most cordial welcome from Christians of all denominations in the capital, and he left us interested and grateful, happy in the reception which has been accorded to him, and promising soon to revisit us. On our part, we bless God that the Presbytery and Council of the Reformed Church of Paris considered it an honour to throw open to him the doors of its largest temple, which was filled at both services by an eager crowd. And of this grand assembly, the members of our Church happily formed no inconsiderable portion, thus proving once again that we have in our midst very many souls who know how to love and appreciate the earnest and faithful preaching of the 'Gospel of the grace of God.'" But the good opinion of brethren in the faith such as the evangelical French pasteurs was to be expected, and the full effect of this visit to Paris of the distinguished English preacher was not fully seen or realised until the merely secular papers had made their comments. One of the most distinguished literary men in Paris at that time was M. Prévost-Paradol; and when such a writer, a Roman Catholic, sent forth a eulogy on the Calvinistic Spurgeon in one of the leading daily papers of France, it was looked upon as something very surprising. M. Prévost-Paradol wrote as follows:—

"Mr. Spurgeon has spoken; the indefatigable apostle has passed three days amongst us, and has preached five times without anyone being able to remark in his privileged nature the least trace of fatigue. And yet wo do not think that any orator could throw more of humility into his speech or deliver himself with more ease to his audience. Without ever declaiming or becoming too much

excited, Mr. Spurgeon is animated and interesting from one end of his discourse to the other. His subject is often a common one and its development is foreseen: that which one cannot understand before having heard Mr. Spurgeon is the persuasive, familiar, and yet commanding manner which draws on his auditor and conducts him, without fatigue, through that long chain of recitals, images, exhortations, and prayers of which Mr. Spurgeon, with so much art, composes the rich and solid tissues of his discourses. But why speak of art with reference to the most natural, and we would willingly say the most inspired, orator we have ever had the pleasure of hearing? Never has anyone spoken with less apparent preparation, or previous study been less felt, and yet what hearer of Mr. Spurgeon has remarked, we do not say the least indistinctness, but the least feebleness or the least hesitation, in the perpetual flow of his simple and forcible eloquence? One listens with security to that powerful and sympathetic voice which never falls too low, or is raised too high, and which, during whole hours, filled with its even flood the vaults of the church. The man who has received all these gifts, and who makes so generous a use of them, is not yet; twenty-five years of age. It is impossible to look at this energetic and loyal character without reading in it the conviction, the courage, and the genuine happiness of doing good. This orator, who is perhaps more listened to than any other citizen of a free country, where freedom of speech exercises so noble an empire, is at the same time the most modest and simple of all men. It is true he has the happiness of addressing a people who do not think themselves obliged, in order to be liberal, to be unjust towards religion; but, after all, Mr. Spurgeon owes to himself alone the considerable and salutary influence he has acquired, yet no one would suspect him of being proud of it. Truly, and without affectation, he ascribes it all to God. It seems to us that all religious differences ought to lose themselves in rendering justice to such apostles. As for us, who have seen in this eloquent and benevolent young man one of the happiest examples of what can, in these modern times, promote Christianity and liberty, we have felt it a great honour and pleasure to shake hands with him." On the Sunday after his return from Paris Mr. Spurgeon preached at Exeter Hall on the Immeasurableness of Sin, the text being Psa 19:12, "Who can understand his errors?" The freshness and force with which he treated the subject would not have led anyone to suppose that he had just gone through such an arduous week's work on the other side of the Channel. There can now be no doubt that he was working too hard; but so far were all from believing this at the time, that they supposed the iron constitution to be capable of meeting whatever demands youthful enthusiasm might make upon it. On Wednesday, March 14, Mr. Spurgeon visited Dr. Campbell, who was, in the young preacher's estimation, a veritable Greatheart and the Luther of the nineteenth century. The conversation related to the sudden deaths of certain well-known personages which had recently occurred, all present little thinking that news of the death of the veteran editor's son, Mr. George C. Campbell, was even then on the wing. This promising youth, whose manners were frank and genial, had chosen the sea as his profession, but, after completing a few voyages, he perished by drowning during the heavy gales in the Atlantic in the early spring of 1860. The sermon preached at Exeter Hall on March 18 Mr. Spurgeon called "Memento Mori," the text being Deu 32:29, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end;" and references were made to Dr. Campbell as a champion of the faith, and to the brave young officer who had been washed from the deck of the barque Native during a storm in mid-ocean. The visit paid to Dr. Campbell was an annual one, and these occasions were something more than mere exchanges of friendly intercourse. The veteran editor himself once explained their object:—"Every 365 days Mr. Spurgeon and his dear companion, and the two little

Princes Imperial, honour my family with their presence for a whole day. We count on it; it is a high day with us. By two sermons on that day I may say Mr. Spurgeon supports almost entirely our City Mission at the Tabernacle." The reference was, of course, to the Tabernacle in Moorfields which had been erected for Whitefield, and of which Dr. Campbell was pastor, although through loss of voice in the later years of his life he devoted his energies to journalism rather than to preaching. Mr. Spurgeon's opinion was that the religious Press of that day had two sides, and that the doctor represented the better side. "He has the most thundering pen in all the universe," the young pastor once emphatically remarked. "If he will give me some portion of the kingdom of the tongue, I shall willingly let him have that of the pen. His pen is like Ithuriel's spear: it has detected many of the toads of false doctrine now in existence, and I have no doubt it will detect and turn up many more."

Chapter 39: A Protest Against False Teachers

Chapter 39.

A Protest Against False Teaching

Progress of the Tabernacle—Sermon on behalf of Young Women—Brown's "Divine Life in Man"—Protest of Spurgeon and Six Other Leading Ministers—Visit to Birmingham—Visit to South Wales—Tour on the Continent.

The Metropolitan Tabernacle being now in course of erection, great interest was naturally felt in its progress, not only by the congregation it was intended to accommodate but by the public at large. Hence, on Monday evening, April 2, a full meeting was held at New Park Street Chapel to report progress and to adopt measures for securing further subscriptions. Mr. Spurgeon himself presided, and was able to congratulate his friends on the success which had already been achieved. From what was further said, the audience inferred that the new Tabernacle was to a great extent a copy of the Surrey Gardens Music Hall. The panic in the latter building had taught some useful lessons. As Mr. Spurgeon remarked, "A great improvement has been made in the mode of access to the galleries, there being a staircase to each of them, so that no crush or inconvenience would be felt in the ingress or egress. It takes about twenty minutes for the people to get out of the Surrey Hall, but this building, though crammed, would be cleared in some five minutes." The great building was then described, and it was spoken of as a place which was being built with large intentions. The subscriptions to date were nearly £19,000, leaving over £12,000 to be subscribed before the sanctuary would be free from debt. On Thursday, April 12, Mr. Spurgeon preached at Bloomsbury Chapel on behalf of the Society for the Rescue of Young Women and Children, the text being St. John 8:10-11, "When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers?" etc. After making some references to the calamities which sin brought upon its victims, the preacher went on to speak of Christ's methods of dealing with particular sinners:—

"He did not condemn them but said, Go and sin no more. The reason He did this was because the condemnation against this sin had but a very feeble effect. Moses decreed stoning; but how ineffectual it was, seeing that a whole host of Pharisees indulged in it. The penalty had evidently failed to produce the desired effect. This one instance might be confirmed by all history. When any very stringent law was made against a crime, they had generally seen that that very crime increased. Forgery, horse-stealing, etc., were far more rampant when punished by execution than they were in their own day. Mere punishment, mere law and terror, had always failed in subduing the wickedness of the human heart. Certainly he did not deny that it had had a slight check on wickedness, but at the same time the thing had been a defeat and not a conquest. The conduct of the Lord was right towards the woman, because, unless they were prepared to say that Jesus Christ's motive was a mistaken one, they could not say He was mistaken in this act. But he (Mr. Spurgeon) did not see how Christ could have condemned the woman. There were two taken found committing adultery, and only one of the guilty persons brought before Him. If she had been before

any judge, surely he would have said, 'Bring the other,' and when they saw the Christian Church acting as a mighty matron, looking down on the fallen daughters of Eve, did they not all say, 'Why does she not do so to the men?' because they were the ringleaders in sin, they first pulled their daughters from the stars and hurled them down to the depths of miry clay. Now that the law had proved a failure, let them try what the Gospel could do."

It was about this time that the late James Baldwin Brown published a volume entitled "The Divine Life in Man," which showed the author to be a disciple of Maurice. To this work, John Howard Hinton wrote an answer, and when these "Strictures" were reviewed in the Baptist organ, appearances showed that the writer of the review agreed with Baldwin Brown rather than with his critics:—"Mr. Brown's chief fault is inconsistency with himself, and it would have been better if Mr. Hinton had paid particular attention to this, and exposed his inconsistencies in detail, instead of conjuring up to himself a bugbear of heterodoxy beginning to be rampant in the churches which it shall be his 'mission' to destroy. We have no belief in this phantasmal hydra, and regret much that it so haunts the brain of some of our venerated and beloved brethren. We believe it to be a delusion of Satan's by which the great enemy has grievously succeeded in weakening the spirit of mutual confidence, and in destroying unity of action amongst the ministers of Congregational and Baptist churches."

It almost appeared as though this reviewer wished to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds: he favoured or corrected each side in turn; for while Mr. Hinton's production was "most objectionable." the doctrines it advanced were "important to be upheld." Accordingly the next number of the paper contained what was not only a protest against Brown's erroneous teaching, but a condemnation of the bias of The Freeman itself, this being signed by Mr. Spurgeon and six other foremost men in the denomination. The passages singled out by Mr. Hinton are spoken of as containing "pernicious error," and Mr. Hinton was held to have rendered "valuable service to Evangelical Christianity" by the publication of his "Strictures ":—

"We are no more lovers of controversy than your reviewer, but if errors subversive of the Gospel are advocated by some of her ministers, it is the duty of others to withstand them.... Without conjuring up any 'phantasmal hydra' of heterodoxy, as your reviewer speaks, and imagining that it is beginning to be rampant in our churches, which we do not for a moment suppose or believe, we take the liberty of saying that we trust our ministers will continue to be students of Howe and Charnock and Hall and Fuller rather than draw their theology from Maurice, Professor Scott, and others of the same school whom Mr. Brown so strongly recommends." The preacher thus publicly reprimanded wrote a short note to The Freeman, complaining that Mr. Spurgeon had joined six others in an endeavour to prejudice his ministry. The apologist for T. T. Lynch during "The Rivulet" controversy also preached in his own defence at Clayland Chapel, Kennington, on April 22. The matter, too, was mentioned in the pulpit at New Park Street Chapel on April 15. The Nonconformist devoted a leading article to the subject, and thought that a mistake had been made, and to this Dr. Angus wrote a vigorous reply. The Freeman also referred to the subject again at length; and it was in reply to this that Mr. Spurgeon wrote a letter which filled over two columns of The British Standard of May 25. After some introductory remarks as regarded the reasons which led to the sending forth of the Protest, Mr. Spurgeon asked:—

"How, think you, was this admirable document received p Why, sir, it was supplemented by an editorial postscript, the marrow of which consisted in a joke upon the juvenility of three of the brethren, who are yet old enough to know some who are their juniors in years, and a few who are far more their juniors in decency. A ghastly smile, like that which flickers upon the face of a man who is confused and confounded, but who longs to conceal his fears with the mask of levity, was the only answer we received. "We were dealing with divine realities, and with verities which concerned the very basis of our holy religion; the reply was a play upon a harmless sentence, highly appropriate in the mouths of most of the seven, and not indecorous upon the lip of any one of them. This absurd trifling was esteemed to be so terrible a piece of artillery that it must needs be fired off again at Exeter Hall on the Missionary occasion, to the disgust of many of the audience, by a gentleman who was so alarmed at the stupendous engine with which he was entrusted that the echo of his own voice seemed to startle him, and one word from an indignant hearer extorted a trembling apology. Was he the reviewer who caused all the mischief? Did an uneasy conscience blanch that cheek, and cause that grim sarcasm which received a cheer or two because it was not understood? If it be so, it is time that the incognito of reviews should be rent away, when common decency cannot restrain a man from stepping forward to be his own champion, to defend in his public position a deed which he dares not avow to be his own." This refers to the speech of one who was easily recognised. The controversy shifted somewhat from the book complained of to, the conduct of a newspaper. At all events, it is the paper which Mr. Spurgeon is chiefly concerned with in his memorable letter to Dr. Campbell's journal. One more passage may be quoted:—

"The Freeman affirms that some of us had never read the book to which we referred. I am sure I had both read and marked it, but as to inwardly digesting it, I am not nearly enough allied to an ostrich to be able to accomplish that feat. Next, it unfairly takes it for granted that the letter of Dr. Angus was a joint affair, although it is his writing, and his alone. Admirable as it is, that letter is no more the composition of the whole seven than is this epistle, which the Editor will take care to observe is mine, and mine alone. A worse act than this imperiously demands inquiry. The Freeman must make good a statement to which I am now about to refer, or tacitly admit that its courage and truthfulness have vanished. It dares to say that one of us had previously approved of Mr. Brown's booh. Name the man. Why stab the whole seven in the dark? In the name of common honesty, not to say religion, point out the individual. None of us would take the pains to deny an accusation so indefinitely worded. The charge is so serious that, to whomsoever it may be falsely applied, it will be his duty, for the protection of society, to visit the author of the libel with the fullest punishment the laws of his country can enforce, unless an ample apology be forthcoming. The imputation is tantamount to calling a man dishonest, if not a liar; and what remains to any of us when such charges are allowed to pass unchallenged?"

While the excitement occasioned by this Protest was at its height Mr. Spurgeon visited Birmingham. He arrived in the great Midland town on April 24 and remained until the next day. "Without having to notify the fact of the services, 6,000 tickets were disposed of in a few hours; and the distributor of these is said to have had his bells broken down by the unceasing peals of applicants. Soon after this, Mr.

Spurgeon found rest to be necessary, and the commotion occasioned by the Protest against false doctrine died away.

It is evident that Mr. Spurgeon intended to write more on this subject, but he found more profitable employment, and does not appear to have given the matter further attention. On Wednesday, May 30, he visited South Wales, and preached in a field at Abercarn to 20,000 people. Lying in Mynyddyslwyn parish, this busy town has its tin-plate works as well as its great collieries; and the seat of Lord Llanover is the great house of the neighbourhood. "Among those present," says a local newspaper, "were the Lord-Lieutenant of Monmouthshire, and Mrs. Leigh; Lord Tredegar, Lady Tredegar, and family; Lord Llanover, Lady Llanover, and family; and a large number of the leading gentry of the county." No more pleasing sight could have presented itself to the preacher than such a congregation made up in large measure of the working classes, and an incident occurred which showed him to be above all else a preacher to the people. The personages of the county were there in great force; but their four-horse carriages were on the outside of the crowd, and not in the best place for hearing. A cry arose for the people to move aside so that the vehicles and their distinguished occupants might approach nearer to the preacher. When he discovered what was being attempted, Mr. Spurgeon at once called out, "I did not come here to preach to horses but to men; four horses and a carriage would occupy the ground of fifty people, and therefore the horses and carriages must remain where they are." After the service the Lord-Lieutenant sent for Mr. Spurgeon and asked him to visit Pontypool; but it appeared that such a visit would be impossible, as preaching engagements had already been made for two years.

It was now nearly seven years since Spurgeon had first appeared in London; and the hitherto unrelieved strain of his heavy labours at last began to produce symptoms which could not be ignored. He complained of weariness, such as had not been experienced before. Since the days of Wesley, there was no record of a preacher having gone through such a term of service; for during the seven years an average of ten sermons a week had been preached, the congregation occasionally showing a total of 30,000 persons. The only way to prevent a complete breakdown was to seek relaxation for a time from such exhausting toil; and accordingly, arrangements were made for a tour on the Continent. On Monday evening, June 4, a crowded meeting was held at New Park Street Chapel, several well-known friends giving addresses while the assembly took farewell of the pastor and his wife, and wished them God-speed on their travels. Arrangements were made for various eminent ministers to conduct the services both at Exeter Hall and New Park Street during the pastor's absence. It was also felt to be desirable that the erection of the Tabernacle should be proceeded with as rapidly as possible, so that a meeting might be held in the great building before the end of the summer. It was thought that such a meeting would not only be of general interest, but would stimulate the collection of the money still needed. But even this necessary break in the round of toil was not a complete holiday, for sermons were given in some of the chief cities of the Continent. After June 3, Mr. Spurgeon did not preach in London again until July 29. As the first holiday in seven years, this was not too long; and it would have ceased to be a holiday at all if he had responded to all the demands which interested persons would have made upon him. For example, there were publishers who would gladly have issued a book of travels by the popular preacher; but he felt that taking notes for such a purpose would be too irksome, and that it would be as profitable to continue work at home as to become a slave abroad.

Chapter 40: Eight Weeks On The Continent

Chapter 40.

Eight Weeks On The Continent

Tour on the Continent—Letter from Baden-Baden—The late Emperor of the French—Antwerp—Brussels—A Gospel Sermon in a Roman Catholic Church—Gambling at Baden—First Sight of the Alps—Zürich—Lucerne—Geneva—In Calvin's Pulpit—Reappearance at Exeter Hall—A Wet Summer.

Although Mr. Spurgeon did not consent to take notes for a book such as would have delighted the heart of a publisher, he supplied his friend Dr. Campbell with at least one ample letter which is even now of historical interest, especially when read in connection with what has since happened in France and Germany. The young pastor happened to be at Baden-Baden at the time of the Conference of June, 1860, which was attended by the late Emperor of the French, and eight other crowned heads. "One could hardly walk in any direction without stumbling upon a Grand-Duke, or being run over by the horses of an Emperor," we find it remarked. The hotels were not only overcrowded; the demands of their regal visitors were so urgent that more humble patrons, whose custom at ordinary times was welcome, had to stand and admire at a distance. The late Emperor of the French passed through Strasburg on Friday, June 15, when the streets were abundantly decorated and crowded with sightseers. One striking feature of the scene was the large number of country people who came in to see the pageant. Garlands of oak-leaves and tricolour flags decorated the quaint-looking old houses of the more ancient streets, as well as the more elegant mansions of the newer thoroughfares. Even the guards, of whom travellers had sometimes to complain, were in a good humour. Across the river, "the town of Kehl was resplendent with the orange and red colours of the Grand-Duke of Baden." It was supposed that there was enough of the "French element" in the populace to account for the existence of this "Imperial fever" on one side of the river as on the other. What Mr. Spurgeon wrote of the French Emperor, who then had ten years of rule before him, will be read with interest:—

"If the people of Kehl received the Emperor heartily, they were the only Germans who would have done so, for everywhere throughout Belgium, Prussia, and the small German kingdoms, he is either dreaded or execrated. It is the universal belief that he will never be content until he has completed the 'natural boundary' scheme by subduing all the territory on the west of the Rhine to his imperial sway. If the English are no friends to Napoleon, the Germans go even further, and are more anti-Imperial than ourselves.

"On Saturday the Emperor might be seen early in the morning walking in the garden leaning upon his walking-stick, and looking more decrepit than his age might justify. It is a theme for great gratitude that he is not a young man, and that, be his ambition what it may, he has no great time before him in which to work out his political adventures. On horseback or in his carriage, all men confess his noble bearing, and no signs of decay are manifest, but when he is walking, the

spectator foresees that the greatest of men are mortal. During the greater part of the day the Emperor returned the visits of the Princes who had waited upon him in the morning. Possibly the laws of etiquette may in this case have been very agreeable to the great one, for it enabled him first to see all the Princes together, and then to give them a lesson privately and individually. "Who can tell what devices were in the heart of the mighty? Who shall fathom the depth of the thoughts of kings? May the Lord rule and overrule, and out of every evil may His glory spring. The Princes and Dukes may have rejoiced at the coming of the Lord of France, but the people wondered what it all could mean, and forebodings of evil were neither rare nor frivolous. As for the little Kings, they came to this place like moths to a candle. Uninvited and unexpected, they must needs come forth to the presence of the potentate, if not to be lacqueys to his pride, at least to sun themselves in his superior glory. It is to be hoped that the dexterous player has not succeeded in throwing the apple of discord among these minor monarchs: divided they would soon be overcome, but united they might oppose a serious barrier to any aggrandisement he may anticipate. I like not to see either thieves in company or kings in conclave. Eagles come not together unless they scent the prey. All may be well, and the meeting may be a friendly visit and an exchange of courtesies, but uneasy thoughts will suggest themselves; for when the wolf inspects the sheepfolds and dines with the shepherds, the silliest of the sheep are troubled at nightfall.

"When the Emperor came forth from the hotel to his carriage, the populace of Baden gave him unmistakable evidence of their feelings towards him. Several gentlemen have assured me that the hissing was very far in excess of the few notes of acclamation. Even in the Conversation House, where the élite of the visitors were assembled, the hisses were very distinct, and must have been an unpleasant sound to one who breathes the air of flattery and eats the bread of adulation. "When the Grand-Duke afterwards appeared, the people cheered him very heartily, as if to show for whom the sounds of disapproval had been intended.

"After all, as far as I can judge, it is not what he has done, but what he may do, which causes this ill-feeling towards him. Some men would have done less and have had more credit for it, but this man continues to mar all his good deeds by a crooked policy which leads most men to suspect his best actions and to impute to him designs which may be very far from his thoughts. "Worse men than he have been better liked; and yet there is no injustice in this treatment of him, for his conduct courts suspicion and his dark reserve creates distrust."

Sunday, June 17, appears to have been the day chosen by these magnates for their chief time of deliberation. When neither crisis nor disaster was impending it seemed to be a scandal to the young London preacher that this should be the case. "Here were all the days in the week, all equally available, no haste compelling, no wars alarming, and yet none of their own six days will suit them: they must usurp God's peculiar day, as if they were lords of the Sabbath, or irresponsible to the laws of Heaven." In what degree were these potentates responsible for the gaieties of the Continental Sunday, which deprived the weekly rest day of its use and charm? Mr. Spurgeon continues:—

"The companies of country people who filled the roads were very interesting to observe; and as I looked from the windows of my quiet chamber upon the gaiety which the advent of these princes had caused upon a day consecrated to rest and worship, I could not fail to remember that men in high places have vast responsibilities, and God alone knows how much of the sins of the nations

will be visited upon the heads of their governors. They are not only partakers of other men's sins, but creators of evil. Surely there are chains of darkness of unusual weight reserved for these ringleaders in rebellion."

Mr. Spurgeon witnessed the departure of Napoleon III. for Strasburg, and he penned this little word-picture of what was an interesting historical scene:—

"The Emperor left for Strasburg at 10 o'clock p.m., and his train started the midst of a silence more profound than I had ever remarked before. Standing on the edge of the crowd, I was astonished to the utmost at a stillness like that of death—a quiet which was not broken until the cause of it had departed; then every man breathed freely, and as the Duke of Baden rode back to his castle, the people gave him loyal cheers, which contrasted with the gloomy silence with which the Gallic despot had been greeted. To my mind there was something truly dignified in this noiseless censure: to hiss might be but a display of weak impertinence, but to be sternly silent was the noble rebuke of resolute minds. I ought to have said that on Saturday there was a fine illumination at the Conversation House, which is the grand resort for the company who are staying in the neighbourhood, and the building in which is concentrated the gambling for which the town is famous. Beyond this one display I did not perceive a flag or light upon any house or hotel. This was very strange to me, for if in any English town there had been but one king, much less nine, there would have been some sort of display, unless, indeed, the unpopularity of one of the number had been great enough to compel the people to ignore the existence of the other eight."

These passages, as coming quite fresh to readers of this generation, will be read with keen interest. They are a fair sample of the book which such a writer would have produced had such work been the object of his tour. The truth was, however, that the storing up of illustrations for his discourses, and thus to utilise all other material that might be gathered on his travels, was much more advantageous to Mr. Spurgeon than it would have been to give it in books or in newspaper letters. What the pastor says about the Emperor shows him to have been a keen observer of life. What were the notions of the once mighty potentate respecting the great English preacher? I once heard that, when Napoleon was a refugee at Chislehurst, in his last days, a friend who encountered him in his walks asked the fallen ruler a question concerning the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. "The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, I thought your Majesty might have heard of him?" It transpired, however, that the ex-Emperor had been so engaged with other matters that he knew nothing about the most popular of English preachers.

Mr. Spurgeon gave an account of his adventures during this tour at a large gathering of friends, who, on his return to England, welcomed him home in the then half-finished Tabernacle; but it will be more convenient to conclude the account of the holiday before any reference is made to the business meeting. When he left London in that March-like month of June, the pastor was accompanied as far as Gravesend by a number of friends; and, after taking farewell of these, he proceeded to Antwerp with an Essex captain, who was well competent to exchange anecdotes with a genially communicative passenger. Concerning this veteran Mr. Spurgeon said:—

"We soon chimed in: I began to tell him some anecdotes and he began to tell me some. Some of his were original: I will tell you one, because it tends to illustrate the town in which we landed—Antwerp. Antwerp is so full of Virgin Maries that you cannot turn the corner of a street without meeting one—sometimes under a canopy of many colours and arrayed in all manner of

pretended jewellery. Well, so many of these Virgin Maries are there that the sailors believe every image they see to be the Virgin. A sailor who landed went and bought some tobacco. When he came to the ship, one of them said, 'This is very good tobacco, Jack; where did you get it?' 'Oh,' he said, 'you will know the shop, for there is the Virgin Mary sitting over the door smoking a pipe.'"

Judging from appearances, it was inferred that more was thought of the Virgin Mary in the city than of Christ Himself. A grand procession from the fine old cathedral, the priests and their attendants carrying lamps and candles in the daylight, made this even more apparent. They were said to be taking the sacrament to certain sick persons; and, as the ecclesiastics passed the houses, candles were lighted, although these were blown, out as soon as the procession had passed. What was regarded as being especially scandalous was the fact that even Protestants were seen to light candles in honour of the host. "I should like to have seen Martin Luther with a candle before his door," remarked Mr. Spurgeon. "If there had been one, it would have been to set the priests' dresses on fire, or to have burned the Pope's Bull." Beneath the shadow of the cathedral, things too grossly indecent on the one hand, and crosses on the other, might have been purchased, thus showing that Romanism failed even to affect for the better the morals of the people, so that the English preacher had his Protestant sympathies strengthened:—"When I saw the gems that were in the shrines, the costly marbles, the rich and rare pictures; and when I saw their Calvaries, as they call them, with representations of Christ and His Apostles, and all those things, I felt my spirit stirred within me at the sight of a people so wholly given to idolatry. I believe Antwerp to be the most religious place on the face of the earth in a bad sense, that is, the most superstitious."

It was found that the Emperor Napoleon was as much disliked in Belgium as he was feared in Prussia, so that the storm-clouds of war, which were to burst with such disastrous effect ten years later, were already gathering. Mr. Spurgeon judged of the national feeling from what was said by a party of gentlemen with whom he had some conversation, and who maintained that, as Napoleon had already been permitted to annex Savoy, no hindrance would be offered by England to his taking Switzerland, or rectifying the borders of the Rhine, should he feel so inclined. The preacher appears to have said the best that could be said for his country. "Do you not think that if Napoleon were to touch any of your provinces on the Rhine, England would certainly speak out?" he asked. "No," replied one of the Prussians; "your nation never speaks out except it touches your commerce: you are a people that care for nothing or nobody except Manchester." This was thought to be not far from the mark. While shrinking from doing anything which might stir up the war spirit, Mr. Spurgeon maintained that Oliver Cromwell was the best peace-maker; for to say the right word at the right time, and to strike evil-doers, tended to peacemaking more than did vacillation.

Brussels was visited, but that city was not found to be of any remarkable interest. What such a divine found reason to say of the preaching of certain priests in the Romish communion, however, must be given:—

"I heard a sermon in a Romish church. By the side of the pulpit was fixed up a crucifix, and the good man—for I believe he was a good man—was continually pointing to it and preaching Christ crucified. He did preach Christ crucified; he spoke of the love of Christ so that I, who am a very poor hand at the French language, could understand him. He did not say 'justification by faith,' but he did say 'efficacy of the blood,' which conies to very much the same thing. He did not tell us we

were saved by grace and not by works, but he did say that all the works of men were less than nothing when brought into competition with the blood of Christ, and that blood was in itself enough. I was pleased to find my opinion verified that there are some even in that apostate Church who cleave unto the Lord—some sparks of heavenly fire which may perhaps guide poor souls to the rock Christ Jesus. I saw in that church a box for contributions to the Pope. He will never grow rich with what I gave him. I have seen money-boxes on the Continent for different saints—Santa Clara, San Francisco, San Dominique—another box for the Virgin, and another for the poor. But I could never make out how the money got to the Virgin and to the rest of them."

Something was said about several towns, and the long hours which the people worked, especially the women, who, in some parts, appeared to be strong and masculine, while they did more than the men. Many Irish were also met with here and there—men who volunteered to serve in the army of the Pope, and to whom no compliment could be paid. After passing through Frankfort and Heidelberg, a stay was made at Baden, and the gaming found to be going on there was characterised as the most dreadful sight this young pastor had ever beheld:—

"The Conversation House is a most gorgeous building. Wealth could not make it more splendid than it is. You are admitted without charge. The most beautiful music that can be found is there; and if there is a special concert, it is always free. The theatres are free, all the places of amusement are free, even the public library is free; nothing has to be paid for. You ask me how this is supported. To the left of the building there are two rooms for gaming. I went in. Here is a great table and a large crowd standing round it. Pour men sit in the middle with a kind of rake pulling money this way and that way, and pushing it here and there. I hardly ever saw such a lot of money except at a banker's counter. You see a young man come in, he looks round him, but he does not seem like a gambler at all. He puts down half a napoleon. In a minute it is shovelled away and he has lost his money. He walks round again, puts down another: this time he is successful, and has got two. You see women sitting in this place all night long playing high stakes. Some people win, but everybody must lose sooner or later. The banks clear a tremendous sum every year by simply making the odds so great against those who play that they must lose; and thus all these splendid places, the theatres and so on, are kept up by the gains of sin. Besides this, a large sum of money is paid to the State, and the shareholders divide a large percentage upon their money. None but fools will go there to play, yet I had the sorrow of seeing many such. Some will spend so much there that they have scarcely enough to take them to England—some not enough. Such is the infatuation, that you feel you must put down something; and if you had not strong principles you would be carried away by the torrent. Some defend the system, but I hold it to be fraught with the deadliest evils of anything ever invented by Satan himself. I saw an old, respectable-looking man, not unlike my friend Dr. Campbell. He came there and put down £10, he won; put down £20, again fortune favoured him—£40—£80—in a few minutes he won £160; then he took it all up, put it in his pocket, and walked away as coolly as possible. That man will certainly lose, for he would come on the morrow, and play so deep that he would sell the house that covered his children's heads, and the very pillow from under his wife. The worst thing that can happen to a man commencing to play is to win."

Some earnest warnings against gambling were given; and the change from the gaming-tables at Baden to the Alps at Schaffhausen was a grateful one. The first sight of the "everlasting hills" made an impression which was lasting. "Is that solid—that snowy glitter that I see yonder? Is it the

sunrise, is it cloud, or is it a mountain?" Passing on to Zurich, the fair was found to be interesting, while the costumes of the country were remarkable. The Reformation had also its agents still in the country:—

"At Zürich, I saw in the fair, what I also saw at Baden, that which gave me great pleasure. Opposite the house at Baden, where sin and wickedness reigned, there was an agent of the Bible Society selling Bibles and Testaments. I purchased a Testament, and felt quite cheered to see that little battery erected right before the fortifications of Satan; for I felt in my soul that it was mighty, through God, to the pulling down of his strongholds. In the midst of the fair at Zurich, where, like at John Bunyan's Vanity Fair, all manner of things were exposed for sale, stood a humble-looking man selling Bibles, Ryle's tracts, and somebody's sermons. I must confess I felt pleased to see my own sermons, for they have been translated into French, German, Dutch, and "Welsh, so that you may scarcely go anywhere where you may not hit upon a copy."

After a Sabbath at Lucerne, the party ascended the Rigi, and then a visit was paid to the pastor of Geneva and historian of the Reformation, Dr. Merle d'Aubigné, and also to Pastor Bach. The doctor missed the great English preacher at the railway station; but, while in the city, he met with a friend who gladly recognised him, and who said, "Come to my house—the very house where Calvin lived." Mr. Spurgeon appears to have been entertained in the house of an eminent banker named Lombar, who is described as a "godly and gracious man." The company was in all respects suited to his taste, and his enjoyment correspondingly great. The Established and the Free Churches had had some differences, but their differences occasioned less friction than of old, and all welcomed most heartily their distinguished English visitor. Some of Mr. Spurgeon's further experiences in this city of Calvin and of the Reformation may be given in his own words:—

"I was really allowed to stand in the pulpit of John Calvin. I am not superstitious, but the first time I saw the medal of John Calvin I kissed it; and when the pastors saw my reverence for him, they presented me with a magnificent medal. I preached in the cathedral of St. Peter. I do not suppose half the people understood me, but it did not matter about understanding, for they were very glad to see, and to join in heart with the worship in which they could not join with the understanding. I did not feel very comfortable when I came out in full canonicals, but the request was put to me in such a beautiful way that I could have worn the Pope's tiara if they had asked me. They said, 'Our dear brother comes to us from another country. Now, when an ambassador comes from another country, he has a right to wear his own costume at court, but, as a mark of very great esteem, he sometimes condescends to the weakness of the country which he visits, and will wear Court dress.' 'Well,' I said, 'yes, that I will, certainly; but I shall feel like running in a sack.' It was John Calvin's cloak, and that reconciled me to it very much. I do love that man of God, suffering all his life long, and yet not only enduring persecution from without, but a complication of disorders from within, and yet serving his Master with all his heart. I want to ask your prayers for the Church at Geneva. That little Republic stands like an island surrounded by France. But I can assure you there are no greater anti-Gallicans in the whole world than the Genevese. I took rather a wicked delight in saying to them, 'Why, you are almost French people.' At last they hinted to me that they did not like me to say so, and I would not say it any more. They are afraid of being Frenchified; they cannot endure it. They know the sweets of liberty, and cannot bear that they should be absorbed with that huge monarchy. M. d'Aubigné charged me with this message, 'Stir up the Christians of England to make Geneva a matter of special prayer. We do not dread the arms of

France, nor invasion, but something worse than that—namely, the introduction of French principles.'" At that time arrangements were being made for the Evangelical Alliance to meet at Geneva in the following year, and Mr. Spurgeon was regretting that he would not be able to be present. The journey from Geneva to Chamouni was an exhilarating experience never to be forgotten:—"You feel that you are going up to heaven just as these mountains are." Then came the passage of the Simplon Pass, and the entertainment at the famous Hospice on the summit, in which were found four or five Augustine monks. The very name of the illustrious Christian Father made this a congenial retreat:—

"They asked us to go in; we entered, and were shown into a very nice room, where cake and wine were awaiting us, and, if one had chosen to order it, we could have had soup, or fish, or anything we liked, and nothing to pay. They told us that they always fed a hundred people every day gratuitously, and sometimes as many as twelve hundred. Of course, no one who could afford it would go away without giving anything to the poor-box. I was delighted to find that they were all Augustine monks, because, next to Calvin, I love Augustine. I feel that Augustine was the great mine out of which Calvin digged his mental wealth; and the Augustine monks in practising their holy charity seemed to say:—'Our master was a teacher of grace, and we will practise it, and give without money and without price to all comers whatsoever they shall need.'"

While on his interesting tour Mr. Spurgeon passed through France, Belgium, the minor States of Germany, and Switzerland. Two sermons were preached at Geneva, and these discourses were published both in French and German. The medal of John Calvin was voted to the preacher by the congregational authorities as a memento of his visit. The principal places on the Rhone, Milan, Mantua, Verona, and Venice were visited, five days being given to the last-named city.

Mr. Spurgeon was very cordially welcomed back by his people on Sunday, July 29, when he preached at Exeter Hall. The text was Job 12:9-10; and the improved health and spirits of the pastor afforded great satisfaction to all friends. The Tabernacle builders had made considerable progress with their work, and a determined effort was now necessary in order to obtain the needful funds in time for the opening. Many difficulties had to be overcome. Some of these were of the usual commonplace kind; and then there was the drawback of an unfavourable season through excess of rain. Under such conditions, and when the building would cost over £31,000, it required some courage for a young pastor to declare that he would not conduct a Sabbath service in the chapel until the builder was fully paid.

Chapter 41: A Thanksgiving Meeting

Chapter 41.

A Thanksgiving Meeting

Meeting in the unfinished Tabernacle—Letters to Mr. T. W. Medhurst—Strict Baptist Objectors-Visits to the Provinces and to Scotland—Preaching in a Barn.

On Tuesday, August 21, 1860, Mr. Apsley Pellatt presided at a great meeting in the only half-finished Tabernacle, "for the purpose of offering up devout thanksgiving for the success of. the undertaking, and making an attempt to raise the remainder of the required funds so as to open the place free from debt." The chairman referred to the old times of John Bunyan and Rowland Hill, to the progress made in relation to religious liberty; and, as one of a different denomination from the pastor's, he wished him all possible success. Mr. Spurgeon made some characteristic allusions to certain of his friends who were present, especially to Dr. Campbell, and to Hugh Allen, who was then rector of St. George the Martyr, Southwark. Mr. Spurgeon himself was in good spirits, and concerning the building itself he said:—

"If my unbaptised brethren on the platform were to fall through the floor, they would find themselves in the baptistery. There is no water in it now, but whoever of you want, in obedience to your Master's command, to be immersed, I shall be glad to be your humble servant. I believe the acoustic arrangements of the building are excellent, though I do not think the science of acoustics is understood. I have heard people say that the building is not so large as they expected it would be, but that just shows that it is excellently proportioned. It is so big that it would hold two chapels like the tabernacle in Moorfields. I do not care a single farthing about the exterior: I will have no towers, for they are only for show. The building is magnificent without being gaudy, and it shows neither extravagance nor meanness." The young pastor vent on to describe other parts of the building, and expressed the hope that, following in the wake of his predecessors, he might be spared to minister for fifty years in the chapel. He added that he should feel like "a guilty sneaking sinner" if the chapel had a debt upon it when he preached his first sermon from its pulpit, for the Scripture said, "Owe no man anything." A hope was also expressed that the rector of St. George's would accept an invitation to preach in the building. The rector made a short speech, and was followed by Dr. Campbell, who, as one of the London ministers who at first had some misgivings about Spurgeon, had at last came round to be his most enthusiastic advocate. The doctor said:—

"I sat in perfect astonishment as I listened to the record of the facts as set forth by the treasurer, and thought of the young man, Mr. Spurgeon, coming to London from the country, unnoticed and unknown. I thought of the historian who says of one who went down to Egypt, 'God was with him.' Now, Mr. Spurgeon came here, and God has been with him. The work is a mighty one. I came with Mr. Spurgeon and saw this gigantic edifice some three or four months ago, and was filled with amazement. I had never seen such a structure before, and rejoice that I live in the period when such a one has been brought into being."

After wishing that the pastor might be spared to labour in the chapel for fifty or sixty years, Dr. Campbell had to make a confession to the effect that he had once suspected that the young preacher from Waterbeach was an upstart. He had even declared that Spurgeon should never preach in the pulpit at Moorfields, but he was now proud to see him there on the occasion of his annual visit on account of the City Mission. Others, such as the Revs. Jonathan George and William Arthur, also gave addresses, and the people then inspected the building. In the evening Mr. Spurgeon gave an account of his Continental tour, and the subscriptions amounted to £1,050. On Thursday, September 6, a visit was paid to Holyhead, two sermons being preached in a large marquee erected for the occasion at great expense. About five thousand persons were present at each service, while on a great platform were a large number of ministers, as well as of the nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood. The admission was by ticket, ranging from 3s. 6d. to 6d., the proceeds being devoted to a new chapel at Newry, the foundation-stone of which was laid by Mr. Spurgeon after the evening service. This service was partly in Welsh, and a contemporary account says that a prayer offered by a minister from Denbigh "seemed to electrify all present." An historical sketch of the rise and progress of the Baptist denomination in Holyhead was read, and an address was delivered by Mr. Spurgeon, who also laid the stone. In the autumn of this year Mr. Spurgeon lost, by death, his old friend Dr. Alexander Fletcher, whose funeral took place in Abney Park Cemetery on October 8. On Lord Mayor's day, 1860, another good friend also passed away in the person of Alderman Wire, who two years before had been installed Lord Mayor of London, and who had taken the chair at the evening meeting on the occasion of laying the stone of the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

Mr. Spurgeon always showed great regard for those who passed through the Pastors' College, and he seems to have harboured peculiar affection for those who had been the earliest of his students. He kept up a correspondence to the last with his "first student," Mr. T. W. Medhurst, a friend who has made several contributions to this biography. In sending the enclosed Mr. Medhurst remarks:—"Here is a characteristic letter, showing his yearning desire for the spread of the Gospel, and the increase of the Lord's kingdom in the villages:—

"'Clapham, 1860.

"'My dear Medhurst,—Your kind letters always do me good. I have had nothing but joy in you, and such joy that it takes away many of my bitters. Tour grateful recollections of the very little which I did for you come like a refreshing breeze on a sultry day.

"'Allow me to suggest the establishment of Baptist churches in villages around Coleraine, to be supplied by lay, alias local, preachers.

"'I am labouring to increase our stations, and have seen great success. We have Maiden, Beddington, Cheam, Staines, New Court, Dockhead, Brentwood, and Grosvenor Street. In two of these there are now rising churches. My own opinion is that if there are only eight or nine in a village, they should be formed into a church, and set to work to increase and multiply.

"'There were, in 1653, Baptist churches in Waterford, Clonmel, Kilkenny, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Wexford, Carrickfergus, and Kerry. Where are these now? Could they not be recommenced, if only in small rooms or cottages? It is a solemn thing to lose one church: it is like blotting out a tribe from Israel. See to it, brother Medhurst. Try to be the Oncken of Ireland. God bless you and

yours.—Yours very truly, "C. H. Spurgeon.'"

Mr. Medhurst further remarks:—"Possibly, at one period of his life, Mr. Spurgeon may have had the thought of forming a distinct body, not separate from the Baptist denomination, but a body of men within the denomination who should be 'set for the defence of the Gospel,' as he believed and taught the 'truth is in Jesus.' Here is an extract from a letter written to me on my removal to Glasgow from Coleraine, Ireland, which seems to hint in this direction:—

'"My dear Medhurst,—I hope ever to see all our Churches perfectly one in heart. The time approaches for the formation of a distinct body or confederation, and to have two large interests in Glasgow will be noble indeed if they agree in one.

'"We had such a meeting last night. The Lord is with the College. We only want faith, and that is growing. We will fill the nation with the Gospel, and then send our armies out the wide world over. Big words, but written in faith in a great God. God bless you and yours.—Yours ever lovingly, '"C. H. Spurgeon.'

"The following note, on my leaving Glasgow for Portsmouth, is characteristic:—

'"Clapham, S.W., August 2, 1869.

'"My dear Friend,—I suppose you maun be flittin', but it's nae weel for Glasgie. God be wi' ye.

'"C. H. Spurgeon.'" On Monday, December 5, another meeting was held in the schoolroom of Islington Chapel, Upper Street, at which Mr. Spurgeon presided, and at which the progress of the Tabernacle was reported. The pastor showed that he should not like the chapel to have a debt, because it would not do to have it said that they had had to borrow the money. "But do not imagine that because you subscribe now, you will not have to do so hereafter, because you will be most mightily mistaken," remarked the chairman. "Other things will occupy attention which, if we were in debt, we should not be able to perform. You are all aware that I have undertaken to prepare a few young men for the ministry; but I hope, when the chapel is paid for, to raise the present number to a hundred. I believe I have a call in this matter. I am not to bring out scholars, but rough thunder men that can preach and be understood. I have often felt that there is a lack of these men—men who suit the people and speak to them in their own language." At that time over £6,000 had to be subscribed. "I intend to be a beggar to-night," said Mr. Spurgeon; "a beggar as bold as brass. It is a matter that will only occur once in my life, and I therefore feel like the man who said, when he was doomed to be hanged, 'It's only once, and I should like it done thoroughly well.'" The Strict Baptists still affected to look with misgiving on the pastor at New Park Street. One of the first of those who went forth from the Pastors' College to accept a pastorate was the late Benjamin Davies, of South Street Chapel, Greenwich, a man who was held in great esteem, and one who regarded Mr. Spurgeon with great affection. Davies had a friend at Leicester who belonged to the straitest section, of which James Wells was a leader, and this friend had been recommended to read the published sermon on "God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility," if he wished to have doubt removed respecting Spurgeon's orthodoxy. The sermon was procured and carefully read, but it failed to yield satisfaction. The Christian brother wished there was more in it than there was, so that he could have spoken better of it. "He certainly has the form of the doctrine of sovereign grace in it, and as much of the power of it as any intelligent mind might attain and be altogether carnal." In other days the writer had known as much about this grace as the preacher, but was, at

the same time, "as dead in sin as a stone is to natural or animal life." Hence it followed, "if Mr. Spurgeon has no better testimony to the power of sovereign grace in his own soul than he has given in that sermon, I believe it is quite possible that he may be like King Saul, have another heart, but not a new one." The hope was charitably expressed that Mr. Spurgeon would not "go over to Popery," while the method of his conversion seems to the writer to be unscriptural. There still remained a section therefore who would not accept the Gospel as preached at New Park Street, or who would not admit that the preacher really understood the matter in his heart.

It was at this time that Mr. Spurgeon consented to become joint-editor of The Baptist Magazine, the other editors being Messrs. Daniel Katterns and Samuel Manning, the one pastor at Hackney and the other at Frome. In days when no Baptist newspaper existed, the monthly denominational organ had been successfully conducted by Mr. William Groser, who was born in 1791 and died in 1856. In the number for January, 1861, Mr. Spurgeon had a characteristic article on Charity, in which Gurnall's saying was quoted—"Love goes ever armed with zeal, and draws the dagger against all opposers of truth." With the Metropolitan Tabernacle approaching completion and with no signs visible of their pastor's popularity declining, the congregation at New Park Street saw a great future before them. Though only twenty-five years of age, Spurgeon was now very commonly spoken of in newspapers as "the great preacher of the age." The Bookseller notified the fact that six millions of his sermons had been sold in six years; and, in addition to those read in English on both sides of the Atlantic, there were translations into French, Welsh, Dutch, German, and Swedish. "For a preacher to produce a sermon every week for publication is something wonderful," remarked The Wesleyan Times: "for those sermons to sell by thousands and even by tens of thousands is more wonderful still. When such remarkable facts come before us, we must note them."

Flying visits to the provinces were still made on week-days, and vast crowds were attracted. Towards the end of January, 1861, services were conducted at Sunderland, Stockton-on-Tees, and York. Leeds was visited on February 12, the service being in the Town Hall, when the tickets of admission ranged from a shilling to half-a-crown. A sum of £50 was given to the Tabernacle fund. On the following day, and under similar conditions, services were held in the United Methodist Free Church, when the Wesleyans were delighted with the preacher's account of his own conversion in the Methodist Chapel at Colchester.

Meanwhile enthusiastic meetings were held in London, from time to time, in order to raise the funds which were needed to clear the new Tabernacle from debt. One of these meetings came off on the day after Christmas Day, when Mr. W. G. Haynes lectured on Alpine Rambles, Mr. Spurgeon following with the subject of Southwark in the Olden Time. "The interval was occupied with music and various other amusements." On New Year's Day, 1861, Mr. W. Roupell, M.P., took the chair, when nearly £1,000 was collected. The chairman spoke as an earnest philanthropist. In the following year, as all the world knows, there came a melancholy sequel to such apparently enthusiastic utterances. On Monday, February 4, a number of friends assembled in the Tabernacle itself, when £4,000 still needed to be raised, and when Mr. Spurgeon repeated what he had often said before, that he would not preach on a Sunday in the new building until all the money needed was either given or promised. If the funds were not forthcoming, the new and completed chapel would stand unused, while the congregation would still have to assemble at Exeter Hall and New Park Street, suffering all of the inconveniences with which experience had

made them familiar. Early in March a circular was issued to notify that the building was nearly completed, and that only £3,000 was then needed to complete all payments. It was believed that this amount would be raised by a bazaar, and by the gifts of friends at the opening services. In the early part of March, Mr. Spurgeon undertook a northern tour, preaching at Preston, Carlisle, and Newcastle, then proceeding to Scotland, services being held at Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, Dundee, Montrose, and Aberdeen. We find this tour described in one journal as "quite a triumphal march." At Edinburgh services were held at the Music Hall and the Assembly Hall. A number of Havelock's men were then at the Castle, and these were specially invited by the preacher to be present. "About one hundred attended, and allusions were made to their late commander and to their services in India."

Concerning the services in the Scottish commercial metropolis, The Glasgow Examiner said:—

"On some former visits we heard, among the captious people of very refined taste, of odd sayings and unwarrantable eccentricities, and very offensive sayings for ears polite; but, on this occasion, not a syllable of such criticism has been heard. The newspapers have been either silent or complimentary, and the people who listened to the discourses are entirely agreed about their gravity, soundness, and vast importance. The matter of the various discourses was such as to disappoint the envious, the fastidious, the critical; but those who went to find occasion against the manner or matter of the preacher could find nothing on which to lay hold." The same journal gave a view of Spurgeon as a worker, and of his treatment by the Americans:—

"Some of his discourses have passed rapidly through many editions. Some volumes of his sermons sold in America to the extent of 250,000 copies; but, since his famous letter against slavery, matters have taken such a turn as to give a melancholy view of the power of slavery. He has been burned in effigy in every slave-holding State. His sermons have been publicly burned as unfit to be read in a State founded on the principle that all men are free and equal; and, what is most marvellous of all, the sale of his sermons has been completely stopped! Such is slavery in America at this hour, and it is not wonderful that a nation that tolerates such outrage on free opinion should be in trouble and about to explode. As much was got from the sale of his works in America (for though some will not believe it, he found honest publishers there) as went far to support his twenty-five students; but that source of revenue has been dried up, and these young men must be otherwise supported."

According to The Morning Journal of Glasgow, more than half the clergy of the city were present at the services at the City Hall and at the Queen's Rooms. "A Glasgow magistrate" gave a glowing account of the services in The British Standard, quoting the couplet in regard to the preacher's style—

"Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;

Strong without rage; without o'erflowing full."

At Aberdeen 5,000 tickets, ranging from a shilling to half-a-crown each, were sold long before the preacher entered the town.

Mrs. Spurgeon accompanied her husband on this tour, and Sunday, March 10, was passed at the manse of John Anderson, the pastor of Helensburgh. Mr. Spurgeon preached twice in the Free

Church; and in addition conducted another service in the manse garden, which is very beautifully situated on rising ground. There was a very large congregation, and the preacher addressed them from a table according to the example, which he ever admired, of Wesley and Whitefield. All the people in Helensburgh had not the discernment of their minister, Mr. Anderson, however; for one old Scotchwoman, who was accompanied by a younger friend, was far from satisfied. "I ne'er did hear sic a mountebank performance," she exclaimed at the conclusion of the service; and when the preacher came down and offered to shake hands, while passing, neither of them would countenance that civility. Nevertheless, after she became converted, the younger of the two hearers learned to admire the great preacher very greatly for his work's sake, and when he died she mourned for him as for a brother. On one or two occasions she communicated by letter with Mr. Spurgeon, and she treasures certain notes of acknowledgment which came in reply. If Mr. Anderson had lived, he would have been able to give some striking reminiscences of this and other visits. On one occasion the two took a drive to Loch Lomond, and while this was greatly enjoyed by the London pastor, he gave his more elderly Scotch friend ample evidence of the way in which he could choose a text, and then arrange the divisions and chief ideas which were suggested. The preacher continued to meet with adventures, the details of which were more or less amusing. In May, 1861, a London correspondent told an anecdote relating to something which happened at Tring, in Hertfordshire, while Mr. Spurgeon was staying there. The people wished him to address them, but no building was available:—

"A Nonconformist minister was first applied to for the loan of his chapel, but returned an indignant refusal. An application to the vicar for the use of the parish church met with a similar response. An open-air meeting in the existing state of the weather was out of the question; and, there being no room in the village sufficiently large to accommodate a quarter of the expected audience, it began to be feared that the whole affair would drop through, more especially as Mr. Spurgeon had to leave for town by an early train on the following morning. In this dilemma a small farmer in the neighbourhood offered the use of a large barn, which was gladly accepted. An extemporaneous pulpit was hastily constructed, and long before the hour appointed every corner of the place was crowded with expectant listeners. On entering the pulpit Mr. Spurgeon informed his congregation that, although he had been only asked to give one sermon, it was his intention to deliver two. After a long and brilliant discourse in his own peculiarly forcible and impressive style, he paused for a few minutes, and then proceeded:—'And now for sermon number two—a plain practical sermon. Our friend who gave us the use of this building is a poor man. When I saw him this morning he wore a coat all in tatters; his shirt absolutely grinned at me through the holes. Let us show our appreciation of his kindness by buying him a new suit of clothes.' The suggestion was immediately adopted, and in the course of a few minutes some £10 or £12 were collected. On his return to London Mr. Spurgeon related the circumstance to some of his congregation, who testified their appreciation of the respect paid to their pastor by subscribing a further sum of £20 for the benefit of the Hertfordshire farmer." At the end of March, 1861, the Metropolitan Tabernacle was completed, so that the pastor and his people now entered on a new era of usefulness.

Chapter 42:`Opening Of The Metropolitan Tabernacle

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First Sermon in the New Chapel—A Bazaar—A Memorable Easter-day—Week-day Services—Ireland and the Irish—Work at Southampton—Baptists and their Literature—Spurgeon "Waxing Morbid"—Dr. Guthrie's Testimony—In Wales,

Mr. Spurgeon preached for the first time in the Metropolitan Tabernacle on the afternoon of March 25, 1861, the text being Acts 5:42, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." The opening service had taken the form of a prayer-meeting at seven o'clock a.m. on the Monday preceding, however, and on the next day there was a bazaar. This was visited by some two thousand persons, including many members of the aristocracy, the stalls being well furnished with goods needed in everyday life as well as things of a more fancy kind. It was remarked that "the centre of attraction seemed to be a large stall presided over by Mrs. Spurgeon, who had the most miscellaneous assortment of goods in the bazaar; for she not only sold baby-linen, pictures, and other fancy goods, but also dealt in daggers, one taken at Delhi, and another, if we correctly remember the fair lady's statement, at Sebastopol. Mrs. Spurgeon tried, à la Robins, to dispose of these articles, saying that they would be very useful to those fond of curiosities, but had not found a purchaser for them up to nine o'clock on Tuesday night." On Tuesday evening, March 26, a meeting of the subscribers to the building fund was held, when three thousand persons assembled, and one chronicler reports, "When the building was lighted up, the spectacle was one of the grandest and most imposing we ever witnessed." Sir H. Havelock presided, and while he had to confess that a sum of £3,000 was still required to discharge all liabilities, he hoped their experience on that occasion would correspond with that of the Israelites who brought more than enough for the requirements of the house of the Lord. The pastor still resolved not to preach in the chapel on a Sunday until all the funds needed were subscribed; and yet his desire was to preach in the building on the next Sunday. Mr. Spurgeon said:—

"It was thought at first that it would be a foolhardy thing to attempt to raise £12,000 for the erection of the building; but, as they proceeded, they looked for £15,000, and afterwards for £30,000; and, as their own ideas swelled, the liberality of the Christian public increased, so that his faith did not stagger through the weight of the difficulty, but through the weight of God's mercies. Money had flown in upon them from America, Australia, and every part of the world. His wish was that whatever income was to be derived from the sittings might be devoted to the training, under his direction, of young men for the work of the ministry."

After several other addresses had been given, the announcement was made that the amount of money required was subscribed; on hearing which the people rose, and sang the Doxology, and at the pastor's request repeated the verse. On Wednesday evening, March 27, Dr. Steane presided at a meeting of members of neighbouring churches in the new Taber. nacle, when, after

acknowledging himself to be everybody's debtor, Mr. Spurgeon added:—

"My dream and the promise are fulfilled—the promise God would help me to build a place the income of which would be devoted to the training of young men for the ministry, not with any view of interfering with or setting aside the colleges, but to bring out rough earnest men, who would lose their vigour if too highly polished. I hope you will all say something this evening, however short it may be. Some of you who have the gift might say a sovereign, and others, who have not such golden eloquence, half-a-crown, a shilling, or even a sixpence." On Sunday, March 31, Exeter Hall was crowded in the morning, that being the last service prior to the final removal of the congregation to the Tabernacle. On the preceding Friday, being Good Friday, the pastor preached twice in the new building; and then on the evening of Easter Day he had the happiness of conducting the first Sunday service in the chapel, which was free from debt. The discourse was based on passages which had reference to the building of Solomon's Temple. The building was crowded, and the outer gates had to be closed to keep back the throng in the street. Dr. Campbell characterised the spectacle as "stupendous and unparalleled." Never before had he set eyes on such a congregation beneath one roof, and the sight was almost oppressive to the mind. In the graphic description which the veteran journalist gave at the time he seems to have thought the building to be in all respects successful. Perhaps the strangest arrangement of all to one over sixty years of age was the pulpit, or rather, what would appear to him as the absence of any pulpit. "What may be considered as the pulpit" was to him "a handsome gallery with a table and a desk," being furnished with a sofa. "At the back are six separate seats resembling those of first-class railway carriages, where the deacons sit in state like so many judges," he remarks; "while Mr. Spurgeon in front sustains the combined offices of Lord High Chancellor, Lord Chief Justice, and Attorney-General, doing the whole of the speaking with a vigour and a vivacity which enliven all around." The doctor then depicts the preacher as he saw him on that memorable night:—

"There stands the herald of salvation: he reads the word of the Lord, and every utterance falls distinct on the ear of the thousands around him. The multitudes lift up the voice of praise, which is as the sound of many waters. It ceases: the accents of prayer succeed—prayer, true prayer, the utterance of the heart, simple, direct, fervent, vehement, penetrating all and moving very many.... There stands the preacher as a man amongst men: he seems quite at home, but the idea of display, either in matter or manner, appears never to have entered his mind,... It was clear, however, that now the preacher has found at last a burden to try his strength. He might be likened to a powerful man under a ponderous load: he still walked firm and steady, but every muscle was tried to the uttermost, and his tread was heavy on the ground—any material increase would have brought him down." As he sat behind the preacher on that Sabbath evening Dr. Campbell asked himself what would be the effects of the ministrations of such a man in such a building? The shrewd observer looked at the matter as an Independent, and the conclusion he seems to have arrived at was that his co-religionists would never be able to hold their own against such a competitor. Thus, in The British Standard of April 12, he said:—

"The building will inevitably form a powerful magnet, especially to young people, in all quarters of the city, who will hardly endure the old-fashioned churches and chapels of their fathers. The result will be to confer on it a leviathan monopoly. This monopoly will operate in two ways: it will bring multitudes from the world to the Cross—an event in which we shall most sincerely rejoice; it will also draw multitudes from the churches to the Water—an event in which we do not rejoice. This

Metropolitan Tabernacle, we believe, will do more to make proselytes than all the other Baptist chapels in London united. It will lift the thing into respectability and even dignity, It will become an object of ambition with sentimental young women and poetic young men to be plunged into a marble basin so beautiful that it might adorn a palace, and so spacious that dolphins might play in it. Then Mr. Spurgeon knows well how to go about this matter: his noble catholicity has not sufficed wholly to eliminate his baptismal bigotry. His manly eloquence will most powerfully minister to the triumph of the polished marble. He showed last Sabbath evening that, while prepared to die for the Gospel, he is not less prepared to fight for the Water!"

After the first Sabbath evening service the Lord's Supper was celebrated; and, while the galleries remained nearly full, the ground floor was filled with communicants, the number of visitors being so large that their names could not be taken according to the usual custom. As an observer belonging to another denomination Dr. Campbell was struck with Mr. Spurgeon's method of administering the ordinance, a manner which may at first have been peculiar to himself, but which was generally followed by those who came forth from the Pastors' College. Thus, after reading the words of Scripture instituting the Supper, the pastor asked his deacons to assist in breaking the bread, which they did in the face of the congregation instead of having the bread cut up and placed on plates beforehand. Then as the Supper as instituted by Christ was taken in a reclining position, all sat while singing the hymn. Though this method was new to him, Dr. Campbell declared it to be "right in principle and happy in effect. The domestic aspect was complete." The opening services of one kind and another kept on week after week. "Never was such an edifice so built," we find it remarked; "never was any edifice so opened." On Tuesday, April 9, there was a sermon by Hugh Stowell Brown, followed by a baptismal service. This was sketched by Dr. Campbell, who thought, however, that nothing sectarian should have marred the programme of such a glorious month:—

"The interest of the thing was overpowering. We doubt if it was a whit inferior to that of Taking the Veil in the Church of Rome. There was the young orator, the idol of the assembly, in the water with a countenance radiant as the light; and there on the pathway was Mrs. Spurgeon, a most prepossessing young lady with courtly dignity and inimitable modesty—the admiration of all who beheld her—kindly leading forward the trembling sisters in succession to her husband, who gently and gracefully took and immersed them, with varied remark and honeyed phrase—all kind—pertinent to the occasion and greatly fitted to strengthen, encourage, and cheer. Emerging from the water, there were two portly deacons in boxes at the side of the steps, with benignant smile, to seize their hands and bring them up, throwing cloaks over them; two other deacons received them at the top of the steps, and another two politely led them backward to the vestry. It was quite an ovation, an era in the history of the neophytes. It had really not been wonderful if all the ladies in the place had been candidates for such distinction. We have ourselves seen several who were there whose heads seemed completely turned."

Among the chief of the meetings which followed was that for the Exposition of the Doctrines of Grace on April 11; and that of the following evening, when Mr. Henry Vincent gave an oration on Nonconformity, the audience being worked up to a high pitch of excitement by the lecturer's rhetoric. The services throughout were regarded as a novelty and as a whole unparalleled. The Freeman thought the time given to the discussion of the doctrines of Calvinism the dullest evening, which from the nature of the subject before such a mixed audience may have been the case.

Throughout the progress of this great enterprise, the conduct of the young pastor had been so entirely removed from any self-seeking that he had been generally commended by the Press and by outsiders, although there still remained a minority of onlookers whom nothing could move into approval, and who could see no self-sacrifice in the man whose whole life had been a resolute turning aside from all temptations to mere personal aggrandisement. Thus, one Scottish journal, which was supposed to be in some sense a Christian paper, reminded "Sympathetic Aberdonians" that no more money-boxes were needed for the Tabernacle, as the place was opened and paid for; and as the building was "Mr. Spurgeon's own property, pew-rents and all," he would be able to ride in a carriage for the rest of his days. That being the case, it was hoped he would "finally dissociate the work of the Gospel from the pursuit of Mammon." Mean writers of this calibre could not understand Spurgeon: the truth about his devotion to the Cause, and extraordinary self-sacrifice, had to be told by others:—

"Mr. Spurgeon is still in the morning of life, yet how vast and varied his achievements! How extended and merited his renown! Only six years ago, a stripling in the nineteenth year of his age, he entered this Metropolis a stranger; but, like another Joseph, 'God was with him'—a fact which explains all that has followed. He has in everything far outstripped the most favoured of his contemporaries. The annals of English Christianity present nothing analogous. His piety, genius, eloquence, and labours have reared for him a monument which will endure to the latest posterity. When all that now live, and their children's children to the hundredth generation, shall have passed away, the Metropolitan Tabernacle will remain the memorial of this wonderful and Heaven-favoured youth, who was the instrument of its erection. As a well of salvation of matchless magnitude, an aggregate of millions may be expected to have drunk at it the water of life before the close of ages. In the salvation of that mighty host, he will have been indirectly instrumental, and in the world of glory, peopled with the spirits of the just, myriads will claim him as a sublunary benefactor."

Now that the Metropolitan Tabernacle was an accomplished fact, the building was found to be a far more convenient place than Exeter Hall for May meetings. The first gathering of this kind that was held in the new chapel appears to have been the annual assembly of the Irish Society on April 22. The speeches were by those who understood Ireland, and who were in hearty sympathy with the work. A passage from Mr. Spurgeon's address on the characteristics of an Irishman may be given:—

"I am sorry that we have not an Irishman with us, as they are always such interesting speakers. I have heard the most wonderful speeches from brethren who, I am sure, must have been Irishmen. When it was said that if I preached so much I should kill myself, one of these brethren said he believed I should never die while I went on preaching as I do. Another brother, on rising to address an audience, said, 'Before I speak to you at all, I should like to say a few words.' I wish to say a few words about the character of the Irishman. I cannot say too much in praise of the tenacity of the Irish character when once it lays hold of what it believes to be true. If the raw material for martyrs were needed again, you must get an Irishman—he is the man to burn for what he believes to be true. I do not think it an ill sign that, with all the harsh treatment and grasping character of his priest, he still adheres to what he believes to be his father's Church. I like the man because he will not give up what he believes. I will not commend bigotry, or stupid, senseless adherence to a dead creed, but still there may be good in—I must not say a holy—but certainly an admirable tenacity

which, when modified and trained, might make the Irishman the truth's foremost defender. There is another thing about the Irishman which makes him well worth looking after—his wonderful fire. We want a few Irish preachers—I will not say in our own denomination, but in many. Dissenting bodies; men who do not require stoves in their chapels, but who are stoves themselves. We have had enough of those dry brethren who understand magnetising people till they go to sleep. We need preachers who cannot say anything better than has been said, but can say it in a more lively way. If we had an Irishman or two in our committee, I think it would be a good thing. He is the man to suggest new schemes of raising money. I have heard of an Irishman who proposed to teach the people by Sabbath-schools held two days a week, and of another, who, when the tithing-man came, proposed that it should be diminished from a tenth to a fifth. If we had such a man, he would be going about proposing that instead of 10s. a year subscription, it should be 5s. a quarter. An Irishman on the committee would be worth almost as much as the Secretary himself."

All this time the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle felt great interest in the progress of his brother at Southampton. On May-day Mr. Spurgeon preached in Above Bar Chapel, which was lent for the occasion; and a tea and public meeting in Carlton Rooms followed. A piano, worth seventy guineas, was presented by the people to Mrs. J. A. Spurgeon; and on the following day Mr. Spurgeon, of London, presided at the meeting at which the church was formed, of which his brother James was to be minister—"A Particular Baptist Church, strict in fellowship, but holding open communion." At the end of the spring, or at the beginning of June, a feeling of great weariness again came over the young preacher, so that engagements were cancelled, and Mr. James Spurgeon preached at the Tabernacle for one Sunday, thus allowing his brother to be away in the country for some days. Dr. Campbell received the following note for publication:—"Mr. Spurgeon begs to inform the public that he is knocked up with hard work, and is compelled to go into the country to rest. This will upset all arrangements, and he begs his friends to remit his promises, and the Christian public not to inundate him with invitations." The strain and the excitement of the spring had been great, so that there was nothing surprising in the fact of the pastor being reminded that he possessed only human attributes. At one communion after the chapel was opened, a hundred persons were admitted to church membership, and one hundred and forty at another. Dr. Campbell remarked, "This is pretty well as times go, making, we believe, a total membership of nearly 1,900 members." An article was mentioned which had appeared in The Record, pointing out the kind of powerful popular preaching that was needed for the times, not mere learning or rhetorical eloquence, but faithful messengers of Christ speaking in the spirit of the Baptist:—"Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Such preaching was to be heard at the Metropolitan Tabernacle; and while Calvin himself would have put his seal on the doctrines taught, Whitefield would have certified to its eloquence. It is then said:—

"Charles Haddon Spurgeon is not one of a class, but an individual chosen for the accomplishment of a special work; and mentally, morally, and physically, he is every way admirably adapted to his mission. His seeming defects, in the eye of some, are special excellences. He is not to be judged by the petty rules that poor mortals have derived from the creeping experience of the past. Nothing were easier than to prove that he is often wild and erratic, and transgresses the canons of the schools. He is above the schools. He is a law to himself, and wholly unamenable to the tribunals cf criticism. He simply exerts the powers, peculiar and wonderful, with which God has endowed him. He reads, he expounds, he prays, he preaches, as nobody else ever did, or, probably, will ever do.

He is an original and a rebel in everything. But, his insurgency notwithstanding, he is the impersonation of the profoundest loyalty to a higher law. Comets are not less amenable to rule than suns. Through his disobedience he achieves his triumphs and rules the millions." At the same time it was feared that the young pastor was going to extremes in the matter of baptism. As an editor of The Baptist Magazine, Mr. Spurgeon at this time contributed an article on Ministers' Libraries, in course of which he said, "We are not a literary people, and the few scholars among us are hardly denominational enough to add much to Baptist reputation." It was also thought that important advantages were being lost through failing to cultivate a denominational spirit. To this exception was taken—"The great orator is waxing morbid, we might almost say rabid," it was remarked. The Baptists were not thought to show any shortcomings in the direction of zeal in advancing their own distinguishing tenet on the question of baptism: the tendency was believed to be rather in the opposite direction. There was a text which Spurgeon might venture to speak upon—"Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the Gospel"—words of the great Apostle in which the mere ordinance seemed to be thrown into the shade, and which thus seemed to breathe a spirit different from that which moved the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. "With the one the ordinance is secondary; with the other, primary. With Paul the water is merged in the truth; with Spurgeon, although the truth is not merged in the water, it seems almost, if not altogether, placed on a level with it." It was thought that there might be danger in what seemed like excess of zeal for baptism. But the fears of Pædobaptists were never realised so far as Spurgeon was concerned.

Another observer, who was equally warm-hearted, harboured no such fears concerning his friend. In the course of a speech made about this time at Edinburgh, Dr. Thomas Guthrie said:—

"When in London two years ago, I went to hear that great man Mr. Spurgeon. I didn't care about how he affected duchesses and countesses who were among those that thronged to hear him, but what I wanted to know was how he affected the people down in Surrey. With the view of testing that, I fixed my eye upon two persons sitting opposite to me in the gallery. From their appearance I judged them to be a greengrocer and his wife. We heard a noble sermon—noble in its truth, its talent, and its telling effect. Some things among those that were said did, I do confess, grate on my ear; but, after all, they were as mere spots on the sun; and what I was interested in was to watch how the greengrocer and his wife were affected; and this is what I saw. Regularly at each recurring passage that jarred on me I observed that they were stirred and thrilled, for they looked in each other's eyes with a quickened intelligence, and by the light of the glance which they reciprocated I read their feeling. 'Well, isn't that fine!' There was, I believe, a ploughman once in Wales who was gifted of God with a rare faculty of speaking in a manner that at once told upon the rich and affected the poor; but God's ordinary method of endowment is to give different gifts to different men. He is pleased to use a variety of tools, some being rough and some smooth, some sharp while some are heavy. One man he uses to break up the fallow ground, one to plant the seed, and one to water what has been entrusted to the ground. One man is a Boanerges, and another a Barnabas—one a son of Thunder, and another a son of Consolation."

Soon after Midsummer, 1861, Mr. Spurgeon was again suffering from overstrain; and on July 4 his brother had to take one of the great preacher's engagements at Islington Chapel. A short time was passed on the shores of Lake Derwentwater, which helped to bring back the needed health and strength.

It was about this time that a visit was paid to Swansea, which excited the greatest interest in the town and neighbourhood. Although the preacher did not arrive at the railway station until nearly midnight, hundreds of persons were waiting in order to accord him a hearty Welsh welcome and, if possible, to shake hands with him. The scene was of a kind that must have been novel even in such a person's experience. "Good-bye, my friends," said the visitor, as he was driven away to Mr. E. M. Richard's house at Brooklands, "I hope to say a word of great import to you to-morrow." On the morrow the rain came down most depressingly, but all were disposed to look at things on their brightest side, especially as Mr. Spurgeon himself offered to act in the most self-denying manner. The service was to have been in the open air, according to Welsh fashion on a great occasion; but, as that could not be, it was arranged that two services instead of one should be held in the morning. This involved double labour, which was cheerfully borne; and then, as the weather cleared, a great open-air service was held in the evening. Long before the time for commencing the approaches to the field were thronged with people. The service itself was described in a local paper at the time:—

"We could not help feeling that the spot was well chosen, commanding as it does a panoramic view of the town and its matchless bay, with the Mumbles Lighthouse—a beacon and a warning—resting in silent solitude in the distance. The hymns, too, and the beautiful manner in which they were sung, and the sound wafted by the summer breeze from side to side, were grand beyond conception.... Then, when he spoke, the plainness of his features, the bluntness of his manner, the brisk hearty sound, the clear spontaneous volume of his voice struck us as in strange contrast to the ordinary type of clerical first-raters. It was, however, when the tide of sympathetic speech rolled mass on mass, and heap over heap, and began to flow over the souls of the hearers, bathing and suffusing them with its influence, that the orator proved himself worthy of his fame. He took a solemn portion of Holy Writ for his text—'O earth, earth, earth, hear thou the voice of the Lord'—and as he went on, swaying the mighty multitude of his temporary congregation, forcing their thoughts to follow the bent of his mind, and working and winning them to his point of view, it became clearer and clearer that he had a master's power." The Welsh are a people whom the most sanguine adventurer must not expect to captivate all at once. Even as regards such a feat, however, Mr. Spurgeon so far succeeded at an early date in his career that one admiring ancient dame ventured the opinion that the London preacher only needed to be blind of one eye to take rank with Christmas Evans himself.

Cardiff, Newport, and other towns were also visited. The afternoon service at Cardiff was interrupted by a somewhat violent thunderstorm; but that of the evening in the market-place drew together a congregation of ten thousand persons. From this time forward Mr. Spurgeon appears to have found peculiar pleasure in visiting the Principality. He is said to have declared that he never found so much pleasure in ministering to any people as the Welsh.

Chapter43: A Great Missionary Address

Chapter 43.

A Great Missionary Address

Centenary of Carey's Birth—Spurgeon's Speech—A Wesleyan Critic—A Summer of Accidents—Spurgeon on the Ways of Providence.

On Monday, August 19, 1861, the centenary of the birth of William Carey was celebrated at the Tabernacle. As many as 700 assembled at tea in the lecture-room, and at the public meeting at seven the chapel was well filled. Over the platform, in white letters on a crimson ground, appeared the motto—

"Expect great things from God.

Attempt great things for God."

Sir S. Morton Peto presided, and addresses were given by Messrs. J. P. Chown and Francis Tucker, the former of whom had some time before given an eloquent lecture on Carey in Exeter Hall on behalf of the Young Men's Christian Association. Mr. Spurgeon depicted Carey as an example to young men. In his day it was a new thing to talk of sending the Gospel to the heathen, and to many it was but a dream; but nevertheless the words, "Go ye and teach all nations," etc., were not Carey's, but Christ's. But to the people of his time Carey was a daring innovator. And was there not room for innovation now? We had master-minds in mechanics and manufactures, and should the Christian Church be without them? Should the Church ride on a heavy-wheeled chariot when the world was flying behind steam? Was the Church not to have some men of daring genius, who would think out new things, attempt new things, and carry them to a successful issue? Let them put down the inventor of Sabbath-schools among the greatest of innovators. Let them write down the man who brought out the ragged-schools as no mean genius; but let Carey, who taught the Church to carry the truth of life among the dead, be chief among the discoverers and innovators who were worthy of honour. When a man once had a good thought, he should not be afraid of it because nobody else had thought of it. He should do it and dare it, defying custom if it thwarted him, tearing it to pieces if it stood in the way of right. All God's true servants were innovators. Those that turned the world upside down were the very descendants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Next to Carey's originality must be extolled his brave determination. No one could now measure what he had to put up with on first commencing the missions. He was sorely troubled in his church by those who held Antinomian sentiments, and who perpetually declared that he did not preach the Gospel. Carey's theology, however, was the produce of the noblest type of divinity that ever blessed the world. He and his friend Ryland were students and admirers of Jonathan Edwards, and if there ever was a man who came nearest to the achievement of what was an impossibility—the reconciliation to the minds of finite men of the two great truths of human responsibility and divine sovereignty—it was Jonathan Edwards. Brainerd and Carey were the living models of the Edwardian theology, or rather of pure Christianity, Theirs was not a theology

which left out the backbone and strength of religion—not a theology, on the other hand, all bones and skeleton, a lifeless thing without a soul: their theology was full-orbed—Calvinism, high as you please, but practical godliness so low that many called it legal. He did not know whether the people in those days called Carey a Fullerite. Perhaps they did; and to this day there were some inhabitants of the innermost recesses of the cave of Adullam who thought it a reproach to be called a Fullerite. He (Mr. Spurgeon) did not think there was any reproach in the term, and although he was not prepared to endorse everything which Fuller said or wrote, he thought it would take a long time to produce a greater theologian than he was. A great many who scoffed at him might have been put by his side without his knowing where they were. The old members of Carey's church said that God's decree would be carried out without missionaries being sent to the heathen. Others said that God had an elect people: no doubt, though they did not think there were any in India, or if there were, the Lord knew how to have His own. But Carey was not thus to be turned aside from his purpose, never doubting that if God had an elect people He would have every one of them, but equally certain that this was the reason why he should go and preach—because the Lord had much people there. There might be young men there who had been put back from preaching because some old ministers had said they did not believe in their call. If they had a right call, they would not be put back by any such thing. Some Sabbath-school teachers might have been discouraged by hearing some say they were not good, efficient teachers. Some persons wanted the Lord to send them to heaven on fine, sunshiny days, and then they would put on their best patent-leather boots and walk to glory; but the moment the Lord sent a storm, they had not got the clumped, hob-nailed boots to go trudging through the mud with. They wanted to conquer all their enemies, but they felt themselves so very valiant that they thought their backs were enough to frighten them, and so ran away. They could not put up with sneers or harsh words. But such faint hearts—such carpet knights—were not worthy of being God's soldiers and workmen. Let all young men be like Carey in determination, and when the world saw their spirit, they would honour them when their work was well done.

Carey's faith was then commended. It was a faith in God above all things; and it showed that nothing was impossible to such as believed in the Creator's power—the power that created atoms on the one hand and worlds on the other. He admired Carey all the more for being a Baptist: he had none of the false charity which might prompt some to conceal their belief for fear of offending others; but at the same time he was a man who loved all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ. The founder of the Indian Mission was then commended for his indomitable zeal, which prompted him to go through with whatever he undertook to do. If all the riches of India had been offered to him to forego his mission work, he would have laughed the offer to scorn. Was there a man of like spirit in that congregation? He would use the old term again—was there a man of like pluck? Was there a man who felt that God had called him to the ministry in foreign lands? Let him, in the name of "Him who liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore," be a missionary, not heeding discouragement. Was the cold shoulder offered to such a one? Let him put both shoulders to the work and make them warm. Could he not see the way? Let him walk by faith and not by sight. If there was a man there who could put his teeth together, and his feet to the ground, and say, "I know that God has called me to this work, and I will do it"—do it he would, though all the committees should reject him, if he did but stand firm to his purpose. But, perhaps, some got stirred a little under an earnest sermon, or were induced by a speech like those they had heard that evening to say that they would go and do something, and yet, after a time, became cool again.

It was better to make no resolves than to make them and not to carry them out. Let those who felt their spirits stirred within them go and teach in the ragged-schools, or stand up and preach in the streets of London. It was not more pleasant to preach beneath a banyan tree in India than under no tree at all in London. Sometimes after a missionary service, ten or a dozen young men would come to him next morning all anxious to be missionaries. In nine cases out of ten the resolution was probably a genuine one, and he had always told them, if they did not happen to have the exact qualifications for the missionary work, that they could be usefully engaged in winning souls here if not in other lands. He should never be happy, however, till many from that church had been sent to preach in other lands.

Mr. Spurgeon lived to have his wish fulfilled, for numbers who are now labouring in various parts of the world have gone forth from the Pastors' College, many being members of the church at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. In the summer of this year an able brochure appeared by Richard Wrench, a Wesleyan minister, entitled "The Popular Preacher; or, Who and What is Spurgeon?" It was considered to be an excellent piece of literary work, and thoroughly impartial in its criticism. The pamphlet was written in an admirable spirit; and while the friends of the preacher might see good qualities recognised and defects pointed out, it was thought that Spurgeon himself might profit by the perusal of such a lecture. The summer of this year was remarkable for its accidents, such as certain unthinking people are too ready to recognise as the direct judgments of God. On Sunday morning, August 25, a collision occurred in the Clayton Tunnel on the Brighton line, and twenty-three persons were killed on the spot, while over sixty were injured. On Monday, September 2, a collision occurred on the North London line, thirteen lives being lost. In addition to these there happened various calamities of a lesser kind. Because the victims of the mishap on the South Coast line were Sunday excursionists, some declared it was to be accepted as a manifestation of the divine wrath, and such extreme notions were even uttered in some instances by Christian ministers. Accordingly, on Sunday morning, September 8, the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle enlarged on the words of Luk 13:1-5. It was worthy of remark, he thought, that in every age of the world many accidents of one kind or another had taken place, and just as calamitous as those which were being deplored; and those which were recorded as happening in the days of stage-coaches were just as many and as fatal as those which had followed since the invention of the steam-engine. He repudiated the notion that the collision in the Clayton Tunnel was a judgment from Heaven because of Sunday travelling: it was as likely to have occurred upon any other day as upon the Sabbath. In fact, the catastrophe at the Hampstead Junction had occurred on a Monday, and when the excursionists were going upon an errand of mercy.

Chapter 49

VOLUME THREE

Chapter 50

Group of Tutors of the Pastor's College

Group of Tutors of the Pastors' College

Chapter 44: "The Sceptics and the Scorpions"

Chapter 44.

"The Sceptics and the Scorpions"

Adventures at Bristol—"Shrews"—"Eminent Lord Mayors"—Attacks of the Press—"Sceptics and Scorpions "—Reply of "Aristides."

Bristol was visited on Wednesday, September 11, for the purpose of opening City Road Chapel, of which Mr. Probert was then the pastor, and the riotous behaviour of the crowd appears to have had a disastrous effect on Mr. Spurgeon's nerves. The demand for tickets was very pressing. The opening sermon was announced to begin at half-past two, but crowds began to assemble an hour earlier, and "when the doors were opened, there was a tremendous rush," says a contemporary account. "In a few minutes every seat was occupied, and afterwards the passages were blocked up by a crowd that occasionally showed itself noisy and restless." When the first hymn was announced, the noise was almost too great for anything to be heard. All ended well, however: it was not until the evening service at the circus that anything more serious occurred. The building itself was crowded, even the passages were packed, but notwithstanding there were thousands outside, numbers of whom were sufficiently uncivilised to keep up a persistent knocking on the wooden sides of the house for admission, or it may have been to induce the preacher to speak to them out of doors. The service was commenced, but it was impossible to proceed. After intimating that he could not preach in the open air, Mr. Spurgeon added:—"I am in the predicament of a man who has too many to hear him, and I wish that some other man would come forward to take one-half of them to himself. My nerves are thoroughly shattered by a late accident. I hope that some person will go to the police-station for assistance." This was no easy thing to do; but someone volunteered to be let down by a rope outside. The ordeal proved almost too much for the nerves of the once strong man, who showed signs of fainting while he made the touching confession, "I wish I had the strength I had a few years ago; but I have preached ten times a week; I am thoroughly knocked up; I am getting old before I am young. After the sermon was commenced, further violent interruption occurred; but by some means, after a very short address, the preacher, whose popularity was more than his nerves could always bear, contrived to escape from his tormentors.

It is no wonder that soon after this Spurgeon was overtaken by increased nervousness, which prevented his taking extra service for some time. He was to have preached for Dr. Evans at Scarborough, but the visit had to be indefinitely postponed. But while preaching engagements in the provinces had to be accepted with more caution, the work at the Metropolitan Tabernacle itself was still carried on with vigour. In October a series of Friday lectures was instituted, and one of these, on the Gorilla, in consequence of the large attendance, was given in the Tabernacle itself. Usually, however, these lectures were given in the lecture room, and a small charge was made. This drew forth some hostile criticism, and was besides misrepresented. An address on "Shrews, and How to Tame Them," which followed, seemed to have the effect of completing the

discomfiture of the quidnuncs who were always glad of an opportunity of raising a laugh at Spurgeon's expense. In the course of this lecture he made some humorous remarks on the little animal called the shrew, and then dilated upon the human "shrew," male and female, beginning with Xantippe the wife of Socrates and coming down to Mrs. Wesley. Mr. Spurgeon, in solving the problem of "how shrews, whether male or female, are to be tamed," referred to Shakespeare's well-known play, from which he read several passages. In nine cases out of ten, he was of opinion, where a husband did not get on well with his wife, it was his own fault.. There was a clergyman once who had had too much to drink when he was called upon to "sprinkle" a child. He fumbled at his book, but could not find the place, whereupon he stammered out, "What a very difficult child this is to baptise!" Mr. Spurgeon's advice to husbands with bad wives was, "Keep your temper, for love mingled with good temper will assuredly tame the most stubborn creatures." Christian women have often much sorrow of heart because they are yoked to ungodly husbands. The lecturer enumerated several instances of men having been converted through the instrumentality of the patience and forbearance exhibited by their wives. On November 8, the subject of the lecture was "Eminent Lord Mayors." Mr. Spurgeon was a good deal surprised that this series of lectures, instituted for the benefit of his own people, should have attracted such wide notice and such hostile criticism. Some timid souls suggested that the lectures should be discontinued, but as that would be showing the "white feather to the enemy," the pastor declared he would do nothing of the kind. He believed that the licentiousness of the Press had reached its height, and that if his opponents had only rope enough allowed them, they would soon hang themselves. In introducing the subject of Lord Mayors, he expressed the belief that the Guildhall was a good standpoint from which to study history impartially. As a rule the Corporation of London had been on the side of liberty, and deserved respect: it had done something for Protestantism. Having mentioned several Lord Mayors, he came to the insurrection of Wat Tyler. He declared it as his opinion that history had done but scant justice to Wat Tyler, who had been a patriot in the early part of his career, though he might have used his power arrogantly afterwards. Walworth thought that Tyler was proceeding most unjustifiably in his interview with Richard II., and therefore he slew him with a dagger. Historians had taken different views of this act. By some Walworth had been condemned, and by others censured, but we probably had not the materials for forming a true judgment on the matter. Liberty was not advanced by sanguinary deeds or by mob violence: the boasted republicanism of America, out of which despotism threatened to spring, gave a lesson which all ought to ponder. He next came to Sir Richard Whittington, and having given the chief particulars of his so-called history, he said that not one word of it was true. He was sorry for it: he wished it were true, and he had no doubt they and the people who came after them would go on believing it. Whittington's father was a man of substance, and he had come of a good family. Richard II. was then reigning, and Whittington gave him one-tenth of his property to carry on the war in which he was engaged. Richard was in the habit of getting the London merchants to send him blank cheques, which he filled up with any amount he thought fit. Whittington invited the king to a magnificent banquet, and when his" Majesty remarked that the fire burned with a bright glow, Whittington said he would soon make it burn brighter. He then threw into the fire bonds to the amount of £60,000, which the king had given over to the citizens of London for the money he had obtained. Probably Whittington had bought the bonds at a cheap rate, as the citizens would know that the king was not very likely to pay his debts, and so the Lord Mayor in an easy way got the honour of paying them for him. Then came the career of Lord Mayor Barton, who lived in 1418;

and that of Stephen Browne, who, in 1438, at a time when there was a famine in the country, sent to the Prussian ports for corn. In 1549, Sir Rowland Hill, the ancestor of Rowland Hill, was in office as Lord Mayor. He was a godly man, and in his case the promise of the Lord to be gracious to the descendants of His people had been strikingly fulfilled. He next came to Sir Edward Osborn, who had jumped out of a window and saved the life of a young lady who afterwards married him. Following him, in the reign of Elizabeth, was Sir John Spencer, from whom the Sovereign borrowed money, and who refused her the granaries which she desired. After him came Sir Richard Gresham, Sir John Gresham, and Sir Thomas Gresham. They knew the story of the grasshopper which was current about Gresham, but there was not a word of it true. The City had greatly aided in deposing Charles I. The dissolute times of the restoration of Charles II. were described, and an anecdote was told showing that the Lord Mayor of London at that time was addicted to the most debasing intemperance.

About this time a little work of some interest appeared, the subject being "Baptism: or, a Contribution to Christian Union," the author being Daniel Eraser, M.A., of Lerwick, in the Shetland Isles. The author had found that the fame of the New Park Street pastor had reached even his distant parish: he admired the printed sermons, and thought that Spurgeon himself was a gift to the Church, and thus regarded his progress with pleasure. "In the midst, however, of the pleasant feelings, I had one serious drawback, in respect of which I could not but feel that, at least, 'one thing thou lackest,' and that as yet the treasure is found only in earthern vessels. You are a Baptist! or, expressing more precisely the drawback to which I allude, you administer baptism by immersion, and holding immersion to be baptism, you baptise only professing believers, or believing adults." The object, of course, was to convert the young preacher from the errors of his ways—an easy achievement, as was thought, if both sides would but rid themselves of prejudice.

Some further notice may be taken of the criticism to which the weekly Friday evening lectures at the Tabernacle were subjected towards the end of the year 1861. This seems to be the more necessary because the young pastor was misrepresented by his enemies and misunderstood by his friends, who were misled by giving heed to the misstatements which were circulated. Dr. Campbell divided the young preacher's enemies into Sceptics and Scorpions; and both of these sections are said to have been in raptures with the sermon on the railway accidents. "Misapprehending or perverting his words, they hailed him as a powerful auxiliary in their blind combat with the idea that 'there is verily a God that judgeth in the earth,'" we find it remarked. "The idea produced uneasiness; and the man who, as they thought, helped them to get rid of it, was viewed as a benefactor and extolled as a sage." It was thought by Spurgeon's friends that the censure of such people would have been preferred to their praise; for the question would arise whether he had not expressed himself incautiously. Whether that was so or not, the truce between the preacher and his friends was of very short duration; for the lecture on "Shrews," already noticed, afforded an opportunity for misrepresenting Spurgeon too tempting to be resisted. One of the daily papers, not distinguished for any liking for the Gospel as preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, professed all at once to be concerned for the cause of evangelical religion. As the shrewd onlooker, "Aristides," remarks, this oracle, "to serve its purpose, commenced Pharisee, assumed the phylactery, and sounded the trumpet at the corners of the street, affecting profound reverence for holy places." The Sceptics having thus stated their case, the matter was taken up by others of the weekly Press, especially by one of the reviews of great literary ability, which all along

showed a bigoted hatred of Spurgeon and his work which was interesting because it was phenomenal. At the same time, the articles of this journal were characteristic of superfine writers who, despite their high assumptions of birth and education, were utterly incompetent to speak on the merits or demerits of Christian work, or of those who did it, because they were altogether empty of the spirit pervading the New Testament. They knew how to do their work in their own way, however. "The Scorpions elaborated the spurious report of the lecture into a heinous offence against religion; and, soaking it in malice, they sent it forth among their misguided readers." Had this school of critics had the affair all to themselves, no great harm would have been done; it was when friends believed in the over-coloured reports of the lecture, and when, through being deceived, friendly newspapers expressed regret, etc, at what had occurred, that the need of correcting error appeared.

Dr. Campbell enlisted "Aristides" to discharge this duty, and he was the man for the hour. He mentioned the witness who confessed before the eighteenth-century magistrate that the Methodists had converted his wife, who hitherto had had the tongue of a shrew, but was then as quiet as a lamb. "Can there be a doubt that men are often driven to violent courses by the shrewship of their wives?" it was asked. "Does it not lead to strife, to separation, to abandonments, and even to bloodshed?" Hence anybody who could diminish the supply of shrews and scolds was a public benefactor; and the worst thing wished for "the scribes of the sceptic and scorpion school" was that each might get hold of a thorough, a matured, and an incorrigible shrew for a wife. That wish was hardly consistent with the principle of returning good for evil; but it was very natural. That the public might not be in any doubt as regarded the character of the Friday evening lectures, a visit was made to the Tabernacle, and the scene was described:—

"At seven o'clock precisely, Mr. Spurgeon made his appearance on the spacious platform of the Lecture Hall—a building which is well lighted, well fitted up, every way commodious, and capable of containing about 800 people. It was crowded in every part. At the back of the platform hung a number of diagrams of lions and other animals, the subject of the night's lecture. After prayer, Mr. Spurgeon opened with a pleasant descant on the King of Beasts. He seems always to do best what he is doing last, and he is eminently fitted for a public lecturer. It is difficult to conceive of anything more instructive, innocent, and amusing. He continued to delight the assembly for an hour and three-quarters! Although interspersed with wit and pleasantry, and apparently extemporaneous, it was evidently got up with care and considerable labour. The diagrams were a highly useful appendage, enabling the eye to aid the intellect, and giving occasional repose, both to the speaker and the audience. To show the earnest, businesslike way in which the matter is gone about, I may observe that Mr. Spurgeon keeps an artist on the premises to prepare the diagrams, and, after they have been used there, they are lent out to societies and public bodies for lecturing purposes. The expense of this arrangement is of course considerable, but it is met, and only just met, Mr. Spurgeon told the assembly, by the twopence charged for admission. Such a lecture must have been a great addition to the toils of Mr. Spurgeon for the week. Throughout this hour and three-quarters, he frequently spoke with almost all the force and vehemence which distinguish his ordinary preaching; and then, be it remembered that this was after four hours' labour in the lecture-room and the exertions of the previous Thursday night, while only forty-eight hours remained till the commencement of the overwhelming services of the Lord's Day."

Despite the howl of disapprobation raised by one section of the Press, the Friday evening lectures thus continued, and the interest of those for whom they were intended seemed to increase. As Aristides said, Spurgeon seemed to do best whatever he undertook last.

Chapter 45: "Counterfeits"

Chapter 45.

"Counterfeits"

Gloomy National Outlook—Death of the Prince Consort—Second Lecture before the Young Men's Christian Association—The College and its Work—Hartley Colliery—Deaths of Dr. Reed and James Sherman.

As the Metropolitan Tabernacle was still a new institution, it continued to be a great centre of attraction. As a chapel, its mere size made it an object of the greatest novelty to all Christian visitors from the provinces and from foreign countries. If the congregation at the Surrey Gardens had presented a striking spectacle, this was still more wonderful, because the vast permanent building seemed to bear its silent but still overwhelming testimony to the lasting popularity of the preacher. Whoever properly understood the man and his surroundings fully realised that he was master of the situation; and that while no one could well be further removed from self-seeking, he perfectly understood how to turn all things to account in the service to which he was called. Thus, when the pastor was depicted in clever articles as being all that was objectionable without any redeeming traits, large numbers, who would not otherwise have been attracted, visited the Metropolitan Tabernacle to see the strange creature for themselves. So far that was satisfactory: only let the people come within earshot, and the preacher would give forth what was good for them whether they liked it or not. Large numbers who came went away benefited. The following account of the pastor and his daily life belongs to this time:—

"No one is so well able to judge of Mr. Spurgeon as those who are constantly associated with him in the work of the Lord, and who know something of that part of his life which is hidden from the public eye. As one of those so associated, I do most solemnly bear witness that it is impossible for any man to be more fully consecrated in body, soul, and spirit to the service of the Lord and His Church than he is. For that alone he lives and labours; not only is it the duty, but it is the joy of his life; and often has it been our lot to witness him labouring ardently, nay, joyously, under physical ailment the most severe, such as would have alarmed and prostrated an ordinary man. Very little of his time, comparatively, is spent at his own home. At the same hour in the morning that City merchants are seen wending their way to their counting-houses, he may be seen on his road to the Tabernacle, where he frequently remains fully occupied in the Master's work until ten o'clock at night. As to his income, save what is barely sufficient for his domestic expenditure, he gives all to the darling object of his heart, the College for young men, and other benevolent objects; and with respect to that College, if you did but know the glorious success some of the young men have had in the conversion of souls by the Lord's blessing, and who are now pastors of prospering labour, it would gladden your heart as it has done ours in no small degree; and, great as Mr. Spurgeon's work is as a preacher of the Gospel, you would say it is small compared to what the Lord is doing by him through the instrumentality of the College." The year 1861 was drawing to a close amidst apprehension and shades of gloom. What would come of the quarrel between North and South in

America? What would happen in Lancashire if the cotton supply were suddenly stopped? While some may have been trying to answer such questions, the news of the Prince Consort's illness caused alarm to be felt throughout England, and then came the shock of the good Prince's death. The nation was in mourning; sympathy for the widowed Queen was universal. In thousands of pulpits reference was made to the subject, and Spurgeon spoke out in a way which did credit to his heart as well as his head. On Sunday morning, December 22, the Tabernacle was draped in black, and a large number of the congregation were in mourning. The text was Amo 3:6, and referring to the royal death-bed, the preacher said:—

"Evil may be taken to mean calamity, and the saddest of calamities has just visited our city. You have lost a man who deserves nothing but good at your hands, and who, standing as he has always done in a most perilous position, has conducted himself so as to have become not only revered but beloved by all classes in the country. Our grief at the calamity is enhanced by the natural apprehension that must arise as to what may come next. We have lost one of the great ones of the land, and the dread sounds of approaching war can be heard rumbling from across the waters. It is at such a time that the very corner-stone of our royal house has been taken away, and our Sovereign is left a widow. What next? and next? We have great faith in our Constitution, but it is to God we must turn in faith to redeem us from the peril. Saddest and tenderest part of the calamity is that by it the Queen has lost her husband. Widows in the ordinary ranks of life have friends, relatives, and neighbours to condole and strengthen them in their affliction, but our Queen has lost in the Prince Consort her only friend and counsellor, and is in fact the saddest widow in the land, standing as she now does on her lofty pedestal in the very desolation of isolation. You feel that not for all her honours and advantages would anyone stand in the situation of our beloved Queen, thus left lone and desolate in her deep sorrow. I regret that I have not the powers of a Robert Hall, or a Chalmers, to paint truly the sorrows of our Queen. My lips are unaccustomed to courtly phrases; I can only stammer and blunder out my impressions, but my heart weeps for that royal lady who in the seclusion of her chamber now mourns the loved husband, the wise counsellor, the steadfast friend and adviser, who has gone never to return. And in saying this I feel that I only echo the sentiment of my congregation, for I believe that in our whole history of royal personages there is not. another case of a single death which has caused so much sorrow in the land."

These were the preacher's honest sentiments, for his words always came from his heart, and he cordially recognised the good example set by the Queen in maintaining the purity of the Court. At a festive assembly of ministers and denominational representatives I have heard Mr. Spurgeon, as chairman, remark that the loyalty of the English people was founded on real appreciation of the monarch. On that sad Sunday in Christmas week, 1861, there was no prominent man in the country who more warmly sympathised with the Royal Family in their affliction than the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

Thus the old year closed in gloom, and 1862 came in with wars and rumours of wars which seemed to impart to its opening days an ominous uncertainty. Neither public calamities nor personal ailments seemed to interfere with the great and ever widening work in progress at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, however. The pastor was still only twenty-six; but great as his popularity had been at the opening of 1861, his influence at its close appeared to be even more commanding. The printed sermons were attaining to a popularity which gave to the preacher an

audience scattered over every part of the English-speaking world. On account of the discourses being given extempore, a fair crop of printers' errors occurred; but otherwise the doctrines given were so identical with what they had been at the start, that the pastor declared his motto to be Semper idem. The old theology was held to be incapable of improvement, despite the commotion which the publication of "Essays and Reviews" had occasioned. It was therefore no small satisfaction to see the printed copies of the sermons increasing in popularity. During the year 200,000 numbers were presented to all who were in any way connected with the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. A special edition in German was also printed for the Leipsic Book Fair. The translators did not even overlook the aborigines of New Zealand; while the circulation of the discourses in English became still more extensive by the United States newspapers, which reprinted them entire.

Though not in the best of health, Mr. Spurgeon struck a cheerful note on Sunday morning, January 5, when his subject was "A Psalm for the New Year" (2Pe 3:18), "But grow in grace," etc. The weekly sermon now began to be printed in larger type, the size of each number being increased from eight to twelve pages. On Tuesday, January 7, Mr. Spurgeon again appeared before the Young Men's Christian Association at Exeter Hall, the subject of the lecture being "Counterfeits." Mr. Robert Bevan was again in the chair, a number of notable persons being also on the platform. The hall was so densely crowded, and the curiosity of the audience so manifest, that Mr. Shipton's general order to "sit down and sit close," was by no means untimely. The interest of the occasion was probably heightened by certain paragraphs and letters which had appeared, and which showed that a distinguished University doctor had declined to fulfil an engagement to lecture before the Young Men's Christian Association because his name was associated with that of Spurgeon. "If Dr. Thomson has declined to row in a boat in which Mr. Spurgeon takes an oar, we entirely approve of his, or any other gentleman's, reluctance to be bracketed with a person of this sort," said The Saturday Review. "It is an indication that a better type of Palmerston bishop has at length been thought of. A bishop is not in his place coquetting with Spurgeon, writing pretty letters to him and to 'shining lights of the Nonconformist pulpit,' and congratulating them on their labours and successes." The late Dr. Tait, who was then Bishop of London, was happily not of this order; and he had recently written a letter to Mr. Spurgeon which did credit both to his head and heart. No civility to Spurgeon could be tolerated by his more bigoted and uncompromising opponents. "Assuming that the letter is genuine," it was meanly remarked, "it is very likely that the bishop only meant to be civil to the Baptist preacher, and wrote a letter of ordinary conventionalism and platitude." Then it was added, "Most likely Mr. Spurgeon publishes it only to avert the waning popularity which the newspapers announce." The preacher's "waning popularity" received a curious kind of illustration when Exeter Hall was again densely crowded, and the young pastor rose amidst prolonged acclamation to give his lecture on "Counterfeits." The lecture began by showing that it was almost generally allowed to be a good thing to be a follower of Christ. "To be, or not to be"—"To be, or to seem to be"—that was the struggle of the present age, as it had been the contest of all times.

"Nowadays there is a temptation for men to act as if to look like a Christian was as useful as to be one. The demon Counterfeit says, 'If charity be an admirable grace, let our name figure in every subscription list. If it be a great and a good thing to do something in the service of God, let us help others who are doing something and that proxy service will do as well. If to possess godliness be

difficult, let us profess it, and we shall have all the advantage of it without the labour.' Again he will tell you that if you wish to win the confidence of your employer, and religion stands in the way, you must seem to be religious and you will succeed; but you must keep a guard upon your lips and tune your speech after the orthodox fashion. Then he argues, 'How much cheaper it is. Where sculptors have produced statues in marble, you fill up with figures in plaster. They will not cost a hundredth part as much, and will answer every purpose. Economy should be the order of the day. It is troublesome to repent; it is expensive to give up sins, to tear off lust's right arm, to be born again, and to pass from death to life. By the pretence of godliness you will win all and without any trouble or pain.' How many, tempted by this short cut, accept the counterfeit and neglect the reality? Then saith the Evil One, 'It looks quite as well and will last as long. Play your cards well, avoid all appearance of evil, and the keenest observer will fail to detect you.' Now you may play at this masquerade all through your youth and manhood, and even when you grow old you may scatter a halo of saintship around your hoary head, while your heart is as black as hell. Time was when men boldly declared what they believed was right; but, says the fiend, 'We know better now—this is not an age of bigots. We may swear to certain articles while we mean the contrary thing, and yet be thought good men.'" So expansive indeed was the charity of the age that men who accepted one thing and preached another might even be recognised as ministers of Christ. Mr. Spurgeon himself had got into the habit of calling a spade a spade, and of expressing what he believed in plain Saxon language, so that he confessed to hardly knowing where he was, whether he was standing on his head or his feet, or whether he had any brains at all, when he heard what was evidently black heresy described as orthodox things to believe. It was the same when a man gave out what was opposite to the truth, and then declared that all came to the same thing as the truth. The lecture then proceeded:—

"Now Counterfeit is the man for such an age. He will never grow angry with an opponent because he has nothing to be angry about. He is a very nice man for all companies, a very delightful person for a drawing-room, because he will never raise any controversies. He is just the man for editors of periodicals and the conductors of newspapers. He is the very individual to whom the age points as one up to the times, and free from all the stereotyped notions of the barbaric past. Now it is fair to admit that there is something in this style of reasoning—that is to say, just enough to make it take. Alas! how many there are both in high and low places who profess that they never experienced, and wear colours which are not their own. How many tradesmen are there who hold themselves out as honest simply because it answers their purpose? They would not wish to be thought rogues, but they are rogues for all that. How many young men in warehouses are there who, if their master compelled them to lay aside scruples, would not do so? Thank God, we have thousands of employers and tradesmen who would not do the wrong thing, but still we read of daily disclosures of the contrary. No doubt some men make a good thing of their religion. By the mere profession of godliness their shops may be thronged and their business advanced. Goods will move off: more rapidly when perfumed with godliness. In England at least the advantage is as much on the side of profession as non-profession. It is but honest to say so, and therefore men have inducements to counterfeit the possession of the quality I have mentioned. It is said that there were many hypocrites in Cromwell's time. I do not think many were to be found in Charles II.'s reign, as it did not pay. If a man then professed godliness, he lost his emoluments and soon got in the common gaol."

It was a matter for congratulation that times were so different from the days of persecution that services were even held in theatres, and churches were active. Nevertheless, the same showers which made the flowers rejoice, also brought out snails and slugs from their hiding-places. Persons in whom the habit of imitation was stronger than honour, at times professed to have undergone conversions which had never been experienced. The Church seemed to be under peculiar danger from pretended religion on account of the plentifulness of religious books and biographies. The Romish Church was then depicted as "Satan's Masterpiece of Counterfeits."

"The honest eye of Luther, kindled with the light of heaven, saw through the fabrication and told us the whole truth, and now the world rejected with loathing the counterfeit which it once so joyfully received. There might be some who would bring it back again, but surely they would fail. It could not be possible that the counterfeit of a counterfeit—Puseyism—could ever succeed. It was base enough when the harlot of Rome put on the garments of Christ's spouse; but to wear her rags was something execrable. To say the least, there was some attraction in the glittering pretence of the Roman Church; but paint and glitter, instead of gold and marble and precious stones, surely would not influence the enlightened minds of this century, so as to bring back an old counterfeit in place of the Gospel of Christ." The young men were then urged not to pretend to be what they were not: it was a miserable thing to be thought a rich man and to be in reality a poor one.

"You are waited upon for subscriptions for every charity, and you must keep up establishments, but bills will at last come in for payment. That is just the position of a man who pretends to be a follower of Christ. He is like a drunken man whom I have seen attempting to walk on both sides of the street at the same time. Shops are sometimes filled with shams—parcels which contain nothing, empty bottles, drawers which do not pull out, and tea-canisters which never came from China. Going the other day into a cheesemonger's shop, I happened to tap a large cheese with my stick, when I found that it sounded hollow. I asked the proprietor what was the matter with it, and he could only reply that I had discovered a hypocrite in his window. Now, in churches we find people of hollow character like that, who look extremely like what they should be, but if you happen to tap them, you readily find of what they are composed." The course of lectures given at Exeter Hall during the winter of 1861-2 was abundantly interesting; for the list included "Miracles," by Dr. Candlish; "The New Testament Narrative," by Dr. Miller; and "Lord Macaulay," by Morley Punshon. Mr. Spurgeon had previously been unwell; he did not preach on the last Sunday of the year; yet now, as one observer remarked, if there was not "the usual amount of electricity in him, yet it required a skilful eye to make the discovery." We find the scene generally described as "a grand spectacle," the discourse itself being "novel, startling, and useful, instinct with life and overflowing with eloquence." The magnitude of the audience showed the interest felt by the public in the lecturer and his theme. As he had done before, Mr. Spurgeon disclaimed all pretensions to being a lecturer: he was only a preacher; but one, in refusing to admit this plea, said that he should like to have lecturing and preaching clearly defined. Dr. Campbell remarked that there need be no fear of giving the people too much Gospel; and it was because Spurgeon gave the people as much of the Gospel as he did, that his lectures deserved to be so highly valued.

"Let not the admirers of gifted men be offended if we say that we deem the discourse of last Tuesday of greater value than the whole of the previous lectures of the present course. It was a hundred times more adapted to promote the salvation of souls. We shall not be surprised if some scores—it may be hundreds—of the vast assembly should be roused to a sense of their true

condition by the feeling and faithful appeals which were then addressed to them." At this time the work of the Pastors' College was being vigorously carried on, the expenditure being at the rate of about £1,600 a year. Over twenty students were being educated, and nineteen had already settled in pastorates. In addition to these, there were 150 young business men who were receiving instruction in the evening classes. Mr. Spurgeon still regarded this institution as being the chief work of his life, next to preaching the Gospel; and he still endeavoured to make all of his friends understand that the methods of the tutors differed from those of other colleges. The one qualification for admission was a gift for preaching, and possessing that, a man was acceptable, however poor his general education might be. This method of dealing with candidates was thought to be altogether consistent with common sense. "It is certain that many men who are toiling at Latin and Greek with very slender success, would be far more profitably engaged in learning English and getting general information," we find it remarked in a general statement of the time. "Such men only prove a drag upon their fellow-students in the classes, and get little good themselves. If a man can learn Greek and Hebrew, he finds the tutors ready enough to admit him into the classes; but in cases where no good could come of such an attempt, he is not dragged along in order to make him keep in rank, but is directed to a course of study suitable to his capabilities." The annual meeting of the College was held on Wednesday, January 29, when the founder gave a full account of the origin and progress of the work. As the College Buildings were not then in existence, the rooms and lecture-hall of the Tabernacle had to be used for all purposes, even when, as would sometimes be the case, 1,200 or 2,000 persons would come to tea. On this occasion, the tutor-in-chief, George Rogers, was described as "a quiet, modest man, of rare endowments, who ought long since to have been at the head of an academic institution." What was more entertaining, however, were Spurgeon's references to the characteristics of the students themselves. Thus, soon after the start was made, and when at least one student had been turned into a success, another aspirant appeared on the scenes who was "quite as original." If his mind had been locked up in an iron safe, it could not have been more inaccessible to the tutor; for although it was plain to ordinary people that two and two made four, this well-meaning youth could hardly be made to rise to the apprehension of that fact. Professor Rogers was quite ingenious in the methods he used for stimulating this intellect into action, but all were in vain until the main facts of astronomy were set before him. The awakening touch was then given—"his mind seemed to burst the shell: he became a new man." In a word, he developed great preaching powers, and in what had been an empty chapel gathered a large congregation. In January, 1862, the country was shocked by the news of the dreadful catastrophe at Hartley Colliery, in which over two hundred workpeople in the pit were killed. The sympathy awakened was very general: collections for widows and children left destitute were made at the Mansion House and elsewhere. At the Tabernacle week-night service on January 30, Mr. Spurgeon gave attention to the subject and made a collection for the survivors. The text was Job 14:14, "If a man die, shall he live again?" It was shown that people in general thought too little of death, and hence Providence thrust it before them. The warning had lately been heard in the palace; and now among common workpeople, who were as apt as others to neglect the future life, it was also being heard in tones of thunder. The question of the text was answered negatively and then affirmatively:—

"'If a man die, shall he live again?' No! he shall not live again here—he shall not live again for himself to make glad his household. If he lived a sinful life, this life shall never be repeated. If there were pleasures in sin, the dead would not come back to repeat them—to take in vain the name of

that God who had daily loaded them with benefits—in whom they lived and moved and had their being. They would have no more opportunity for their base ingratitude to their Maker, whom they treated worse than the 'ox which knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib.' Nor would they ever live again to stifle the remorseful conscience. And it was quite as well for the wicked that they could not live again; for, whatever they might think to the contrary, if they lived again they would live as they had lived before—the filthy would be filthy still, and they would increase their condemnation. On the other hand, the righteous would not live again to repent of sin, to suffer for their righteousness. They would not bring back to strife and contest the victor when he wore the crown, the mariner who had gained the shore! And if a man would not live again for himself, neither would he live again for others. If there were any in that fatal pit who led others into vice, they would not live again to do so. The man who was living an idle and useless life, would not live again to set his bad example. There was no moral quarantine; but if they only had a clear perception of the leprosy of vice, they would shudder at those overt and covert influences by which some men were daily exercised for evil. There were some men who carried, as it were, a moral plague about them; but those would not live again to pour out moral poison and pollute the very air they breathed. As with the evil, so it was with the good. They would not live again to do their duty to their God and to their fellow-men. In the pit with those poor men at Hartley were some of the Primitive Methodist local preachers, men selected to preach to others because they could preach from the heart to the heart, though not perhaps grammatically. That was the true principle of New Testament Christianity—to select men for ministers, not for their scholarship, but because they had the Christian life within them. They would do more good amongst the working classes in London if they were not quite so squeamish on these points. If a man die, shall he live again? Yes! but not here. His soul would live again in a resurrection life. The poor mangled forms in the pit would live again. They would all live again, the consciences of the evil would live again and be their continual tormentors. Their victims too would live again; and those whom they had wronged would live again and reproach them. The good would also live again as flowers transplanted from one spot, where they could only bud, to another where they would bloom with everlasting freshness." In February of this year died James Sherman and Dr. Reed the philanthropist, two earnest men for whom Mr. Spurgeon felt a strong regard. The old-time leaders were fast passing away.

Chapter 46: Work and Progress in 1862

Chapter 46.

Work and Progress in 1862 A Young Men's Mission Aid Society—Meeting at Bunyan's Tomb—A great Company of Emigrants—Bi-centenary of the English St. Bartholomew—Spurgeon refuses to take part in the Celebration—A Service at Cheddar Cliffs—A Memorable Open-air Service—Barnums in the Pulpit—Death of James Smith.

Although he very much disliked writing prefaces or introductions to books by other people, Mr. Spurgeon would occasionally undertake such a task, or he would even volunteer to do the service in an exceptional case when he thought some good purpose might be served. Thus at this time we find him supplying a prefatory notice to Mr. John Stock's "Handbook of Revealed Theology," a closely printed volume of over 350 pages. When the roll of Church membership at the Metropolitan Tabernacle became the largest in the world, nothing pleased the pastor better than to see a number of friends exercise a spirit of self-denial by going elsewhere to start or strengthen another interest. One of the places which thus received attention was the chapel in New Court, Old Bailey. It was determined to resuscitate the cause by reopening the Sunday-school and engaging one of the members of the College to conduct the services. This succeeded so well that towards the end of February, 1862, the congregation was in a position to remove to what had been the Welsh Independent Chapel in Aldersgate Street by purchasing the lease. Mr. William Olney lent his aid and did much to make the enterprise a success. The student who undertook the pastorate was Mr. Alfred Searle, whose rare devotion, success, extreme youth, and early death conspired to make him a subject of more than common interest. He died of consumption, while staying at Hastings, September 20, 1863, being then in his twenty-first year. At the time of his death he had only just accepted a call to the pastorate of Vernon Chapel. On Monday, May 5, the Young Men's Missionary Association in aid of the Baptist Missionary Society had its meeting at the Tabernacle, Mr. J. E. Marshman being in the chair. It was arranged that there should be no resolutions, but that each speaker should choose a subject and enlarge upon it. Mr. Spurgeon decided to speak upon the Society. It was shown that the day was past when anyone harboured suspicion in regard to the righteousness of the cause; and some references were then made to Calvinism past and present:—

"We know that the Calvinism of a former time—although I trust we still maintain it in all its great fundamental principles—but the Calvinism of that former time was not able to reconcile to itself the text where Christ is represented as weeping over Jerusalem. The commentators of that day laboured hard to prove that Christ did not weep, or that He did not weep over the fact that men would perish. They could not reconcile it with the Sovereignty of God and the doctrine of election. Now I trust our Churches know that God's purpose is fully consistent with free action on man's part, and that while it is God's to choose and God's to effect, it is ours to attend, and to be employed as instruments in God's hand. We are no longer afraid to say, as Peter did, 'Repent, and be converted, every one of you,' though we can still feel with the Apostle Paul, that it is not of him

that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. We can say fearlessly, in the name of Jesus Christ, 'He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.' Yet there are still a few survivors of that ancient tribe who will have men do nothing because God works in all; but they are happily very few, and I do not suppose there are any in this assembly. There are also difficulties raised by enthusiastic people who think that God will surely, all of a sudden, make one day as a thousand years, and cause all the nations to be born at once. Perhaps their hope is true. I think it more than likely that such an event will transpire—that at the coming of the Lord from heaven with a great shout, the nations shall behold the Messiah, and in the Glory of His second advent shall perceive that it was He of whom Moses and the law and the prophets did speak." In the retrospect it seemed a marvellous thing that such a man as Dr. Stennett should have looked coldly on missionary enterprise. If they looked on sick persons and knew of medicine which would cure them, would they not tell of it? If well clothed, they pitied the shivering beggar on a cold day; and thus Christian instinct prompted them to make known the precious secret that God was ready to receive and forgive the sinner:—

"When the love of Christ gets into the soul, it can never be hidden. Persecution could not check its hallowed fire from spreading. The angel of Prudence once said to a spark which fell into a field of stubble, 'Spread not, for if thou dost, the next particle of stubble will be kindled, and another and another, and who can tell whereunto this may lead?' And lo! ere the angel had finished speaking, the spark had kindled the next atom of stubble, and the next, and the next, till it burst into a blaze, and the angel was fain to spread his wings and fly away. Though the man zealous for God were to be confined in a prison, I would work there for Christ; if not in the cell, yet I would find some means of being heard beyond it. Let a servant of God be put in cramping irons, and be told that he must not do that which the Spirit of God within him compelled him to do. As well tell the river it must not flow to the sea, or the sun that it must not shine, or the stars that they must no longer cheer the darkness of midnight. They must—it is not may with them—they must. 'Woe is me,' said the Apostle, 'if I preach not the Gospel.' We feel it like fire burning within us, and we feel constrained by a holy force more powerful than even that of gravitation, which makes the earth revolve within its orbit. We feel that the omnipotence of love and of grace compels us, so far as we have opportunity, to make known the great plan of salvation for the souls of men." When they comprehended Christ's sufferings and character, it was hard to understand how there should ever have been any indifference to His cause. Young men seemed to have a special mission in the world; but while it was an instinct of youth to be radical and destructive, Mr. Spurgeon himself confessed to being conservative. Who were the best qualified for missionary work?—

"It is for the young men to venture. During the winter, when the ponds at Clapham get frozen over, I have seen stones thrown on to the ice to see if it were strong enough to bear. If the stone does not go through, a small boy will be sent on, and if he makes the transit in safety, full-grown men will venture. I think that in the mission work, young men should feel that they are to make the venture where others cannot. The young man, perhaps, has not got a wife yet; he has thought of it, but still, not seriously, and he has laid it aside; he knows that it is good for a man to wear the yoke in his youth, but still he does not intend to wear that particular yoke at present. When he puts on his hat he has covered his house, and when he goes abroad he can take his worldly goods and chattels with him, for he is at present, 'self-contained.' This is the young man to go out as a missionary. Perhaps the committee may say, 'Well, but you would be better if you had a wife; is

there no young person of your acquaintance?' 'Oh, yes,' says the young man, 'that could be managed; there's a young sister living so-and-so: it could be managed.' These are the sort of folks to venture if there is any hard work to be done. If there is any difficult place, or any suffering to endure, they are just the people. These are the men who, when God has touched their hearts, will be ready to lead the forlorn hope, to run into the ditch, to put up the ladder and make the irons rattle on the coping of the wall. It is God's will that some should abide by the stuff, while some should go forth to the battle; and who so fitted to do so as the young?"

There was some rough work to be done, and it would not be done by people in kid gloves. There were grand opportunities, the Baptist communion being the finest under heaven; but a man must be qualified for the service required:—

"Many come to me who think they are called to be preachers, and from the very cut of their mouths I can tell they were never meant to be, that they would never make fluent speakers. There are always two sides to a revelation. A person wrote to me, saying it was revealed that he was to preach for me one morning in the Surrey Music Hall. Far be it from me to be disobedient to any sort of heavenly vision. I wrote back to say it was a lop-sided revelation, but when it was revealed to me that I was to let him preach, I would let him know; at present I had not had such a revelation. You may perhaps see clearly enough that they are the men for the mission work, and that they ought to go out to some land where the cannibals will eat them up in a proper manner; but if the committee does not think them the proper persons, it is much better that they should be cut up at home. But if they believe they are called, and the Missionary Society will not send them, let them go without. There are plenty of missionaries unconnected with any society. It is possible for them to find friends who would take a pleasure in maintaining them; if not, might they not, in answer to prayer, be so prospered in life as to be able to maintain themselves in the mission work?" On the day after he had given this advice to young men who might be desirous of entering the mission field, Mr. Spurgeon paid a visit to his brother at Southampton, whose congregation assembled in the Carlton Rooms. A service was held in the afternoon, 900 persons sat down to tea, and an enthusiastic public meeting came off in the evening in aid of the fund for the chapel which was subsequently erected. In the spring of this year Bunyan's tomb in Bunhill Fields was restored, and with the Earl of Shaftesbury and some others, Mr. Spurgeon attended the inauguration on May 21. It was a wet afternoon, so that after a very short ceremony in the grounds the large company sought shelter in the City Road Chapel. Following his friend Lord Shaftesbury, Mr. Spurgeon spoke at some length on Bunyan as a preacher, an author, and a sufferer. The tinker's style was commended, that style being "not the spread-eagle style of long and lofty sentences, but plain and homely speech which all love and by which all are attracted." In regard to Bunyan's works, Mr. Spurgeon did not hesitate to value "The Holy War" more than "The Pilgrim's Progress," the one being a sketch of the Christian life, the other the filling up; the one being adapted for babes in spiritual experience, the other being meat for full-grown men. "As the works of Dr. John Owen have been well described as the Thesaurus of theological wisdom, so are those of Bunyan the Thesaurus of allegory." After some references had been made to the sufferings of Bunyan from imprisonment and extreme poverty, the people were advised to raise monuments to the allegorist in their hearts, becoming his spiritual descendants by accepting and cherishing the truths which he taught, and thus keeping his memory green.

During the spring of this year Dr. Merle d'Aubigné, of Geneva, visited London as the guest of the Kinnaird family in Pall Mall. On Sunday morning, May 18, the historian of the Reformation visited the Tabernacle, when the pastor gave what he called an Exhortation founded on 2Sa 11:1, which was followed by a Salutation from his visitor. The latter spoke English with some difficulty; but showing great earnestness, he made the people understand him, while he quoted the Apostle's words, "The whole Church saluteth you," and made reference to the tercentenary of the death of John Calvin, which in 1864 it was hoped they might celebrate in the famous Swiss city by erecting a fitting memorial of the Reformation. On the Tuesday following the Hon. A. Kinnaird gave a conversazione in the furtherance of this enterprise. It was proposed that the memorial should take the form of "A Hall of the Reformation," in which the Gospel would be preached, the building being also available for the "great ends to which Calvin devoted his life." It was also proposed to circulate the Reformer's works more widely. Mr. Spurgeon, who was present, cordially advocated the scheme, which was warmly taken up by friends in various parts of Christendom. It was hoped that £10,000 would be raised in Great Britain alone. On May 27 a more than usually novel kind of meeting was held at the Tabernacle, to take farewell of a thousand emigrants who were about to proceed to what was called the Nonconformist Settlement in New Zealand. A tract of territory comprising about sixty thousand acres was secured, and two-thirds of the land was supposed to be suitable for settlement. The distance from Auckland ranged from thirty-five to sixty miles, and a sum of £2,500 had been set apart for the construction of roads. All the arrangements which had been made appeared to give satisfaction to those in England.

Mr. Edward Ball, M.P., occupied the chair, and Mr. C. J. Middle-ditch, who spoke on the general subject of Christian Colonisation, emphasised the fact, that the gathering was of a very unusual character. "The spectacle of a thousand Christian people going forth at once amid the sympathies and benedictions of such an assembly as this has probably never been beheld." Dr. E. Tomkins gave a kind of charge to the pastor elected to accompany the emigrants—Mr. S. Edgar, B.A. Several other addresses were given. Mr. Spurgeon said:—

"In the history of the Church, the first sower was the devil, and in his efforts he scattered the seed everywhere. Satan is unwittingly the servant of God—fool as he is; though not intending it he accomplishes the purposes of Heaven. His object at one time was persecution; now he is endeavouring to hug the Church. But He who has delivered the Church out of the jaws of the lion, will also deliver it out of the paw of the bear. By Satan even emigration has been prostituted to the worst of purposes; now we are going to defeat him. You are going forth not so much to found a colony, as a Christian Church. Many who hear me will remain to sing at home; but the emigrants are going to sever the ties of home. They are going to the Antipodes, and instead of lips being together, the nearest part of their bodies to England will be their feet. They will have to forget some of the highest associations under heaven—

'Wherever we wander, there's no place like home.'

Your condition after a while will not be quite so respectable as it has been. We talk about being sturdy Nonconformists, but even a sturdy Nonconformist getting hungry is not in a very respectable condition. The proof of the pudding is in the eating of it, but the trouble is in the making. After a while some of you will be feeling for the softest bit of wood on board ship, or enjoying the cold comfort of a bed in a hut with the wind blowing through it. You have had

experience of England but not of New Zealand. In making the change you will perhaps feel the force of the arrow all the more, because it is a new one and has never been shot before. In going to the place on the banks of the river, the name of which I do not remember, I expect you will be strictly loyal, and as a reminder I will ask you to sing 'God save the Queen.' In addition to loyalty I hope you will always keep up what I will call the Englishness of your hearts. Let that word 'home' be held sacred, whether the home be a log hut or a palace. I expect you will keep your arms strong—strong to wield your axes and reap your harvests. You will also require strong doctrine—sixteen ounces to the pound—of election and perseverance. Religion is a blessed thing in all ranks, but best proved among the poor. But you tell us you expect something of us. I rejoin, blessed are they who expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed. But in the prayers of dear friends you will not be forgotten. Prayers will be heard in England for you, prayers will be heard in New Zealand for us. I trust you will go out good soldiers of the Cross—strong in the omnipotence of the Master."

During the year 1862, great attention was given to the subject of the secession of the two thousand ministers from the Church of England two centuries before—men who gave up their parishes because conscience would not allow of their subscribing to all that was contained in the Book of Common Prayer. On Sunday, August 24, that being St. Bartholomew's Day and the 200th anniversary of the secession, discourses were very generally devoted to the subject in the pulpits of England and Wales, the opinions of leading preachers being given in the newspapers. Mr. Spurgeon did not follow the example of his brother ministers, however; for his subject on that morning was "The Loaded Waggon" (Amo 2:13). He objected to the celebration as a one-sided one, and thought that Churchmen as well as Nonconformists ought to have united in such a commemoration, agreeing to confess their faults in common, and to bury past grievances. That would have tended to sweep away anything that remained which might be opposed to religious liberty. There might be some things yet remaining to be complained of; but he believed they would have been granted by Churchmen if they had been asked for in the right way. On Wednesday, September 10, a more than usually interesting service, attended by 10,000 persons, took place at Cheddar Cliffs. The congregation showed the keenest curiosity to see and hear the preacher, and a large proportion had come together from a radius of twenty miles. Indeed, the scene altogether was of the most striking description, the preacher standing on a platform erected for him with his back towards the rocks. The hymns, "Before Jehovah's Awful Throne," and "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," were sung with grand effect; and then came a sermon on "I am the way," such as Spurgeon alone could have given. A contemporary account compares the service with one of the gatherings of the old Covenanters among the hills of Scotland; and such was the power of the young pastor's voice at that time that an outdoor assembly of twice the number could easily have heard every syllable. This passage occurred in the sermon:—

"Ye rocks that have listened now and heard the words I speak; ye rocks that have felt as much as some have felt; ye rocks that have trembled as much as some have trembled; ye rocks, give witness before God against this people if they believe not in Christ, when your head shall bow down at the last great day, still bear witness that Christ was lifted up in Cheddar, and His name exalted. Shall they bear witness against you every time you pass them; shall they say, 'You had an invitation, but you rejected it?' "

Meanwhile, work at home was being carried on with vigour. Nothing afforded the young pastor greater satisfaction at this time than to see one handsome chapel after another rise up as a result of the preaching of men who had been trained in the College. Wandsworth now gave rise to one of these interesting stations. About three years after his first preaching in London, Mr. Spurgeon gave a sermon in the Assembly Rooms, the regular ministry in which was afterwards carried on by one of the students, Mr. J. W. Genders. He commenced with a Church of eight members, which he soon increased to over 150, the main part being baptised by himself. The result was that Mr. Spurgeon laid the memorial-stone of a new chapel to accommodate 700 persons on October 6, 1862. The estimated cost of the chapel was £2,100.

During that same week the annual meeting of the College was held, when the pastor referred to his students in affectionate terms. There were then thirty-nine students in course of training, besides over one hundred young men who attended the evening classes, the cost altogether being then £2,000 a year. The Friday evening lectures were still in favour; and on September 19, the subject was "George Fox." The founder of the Society of Friends was described as a man whose faults had been excused by his disciples, while opponents had falsely given him a scandalous character. Macaulay's estimate was to be taken for what it was worth; and even Carlyle, unexcelled as a shrewd thinker, had still "done serious injury to religious faith in the present century." Concerning Fox himself, it was remarked:—

"He lived in a time when men were in earnest, and some went beyond enthusiasm into fanaticism. Prophets were in every street, and prophetesses were as plentiful as blackberries on bushes; but George Fox was one of the soberest men in that strange time. Some of his professed followers committed actions that disgusted him, and against which he protested; but he could not prevent all who were his followers from doing something that was outrageous. They should not therefore confound George Fox with his associates; they should not lay other men's sins at his door; they should let him stand in his own shoes. George Fox was probably the best judge of what was his duty, and two hundred years ago knew better what God required of him than they could know in the present day. If he had as much grace as George Fox, with George Fox's temperament, he might have done the same thing. The mar pel was, not that the man was extravagant, but that he was not much more so. Even in early life George Fox had shown the most tender spirit. Plays and games had no charms for him, and, shocked at the conduct of some old men, he once expressed a hope that when he grew old, God would prevent him from doing as they did. His parents had not the means of giving him much education, but he had the power to pick up a great number of things. When he said 'yea,' it was ended so; and when he said 'nay,' it was impossible to change him, because he meant 'nay.' When certain men would swear, and professing Christians would declare upon their honour or their word, George Fox would say 'verily,' and there was an end of it. George Fox could always deal with other men's hearts and see them thoroughly, because he had been prepared by temptation for his high and noble mission. One of the first things he perceived was that human learning was not necessary for religious teaching; and was there anything extraordinary in that? No! because no man could pretend to make a minister, for that was God's work. He next said that human profession did not make the Christian, and that was the fact; but for protesting that, George Fox was put in prison."

Many of the opinions held by Fox were accepted by the speaker, but the doctrine of sinless perfection could not be endorsed, because no such example had ever been met with. The acts of

the old Quaker were also generally approved; although it was a silly thing to enter Lichfield without shoes and stockings, to cry out against the city. Macaulay had charged him with indecency, besides calling him a madman; but there was no indecency in an act "which merely caused the cooling of his feet and the losing of his shoes."

During this year, the distress in Lancashire, consequent on the stoppage of the cotton supply, was very widespread, and amounted to a national calamity. Large sums were collected in different parts of the country and distributed among the sufferers from enforced idleness. Into this work Mr. Spurgeon entered with great heartiness. He sent money on several occasions; and on November 9, when collections for the distress were made at the Tabernacle, the sum realised was £713 6s. 9d.

Like Whitefield, with whom he was so often compared in these early days, Mr. Spurgeon delighted in the open air. Some of the most memorable of his discourses were given in fields or on a hillside; and a complete account of what he did from first to last in this department would certainly be a record of extraordinary interest. As this work proceeds, I may be able to give reminiscences supplied by friends of some of the happy occasions referred to. Meanwhile, I will give here a description of a field service in 1862, which my friend Mr. William Cuff, of the Shoreditch Tabernacle, has kindly supplied:—"The first time I heard Mr. Spurgeon preach in the open air was in the year 1862. The place was at Naunton, eighteen miles from Cheltenham. I was but a lad, just then converted to God. Of course I had heard of the mighty man, and went to hear him full of wonder and expectation. The service was held in a lovely meadow, through which meanders the famous Naunton Brook. It was a faultless day, and crowds gathered from all parts round about. All classes came. Work in the fields was suspended, and smock frocks were plentiful in the audience. Horses were tethered everywhere, and the roads seemed blocked with all kinds of vehicles, from a four-wheel waggon to a brougham. I am not sure, but I think the pulpit was a waggon. A crowd of thousands had gathered long before the time to commence the service. We waited eagerly, and some prayed fervently for saving power to be upon preacher and people. One old man standing next to me scarcely ceased praying all the time we waited. When Mr. Spurgeon stood up to commence, he said a fervent 'Amen' and 'Lord help him.' It thrilled me.

"Then came the preacher and the service. I shall never forget the ring and tone of that musical though powerful voice as the words fell on our ears—'Let us pray.' A profound and holy hush fell on the crowd. It was as still as death. The prayer was simple, short, mighty. Every word was heard. Every tone was felt. It lifted the mass nearer God, and transmuted the meadow into a very house of the Lord. Sinners must have trembled, while saints rejoiced in the presence and power of the Lord. But the prayer was calm and measured. So was the pleader. Mr. Spurgeon did not look or seem the least excited. He stood then as ever he did, like a master of assemblies. The reading and exposition were very powerful, yet most simple and unaffected. Another prayer, not long; but a tender, intensely earnest plea that souls might then and there be saved. Then came the text and the sermon. It is as impossible as it is needless to describe the sermon or its effects on the crowd. The text was in Acts 14:9-10. The sermon is printed in Vol. x., p. 145, of the printed sermons.

"One curious incident happened at the close of this service. A poor old man came up to Mr. Spurgeon and shook hands with him in a manner that shook him all over. He said—'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee.' 'Go on, sir, and finish the text,'

said Mr. Spurgeon. There was a pause, and some confusion, and then Mr. Spurgeon added—'Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.' There was a sharp but kind rebuke administered for misquoting, and wrongly applying Scripture. That service took place thirty years ago, but the whole thing is as vividly before me as it could be if it had been yesterday. The result will be known when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed." By this time Spurgeon had in the main lived down opposition, but here and there was found one who still looked on him with suspicion or actual dislike. At an ordination service at Bristol a well-known doctor of divinity, who gave the charge to his own sod, was heard giving the preference to dumb dogs to such as were always barking; and the young pastor was urged to be on his guard against "the Barnums of the pulpit who draw large gatherings, collect large amounts, and preach many sermons."

Taken altogether, the year 1862 was one of progress and encouragement. The improvement in the weekly issue of the Sermons ensured a greatly increased circulation. From all parts of the world news was continually being received of the good effected through the reading of the discourses in many tongues. In the closing days of 1862 occurred the death of Mr. Spurgeon's predecessor at New Park Street, James Smith, of Cheltenham, an uneducated man in a literary sense, but one possessed of genius and of rare devotion in his calling. As pastor of Cambray Chapel, he preached to a large and appreciative congregation; and such was the respect accorded him by the townspeople generally, that while Mr. Smith lay in his last illness, and within a few days of his death, the rector of Cheltenham, I believe, presided at a meeting at which a sum of £400 was subscribed for the Baptist pastor's necessities.

Chapter 47: Progress of the College

Chapter 47.

Progress of the College

Losses by Death—Spurgeon ceases to edit The Baptist Magazine—Spurgeon and Punshon—The Tabernacle depicted—Societies—Work of the College Students—Temperance—Baptisms at the Tabernacle—Exaggerated Reports of Spurgeon's Income.

Many friends of Spurgeon, both in the Establishment and in the ranks of Nonconformity, passed away during the year 1862. Beresford, Primate of Ireland; Sumner, Archbishop of Canterbury; and Horne, the well-known author of "The Introduction to the Scriptures," were among the Churchmen; the losses of Dissent included George Clayton, James Sherman, Drs. Reed and Leifchild, and lastly Sheridan Knowles, who commended Spurgeon when he first came to London on account of his correct elocution and dramatic power.

During the year London had been enlivened by the second Great Industrial Exhibition; hut the untimely death of the Prince Consort, who had laboured hard to make that international show a success, cast a gloom over the country, which was deepened by disasters in mines and on the railways. As we have seen, Mr. Spurgeon was ever ready to turn to account the events of the day by drawing useful lessons from them.

Other matters also, in which the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle was more interested, because they more affected him in his work, were taking place. At the opening of the year 1863, a controversy between the assailants of the authority of Scripture and the defenders of plenary inspiration was at its height. "Whatever may prove to be the distinguishing characteristics of the year 1863, one feature it is already seen to possess in common with that which has just elapsed—that arising from the struggle between the assailants and the defenders of the veracity of God's Word," remarks a religious chronicler of the time. "The controversy would seem to be just commenced, and we appear to stand in a position not dissimilar from that occupied by the men who, thirty years ago, were called to contend for the faith against Tractarianism. Then it was superstition, now it is scepticism, which threatens to sap the Church's foundations. In the ultimate discomfiture of the one we read a prophecy of the certain defeat of the other."

These disputes touched Spurgeon in his most tender place, for he seemed to realise that his life mission was not only to preach the Gospel, but also to stand for the defence of the Truth. His attitude in this respect was always uncompromising, although his hearty denunciations of Arminianism, in the pulpit did not prevent his fraternising with the General Baptists in their work and everyday life. At the same time the smooth progress of the pastorate and of service in the world was occasionally hindered by hitches and obstacles which were more ominous than reassuring. Thus, with the opening of 1863, Mr. Spurgeon ceased to have any connection with The Baptist Magazine, which he had jointly edited for two years. It was in relation to this change that a letter was sent to Mr. Medhurst, now of Cardiff, to whom reference has been made as the "first

student." After showing that it was impossible to carry on the joint-editorship so as to please all, Mr. Spurgeon added:—

"We hope to start another and cheaper magazine in which we may teach the truth and discover error, without being called to account by a denomination far too heterogeneous ever to be represented at all, and, I fear, too unsound to endure plain speech. If I may leaven the denomination with scores of men like yourself, I shall rejoice indeed, but earnest preachers of the whole truth are too few.

"Fray that the Lord may guide me in some tremendous struggles which now await me."

Referring to this communication, Mr. Medhurst remarks in a private note:—

"The magazine of which the above letter speaks as to be started was The Sword and the Trowel, commenced in 1865, in which truth has been taught and error exposed with unwavering fidelity from the commencement even down to the present time.

"From the beginning of Mr. Spurgeon's marvellous ministry, he was eagerly stretching out his hands towards the 'regions beyond,' longing for the time when the results of his ministry should be far-reaching."

It cannot be said with certainty to whom the allusions are made; but we should go wide of the mark if we were to interpret too literally expressions which were written down in letters, or which were spoken in private conversation, at the date in question. The fact seems to be that the misgivings with which Spurgeon had been regarded in the earliest years in London had not altogether died away. It is certain that many good Christian people who read The Baptist Magazine would have taken exception to his sound Calvinistic teaching. The young preacher had a favourite expression—a full Gospel, "sixteen ounces to the pound;" but some did not care for what he regarded as full weight.

About the middle of January the welcome news reached England of the arrival in New Zealand of the Albert Land emigrants previously referred to, and in whose welfare Mr. Spurgeon was deeply interested. Speaking of the land allotted to them, a daily paper said much of it was of excellent quality, while the remainder was average. "There is ample room for cattle-runs with the present population. We regret that for a few days the special settlers suffered considerable privations. Nothing had been done by the pioneer agents to provide shelter for the immigrants on their arrival, although this could easily have been arranged." Some inconvenience and extra expense were occasioned by somebody's negligence; but some of the more opulent settlers were sufficiently pleased with the country to purchase much more land than was originally allotted to them.

About this time, Dr. Campbell published a series of articles, entitled "Eloquence. The Young Men's Christian Association," the pieces having reference to the lectures given at Exeter Hall, and to those who gave them. In one of these studies particular attention was devoted to Morley Punshon, comparison being also drawn between that distinguished orator and Spurgeon; and these utterances seem to be the more interesting because the two men were always sincere friends. They differed on theological points; but they were content to differ. Mr. Spurgeon would himself occasionally attend a lecture at Exeter Hall; and I have reason to think that he has there been profoundly impressed by the power of Punshon's oratory. I have heard that Spurgeon once said

after an address by his Wesleyan friend, "If I could speak like that, I would turn the world upside down." At the same time no one knew better than the Baptist preacher that Punshon was too rhetorical. As is the case with writing, speaking may be too highly finished to produce the best effect, especially when all that has been prepared has been learned by heart. Hence, notwithstanding the admiration which Spurgeon justly accorded to his friend, he never really coveted his art. "What did you think of Punshon's oration?" "Well, I felt like the country-boy who, on being requested to ask a blessing at a feast, said: 'Lord, we thank Thee that we do not get such a good dinner every day, else we should be ill and want the doctor.'" It had to be admitted that in the best sense highly ornate preaching is not successful. It does not seem to have been so even in the case of Robert Hall; and it was still less so in the case of some who came after him—men who, as talented elocutionists, were much run after by the crowd. In his study of the famous Wesleyan preacher, Dr. Campbell showed that his speaking was "novel, startling, grand," but it was not sufficiently natural; and in this respect he differed from Spurgeon, who had "surpassed all his contemporaries by his fidelity to nature." The great preacher performed "nearly the whole of his mighty marches in the pace of a Titan:—His is Cicero's first style on the very largest scale possible. It consists of gigantic conversation. He could trot, and that to purpose, and so could he gallop, but he rarely does either, unless the latter sometimes, when waxing indignant with the Neologists, Rationalists, or the American slaveholders, and then he thunders and lightens like Jupiter." As had been the case with Jay, of Bath, Samuel Martin, of Westminster, achieved "his wonders" like Paganini, who charmed all Europe with one string. It was worth while giving attention to such exemplars:—

"Why should not Mr. Punshon take a leaf out of the books of Martin and Spurgeon? It would mightily add to the pleasure of his audience and to his general usefulness. It would to that extent increase even his present immense popularity. As the matter now stands, he has, to men of taste and culture, too much the air of merely a brilliant rhetorician, an English Isocrates, a leviathan declaimer. The trot, the gallop, are doubtless a great thing, but they must not constitute the whole, else it will savour of a performance, a display, an exhibition, a notion everywhere fatal to dignity, grandeur, and power. It is not thus that the great business of life is carried on in courts of law and halls of legislation: not thus spake Chatham, Pitt, and Burke, Erskine, Plunket, and Flood."

Whether or not Spurgeon had at this time reached the height of his popularity, it was a fact, as we find one insisting, that his name was the most popular in Christendom. At the same time, there were large numbers even in the metropolis to whom the Metropolitan Tabernacle as a term conveyed only a vague idea. The place was indeed one of the most wonderful centres to be found in the world; but only by being visited and looked into could such a hive be properly understood. One friend in particular seems to have become more and more astonished and delighted at what was being achieved as he advanced in years; and the aim of his writing and speaking was to lead persons to visit the great chapel for themselves. "You arrive," wrote he, "at a few minutes to six o'clock on a Sabbath evening. The streets around are crowded with respectable people. At length the gates open, and in a trice the whole of the vast area within is gorged; the noble flight of steps and the spacious portico are literally loaded with an expectant throng. At length the doors are opened, the bulk of the seat-holders having been already accommodated, and in the visitors pour as a torrent, which very speedily covers every foot of space. Try now, good stranger, if you would form a proper estimate of the wondrous sight." In the distant region of the upper gallery there was

a large congregation; there was one even larger in the middle gallery, and one more numerous still in the area. Indeed, we find this spectacle described as really consisting of half a dozen chapels, each being larger than the average, but all having the advantage of being under the ministry of one master mind and one unrivalled voice.

What was more, the tendency was to increase rather than fall off, notwithstanding that "scathing envy and green-eyed jealousy" bad confidently predicted that this would not be the case. At the opening of 1862 the quidnuncs who were well versed in the signs of the times gave out that Spurgeon's power to attract might survive the summer, because people coming into town to the Exhibition would hear the hero of the hour, but when all the visitors had returned to their homes, the whole thing would naturally collapse. The fact was, however, that the eagerness of people to attend the services was greater than ever. The additions to the membership averaged about nine a week, and the Church of nearly 2,500 members was already the largest in Christendom. It was held, too, with some reason by Mr. Spurgeon's friends that the congregation, large as it was, had the privilege of being even better looked after than many smaller assemblies. The town was divided into districts, each having a discreet and vigilant elder to look after it, who had to give in a report at special meetings. These we find described as presbyters, the pastor being the bishop. "He repudiates the idea of isolated independency, holding by something which may be designated Baptist Presbyterianism." The preacher with his surroundings on a Sunday morning at this time we have depicted thus:—

"You see the clock; Mr. Spurgeon will be here in a moment. Mark him as he softly glides down those steps, and drops upon the sofa. Note his lustrous and beaming eye. The countenance is not so much sallow as bloodless. His whole face, you will see, is radiant with benevolence; he seems the happiest man in the assembly. You see those gentlemen that sit in those enclosed seats. That is the sanhedrim; those are the deacons. Do they not present a really aldermanic appearance? What a fine-looking body of men! How hale and hearty they are! They certainly adorn their position, and speak well for their profession. Their presence is a standing proclamation of the fact, that godliness has promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come. They seem to say with Moses to Hobab, 'Come with us, and we will do you good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning us.' The introductory prayer, you will think, is a somewhat strange affair. Men from a distance, more especially from the systematic and orderly kingdom beyond the Tweed, are often startled at its seeming irreverence. They doubt if the good man be praying at all; or they think he is still but a learner. Well, he certainly talks to God as if he meant it."

It was pointed out that at this time Spurgeon really gave at every service what might be called a lecture as well as a sermon; and it was thought that the comments on the read portions of Scripture which constituted this lecture were quite as valuable material for the printer as the ordinary discourses. It needed no unusual sagacity to make the suggestion that these readings should be published; for had they been issued in a way similar to that adopted by Dr. Cumming, the volumes would no doubt have been extremely popular. The fact is, however, that there was never an excessive amount of enterprise in connection with the publication of Spurgeon's works. The annual meeting of the College took place on January 30, and was a more than usually good gathering. "Here we are in the midst of a most interesting company of tutors, Church officers, leading men, students, and friends," we find one of the guests remarking. "The assemblage takes place at five o'clock, and the tea is of course excellent. Mrs. Spurgeon, with her modest vivacity

and modest attention to all, is the soul of the hour, and the young bishop is moving airily about, loving all, the beloved of all, pleasing all, and amusing not a few." After tea there was a crowded meeting, and the history of the institution, for the year showed the College to be a thing by itself—something unlike anything else in the British Islands. If such a school of the prophets did not prove the founder to be actually revolutionary, its existence at least showed him to be thoroughly original. He did not wish to be singular or eccentric; but desiring above all things to be useful, his genius enabled him to find out new paths. He cared nothing for conventional ideas nor for prevailing customs unless they happened to fall in with his plans and aspirations. "He acts in everything as if he had been the first actor, and as if this were the first age of Christian society, with neither ancestry nor precedent," we find one remarking. "What is good? What is better? What is best? This point settled, to work he goes, and he rests not till the object has been accomplished." But while this eminent leader possessed sterling characteristics which enabled him to move as a chief among his fellows, it was not to be taken for granted that he was always necessarily right in speech or action. Obstacles to the success of the College had been overcome in a wonderful way; the objections of early opponents had been triumphantly answered by the progress made; the prophecies concerning failure or undesirable results had never been fulfilled. At the same time, while the devoted young pastor was extolling the liberality of the people which under God had enabled him to achieve what he had done, he was simply carried away with his own enthusiasm when he publicly declared, "The days of societies are over and gone." Exception was very generally taken to such an assertion in the newspapers. It was maintained, with some show of reason, that in a Christian sense the day of societies had only begun; that they would be as lasting as the nations, with which they had much in common; and that they were necessary for the accomplishment of Christian work which could not be carried out by individuals. It was shown that some of the best things which had blessed the world had been carried out by associations.

Connected with the College at that time were three Jews, one of whom with his own hands had distributed 3,000 copies of the Scriptures at the Great Exhibition of 1862. They had some Primitive Methodists among their number; and it was then thought to be a singular thing that about half of the students in course of training should send up a memorial in favour of teetotalism. Mr. Spurgeon was not then an advocate of total abstinence, believing that intemperance, like other sins, would have to be cured by the Gospel. Still, he characterised the memorial as a good one, though its very mention provoked a round of laughter. At all events, it showed a becoming disposition towards economy in men who received only fifteen shillings a week. When the President rose to make a further statement, he was able to say, "My once despised lath-and-plaster institution is actually, in point of numbers, already at the head of the colleges of the Baptist body." There were over fifty students, and on this fact one authority remarked:—

"The circumstance is alike remarkable and cheering. But this is only one view of the subject; it regards only the College proper. There is much, very much good, however, besides being done in the way of intellectual culture and fitting men for usefulness. The evening classes comprise thrice the number of the College students, and these classes are supplied with instruction adapted to their circumstances of an exceedingly interesting and important character. In addition to the College course and the diversified exercises of the evening classes there is every Friday night a popular lecture, very often by Mr. Spurgeon himself, and otherwise by the most eminent men, lay and ministerial, that he can find. This is one of the most attractive features of the system. He

stated on Friday night that Mr. Paxton Hood had been engaged for the next series of lectures, embracing pulpit eloquence and a variety of subjects, all enlightening and attractive."

It was thought that the institution was exercising a power which was wanting in other colleges, and that Spurgeon was not only the presiding genius, but "the animating soul of the system." Hence persons who by no means underrated an educated ministry predicted that vast good would come to the Church from the evangelistic enterprise of a band of men who were taught that the ingathering of converts into the Church was to be the ambition of life. The training, as a whole, seemed to be well fitted to develop enthusiasm, as well as to draw out latent talent. "Everything is done to nourish the spirit of devotion," wrote one friend. "The tutors and the students form a species of Protestant fraternity of the ancient type, with all its good, and without any of its evil; a spirit the most paternal seems to obtain among them; nothing can form a greater contrast than the cold proprieties of the old Dissenting Colleges and of the National Universities." According to Principal Rogers, the law of love was dominant; then profitable social intercourse was encouraged, while they communed together once a month at the Lord's table. The institution may have shown some shortcomings; it might not be the place for such young men as had enjoyed exceptional advantages, and had set themselves to attain to a high standard of scholarship, but it was nevertheless such a training-school as the age required. While expressing his admiration, Dr. Campbell ventured to give forth a prophecy destined never to be fulfilled:—"In addition to the tongue power which it so strenuously cultivates, it initiates the young men into all the chief branches of human knowledge, and, although there is obviously little time for general reading, yet mind is awakened, directed, and put in the way of improving itself indefinitely. Rightly speaking, education only begins in colleges. It was well remarked, both by Hume and Gibbon, that no man was ever great who did not put himself through a second course of training after leaving the university. It is well known that Swift obtained his degree in Dublin by special favour, having no literary claim to it; but afterwards he laboured fourteen hours a day for seven years, and hence that brilliancy of wit, and that vigour of intellect, and that multifariousness of knowledge which lifted him so high above his compeers. If we do not greatly miscalculate, mankind will hear more of this matter. Should Mr. Spurgeon, who, we believe, is only yet in his twenty-sixth year, have before him forty or fifty years of life and health, which is quite possible, and the present measure of Divine approbation, his work will be its own witness. He will very probably, however he may deprecate the idea or struggle against it, become the founder of a denomination bearing his own name, which will occupy a place of no ordinary usefulness and honour both at home and abroad."

Among those who were baptised at the Tabernacle during February, 1863, appear to have been the present Sir Arthur Blackwood, of the Post Office, Captain Hawes, and Mr. Ord. According to The Record their immersion took place in "Mr. Spurgeon's baptistery adjoining the Tabernacle," but, as most persons are aware, the baptistery is beneath the lower platform, directly beneath the chair which Mr. Spurgeon used while conducting a prayer-meeting. The Friday evening lectures were still kept up, the pastor himself giving one occasionally. In the main, other lecturers had now to be engaged, however, and amongst them we find the author of "My Wanderings in the East" delighting the audience on February 13 with an account of Palestine, The Tabernacle itself was on this occasion nearly filled, and Mr. Spurgeon spoke in high terms of Mr. Gadsby both as a lecturer and writer.

It was not customary for Nonconformist chapels to be open on Good Friday, but on that day in this year, Mr. J. A. Spurgeon appears to have preached twice at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on behalf of his new chapel at Southampton.

Exaggerated notions of the amounts which Spurgeon received from America on account of his works gained currency from time to time. We find it reported that Sheldon and Co., the Transatlantic agents, had sold 300,000 of the Sermons, and that they were accustomed to remit the preacher £1,000 at one time. Mr. Spurgeon in contradicting the report said that he would like to see such a remittance, or even one of a thousand pence.

Chapter 48: "Number Five Hundred"

Chapter 48.

"Number Five Hundred"

Distress in Lancashire—No. 500 of the Published Sermons—A Week-night Festival—Spurgeon's Address—Speeches of Friends—The Watchman and Reflector —Spurgeon attacked by J. B. Gough—Visit to Whitefield's Tabernacle—Spurgeon and the Wesleyans.

The distress in Lancashire continued to attract attention, and individually Mr. Spurgeon seems to have done all that lay in his power to relieve the sufferings of those who were chiefly affected. The pastor of Pole Street Chapel, Preston, acknowledged the gift of £50 with a crate of clothing from the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. A little later, a sum of £150 was sent to the Lancashire Baptist Relief Fund.

Sunday, March 15, 1863, was an interesting day on account of No. 500 of the published Sermons being delivered at the Tabernacle in the morning. The text was 1Sa 7:12, "Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." On the following Wednesday the publishers invited a number of friends to a supper to celebrate the event. Mr. J. Spicer, who had rendered great service in procuring the site for the Tabernacle, was to have presided, but though present, he desired that the place of honour should be taken by Mr. Rogers, the. Principal of the College. Mr. Spurgeon explained that it was quite a social party and not a public meeting; and they were assembled in the lecture-room because their entertainers had not a drawing-room large enough for their accommodation. The general object of the meeting was to obtain additional subscriptions for extending the work of the College. Mr. Spurgeon said he trusted he might ask them, to join with him in very sincere and fervent gratitude to God for the help which He had given him, so that he was able to say "Ebenezer—hitherto the Lord hath helped me." They could sympathise with him in some degree, he was sure, in the pleasure, in the surprise, that he felt in that God had been thus gracious to him. It would be utterly impossible for them fully to enter into the depth of the debt which he owed to the Lord his God. He remembered what he was, and therefore he marvelled that there should have been found Christians to listen to him all these years. He remembered when he was, some twelve or thirteen years ago, teaching small boys in a country place—an occupation by no means congenial to his tastes. Goldsmith had said that a man had better be hanged than have such work to do, and he was quite of that opinion. He should hesitate, perhaps, for a time, but in the end, no doubt, prefer the alternative of hanging. He was not, at the time alluded to, big enough to be a master; and not small enough to be a boy. He had had no college education. This he said not by way of boasting—far from it. He would have learned more if he had had the opportunity; but, that not being the case, he did what all ought to do—he made the very best use he could of such opportunities as he had. He should never forget the first time when he went out to preach. His friend Mr. Trestrail recollected his addresses in the Sunday-school, but before then, while yet in a jacket, he had addressed the boys, and there were always found large numbers of persons to

listen to him. The schoolroom was crowded. It was in a queer little cottage that he delivered his first sermon, with a ceiling so low that a hole had to be cut in it to enable tall preachers to stand upright. That hole, however, was not necessary in his case. He was very glad when his sermon came to an end, and as he sat down an old woman asked him how old he was. He said he would talk to her after the benediction had been pronounced; and so he did, and told her that he was under forty. She held that he must be considerably under twenty. As to his five hundred sermons, the later ones were rough enough, no doubt, but they were exceedingly superfine as compared with the earlier discourses of the series. The fact was that he had used a homely oyster-knife where a razor would have been but of little use. Nothing could be of more real service to a young preacher than the style of criticism to which he had been subjected—men who not only expressed their opinions very frankly, but sometimes in a bitter, nasty way—and many a joke had been cracked at his expense. Young preachers never liked such critics, but after all they were their best friends.

Reference was made with good effect to the out-of-the-way places to which the sermons found their way, such as Central Africa, the Bahamas, New Zealand, etc.; and to a preacher who had, since coming to London, preached nine times a week, it was an encouraging thing to be able to maintain sufficient freshness to command an increasing circulation. There were, no doubt, persons who harboured the opinion that preaching was such an easy thing that a man had only to elevate his arms and the words would run out of the mouth; but a great mental strain was necessary in the case of one who preached so frequently.

Some interesting facts relating to the circulation of the weekly issue were given at this meeting. The publication had gone on for eight years—an average of a million numbers a year had been sold; and one friend who attended the meeting had himself circulated a quarter of a million of the discourses. As the object of the gathering was to help the funds of the College, Mr. Spurgeon gave some facts relative to the work of the students as supplementary to what he said about the sermons. The German translation, he said, was sold off at the last Leipsic fair; in Holland a Dutch version had had a large sale; and on a visit to that country he found that many knew his name though they could not pronounce it. In fact, he did not know himself what they called him. In Sweden and in Norway editions had been published; and in France the discourses appeared in three different shapes. A friend had also arranged for an Italian edition. Since he had been pastor of that church he had baptised 3,000 persons, most of whom he might call his spiritual' children, they having been brought to a knowledge of the Truth either by hearing or by reading those sermons. As to the College, they had now fifty-four students preparing for the ministry; and so greatly had the cause prospered, that if they had four hundred instead of fifty-four, they could place them out at once in suitable spheres of labour. These students, in fact, did not wait for what were called promising openings, but preferred rather to go into unlikely places, where their efforts might be blessed. Referring to the liberality with which the College was supported, he stated the case of a lady subscriber, who, on coming into the possession of considerable property, offered to support at her own cost a minister in her locality, and allow him to preach in her own drawing-room till he found a congregation, when she would build him a chapel. During the first six weeks of this year £600 had been subscribed towards the College, and he had no doubt that if they had faith enough to double the number of students, the funds would be forthcoming. They received a great many one-pound notes from Scotland—some of them, he thought, must come from Presbyterians,

because there were not nearly so many Baptists in Scotland as they had received one-pound notes. Some young men who had attended their other classes at Scottish universities came to his college to complete their theological course, and some came even from the colleges in America, so that he felt greatly encouraged in his work.

Mr. Spicer characterised the whole thing as unparalleled. There was no other minister, either in London or the provinces, who would have liked to be published to such an extent as Mr. Spurgeon had been. A Churchman who had not seen the Tabernacle had been encountered, and the advice given to him was, "If you wish to have your mind enlarged, go: you little know what is done there."

Many other speeches were made, the most interesting being those by James Grant, of The Morning Advertiser, and Dr. Campbell, who, as champions of the cause which Spurgeon represented, were regarded at the Tabernacle as two of his chief friends. The former said that public speaking was not his vocation; and had he known that he would be called upon for a speech, the probability was that he would have remained in his editorial quarters in Fleet Street. When the tongue of the popular journalist became unloosed, however, he said some good things:—

"It may not be known to anyone here that I was the first person connected with the newspaper press who made reference to Mr. Spurgeon. Since that time I have had very great pleasure in frequently referring to his public ministrations as well as to his public works, and no one rejoices more cordially than I do in all the success which has attended him. Mr. Spurgeon has referred to various quarters from whence he had received most gratifying evidence of the good his works have been productive of; and only the week before last I received a communication from a person in London, educated for the Church of England, in which he spoke of the very signal service he had received from a sermon of Mr. Spurgeon's. I know from various quarters that the printed sermons have got into places where very few of us would ever imagine, where the persons have been educated in all the fashionable pursuits of the world, where the Gospel was altogether unknown; and from my own knowledge I know that in many instances persons who have read those sermons have been led to abandon their evil ways. Some time ago the daughter of an Archbishop being recognised by a friend in the Tabernacle, and feeling that she had no right inside a Dissenting place of worship, put her hand to her lips as much as to say, 'Don't say I was here.'" When the turn came round for Dr. Campbell to speak, that veteran was loudly cheered as the hero of the evening; and this was not only on account of his private and public worth, it was the manner in which those assembled expressed their satisfaction at his success in what the chairman called "bearding the lion in his den," in connection with an action for libel against a leading weekly paper. For reasons best known to the proprietor, this journal manifested a strange kind of dislike to Spurgeon, while Grant and Campbell were hardly more favoured. Campbell took the bull by the horns, however, and in a suit for libel won £50 damages, an application for a new trial being unsuccessful. It was on account of this victory that the audience cheered the name of Campbell, and repeated their plaudits when the old journalist rose from his seat. In the course of his speech he showed that his neighbour of the Advertiser "did not exactly do justice to himself. The truth is," it was added, "he was the first of our public writers to sound the tocsin, to blow the trumpet, and to announce that there was a young prophet among us." The doctor confessed to having been one of the last of the London ministers to become reconciled to Spurgeon's methods. He then showed in what sense the young pastor was an innovator:—

"There was no preaching in... great public edifices till Mr. Spurgeon went to Exeter Hall; but now people, both Churchmen and Dissenters, are eager to imitate him. Deans and chapters and bishops and clergy are all imitating him; and as if the great cathedral were not enough, they actually go to Exeter Hall; nay, they rush to the very theatres. All this, whether for good or for evil, undoubtedly originated with Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Is that nothing? Why, it is a mighty thing. This unpretending, humble, but gifted youth, who came from the country, this lad with the little basket and the 'barley loaves,' to use a phrase supplied us by the Holy Book, has set all, from the Bishop of London downwards, in motion. All Mr. Spurgeon's movements have been new; the form and character of this stupendous structure are new; his style of talking is new; his style of praying is new; his style of preaching is new; everything is new—and there is something else that is new—the idea of preaching and printing a weekly sermon. That never entered the head of anybody; but then, next to that in novelty and wonder, is the assembly this evening to celebrate the five-hundredth sermon. Why, Steele with his Tatters, Addison with his Spectators, and Johnson with his Ramblers and Idlers, were all little men compared with this stripling. The sale of their papers was limited to London, while Charles H. Spurgeon has supporters throughout these Isles and all over the world. For a time he was in mighty favour with the States of the South; but they discovered at last that he was not to their liking, that he was too much the friend of the slave, and then cursed him as much as they had blessed him before. They have a mighty gift of cursing. They burnt his sermons from the time that they discovered his principles, and there was an end of the sale among the Southerners, as you have heard. They will come to their senses by-and-by." This little festival, at which Mr. Spurgeon's publishers were the hosts dispensing hospitality to a choice circle of supporters and admirers, was talked about and written about in a way which at least testified to the preacher's unique popularity. One weekly journal which never showed anything save hostility to Spurgeon thus referred to the celebration:—

"It appears that Mr. Spurgeon is gradually declining the comic business of which he has proved himself so great a master. The publication of his five-hundredth printed sermon was celebrated on Tuesday evening by a sort of festival at the Tabernacle. Many hundreds of people were collected by the attraction of tea and speeches at a shilling a head, or speeches simple without any charge. It would not be just to say that those who did not pay for tea got milk-and-water, for no enemy would venture to call Mr. Spurgeon's speaking weak, and several of Mr. Spurgeon's young men performed creditably, considering their inexperience. The objects of the meeting were: first, the consumption of tea and cake; secondly, to hear Mr. Spurgeon recount his own rise and progress as a preacher; thirdly, to promote the collection of a fund for the support of the College which he has established for training ministers; fourthly, to give some of the pupils of that College an opportunity of exercising their powers of public speaking; and lastly, to combine with these more serious exercises a little of that jocosity which seems requisite to maintain the popularity of the Tabernacle. The history of Mr. Spurgeon's ministration was traced by one of his admirers through the volumes of his five hundred sermons. It would be superfluous to criticise Mr. Spurgeon's conduct in presiding at a meeting while this elaborate compliment to his abilities and success was being read; because it is evident that if he were a man of sensitive delicacy he would not have a Tabernacle to preach in. Mr. Spurgeon's followers are a good sort of people in their way, but it would not be likely to occur to them that there was any impropriety in puffing spiritual commodities. But if Mr. Spurgeon's sermons were to be examined by an impartial critic, it would not be difficult to derive from them a conclusion more flattering to the preacher than to his congregation. The truth

is, that Mr. Spurgeon used methods to acquire popularity which he began to lay aside when he saw that his position was secure. He has gained by extravagance a power and influence which he means to use discreetly, and, having become prosperous, he thinks it time to cease being amusing.... As an example of practical sagacity, let us just observe him trotting out his best pupils before the meeting. He wants to make these young men preachers like himself, and, knowing that public speaking can only be learned by practice, he seizes the opportunity of putting them up to speak to a sympathising audience on a congenial theme. In this respect the Church might possibly learn a useful lesson from the Tabernacle."

It was remarked at this meeting that the idea of printing and publishing a sermon weekly was a new idea which never entered the head of anyone before; but as was pointed out, the late Joseph Irons, of Camberwell, issued through Mr. Collingridge, of The City Press office, a discourse weekly from June 4, 1848, till the preacher's death.

Some interest was shown by Mr. Spurgeon in the Surrey Mission, a society which had for its object the spread of the Gospel in the county. On April 16 we find the pastor preaching on behalf of this cause at Union Chapel, Brixton. There earnest evangelists were already employed, and the committee, being greatly encouraged by their past efforts, were hoping to engage others for service in distant parts of the county. When he accepted the joint-editorship of The Baptist Magazine, Mr. Spurgeon discontinued his letters to the Transatlantic journal The Watchman and Reflector, but during the year 1863 that correspondence was resumed. A letter which appeared in April contained some personal allusions which show what methods were adopted in answering the slanders of enemies:—

"I have a good friend whose common sense is of the richest kind, and I have frequently heard him observe that it is a great mercy that bad men are allowed to use ill-language. 'For then,' says he, 'I know what they are and how to deal with them.' If lions could bleat like lambs, they would be far more dangerous. The rattle of a rattlesnake is a useful appendage, for it sounds a warning to the unwary. Every man, then, after his own order. It should be very shallow wisdom to make all men speak by one rule, or to induce them to adopt a language which is not in harmony with their hearts.

"Pardon me, friendly readers, if I here digress a little. You will excuse me if ever you have been the subject of the same provocation. Continually am I assailed with accusations from every quarter, bringing to my charge words I never uttered and deeds I have never dreamed of. From the first day till now I have never answered a slander. I have seen my best motives impugned, my holiest aspirations ridiculed, and my most disinterested actions calumniated, and hitherto I have held my peace. The silence which at first was one of moral courage, now assumes a tinge of contempt. 'I am crucified unto the world, and the world is crucified unto me.'

"Its loudest censures are almost as powerless as thunders in a dead man's ear, and its praises have even less effect upon me. There is no love lost between me and a world which despised Christ. Let it speak ill of me, for I have good cause to say far worse of it than it of me."

Then comes a passage concerning John B. Gough, which will remind us that at this time Spurgeon was not a teetotaller, and that the popular Temperance advocate did not speak of him in the kindly strain that was characteristic of after days:—

"I have turned aside from copying from the dear companions of my study, to write out of my own heart, because, singularly enough, a paper has reached me since I have written the last extract, containing a most cowardly and undeserved attack upon me by Mr. Gough, the temperance orator. I will not be tempted even by so urgent a case to turn aside from my fixed rule. I had always honoured Mr. Gough as a great and good man, far removed from any suspicion of falsehood, and equally clear of the folly of attacking God's ministers in order to defend his opinions. I imagined that he knew too well the cruelty of slander to spread a libel against another. I had supposed, also, that he was a gentleman, and better still, a Christian, who esteemed the cause of religion even more highly than that of teeotalism. We live to learn, and there is some learning which costs us bitter grief and the deepest sorrow. When my tongue knows how to speak evil of my fellow-labourer's character, let it rot from my mouth. If I have a cause near to my heart which cannot be defended without slander, perish the cause, even though my heart break from the disappointment.

"Friends, let us leave this personal matter, for I am half inclined to put this letter into the fire even now, and would do so but that the lesson may be useful to us. Let us believe nothing against God's people unless the testimony be ample and decisive, for there are ever these about us to whom it is sport to do mischief. We have been harshly judged; let us not commit the same sin, but ever rest assured that there is real grace upon the earth, and far more of it than some would have us believe." This was the kind of rebuke which Gough would be able to lay to heart, and although many years were to elapse before the preacher would accept the principles of the teetotal champion, the day ultimately came when Gough and Spurgeon were good friends, and when costly presents were exchanged. The lecturer once sent the pastor a magnificent gold-headed walking-stick, to which a Clapham burglar unhappily took a fancy; and I was at the Tabernacle when a beautifully bound set of Spurgeon's Sermons was presented to "the most extraordinary of English orators," as Gough was called by his more gushing admirers. On April 15 Mr. Spurgeon, accompanied by his wife and sons, paid his annual visit to Dr. Campbell, and preached twice on behalf of the Whitefield Tabernacle Auxiliary of the London City Mission. The party at dinner was a brilliant one, and the day was long remembered by the veteran editor as one of the happiest of his life. George Smith, then the well-known pastor at Poplar, was present, and as a good conversationalist did much to enliven the occasion. Even more attractive in regard to the reminiscences he was able to give of other days, was Thomas Jackson, who in his time had served the Wesleyan body as President of the Conference, as Principal of Richmond College, and as editor of many denominational works. This "father" among his own people held Mr. Spurgeon in great respect, and though he was an Arminian in the company of Calvinists, he got on very well. The crowd was so great in the evening at the chapel that the outer gates had to be closed to keep the people back. The aged Wesleyan leader made one of the congregation, and it so happened that the sermon was a decidedly Calvinistic one, powerful throughout, and peculiarly searching in certain passages. When the friends met after the service, the old Methodist remarked in kindly tones to the young pastor—"If I had heard you sixty years ago, I should have preached better." One friend was of opinion that Spurgeon felt this compliment, for the Wesleyan patriarch was so well pleased with the appeals to the unconverted which he had heard that he meant all he said. As host, Dr. Campbell himself was perhaps the best pleased of the party. He looked at a matter like this from a thoroughly Catholic standpoint. "The God of love and mercy blessed, and blessed equally, both Whitefield and Wesley, and it ill behoves their followers to reproach or unchurch each

other. It is a proof that both have 'the root of the matter' in them, that both 'hold the head,' and that both embrace the Lord Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King."

Chapter 49: A Visit to Holland

Chapter 49.

A Visit to Holland A Night at Sea—Landing at Rotterdam—At the Hague—Interview with the Queen—Preaching Services—At Amsterdam—Utrecht—The Manchester Examiner —Spurgeon at Exeter Hall—Pure Literature—Paxton Hood's Lectures at the Pastors' College.

On Tuesday, April 21, Mr. Spurgeon left England for a tour in Holland, "not with a view to rusticate, after a year of Herculean labours, among the locks, docks, and smiling gardens of that moist and rheumatic region," as one journal remarked, "but to preach twice or thrice a day throughout the great towns and cities, and to address the students in the university." This visit to the land of his ancestors afforded some satisfaction to the pastor's friends; for the Low Countries were understood to have come down in a religious sense until the people were enveloped in the darkness of Egypt. "Out of its 1,500 parish pulpits, in little more than 100 is the Gospel trumpet sounded," we find it stated. Hence, it was thought to be "a matter of great moment that the truth should be proclaimed, as Mr. Spurgeon is wont to proclaim it, throughout the length and breadth of the country."

Thirty years ago the communication between England and Holland was far from being so perfect as is the case at present, and those who sailed from the Thames for the Continent frequently suffered from the discomforts of the voyage. Mr. Spurgeon and his friends set sail at midday on Tuesday, the 21st; and after "a very rough and boisterous voyage, though an unusually rapid one," they arrived at Rotterdam in a sickly condition at six a.m. on the following day. In that old town they were cordially welcomed by friends who were looking out for them, of this number being Mr. Davis, the English pastor, and some of his church officers. After breakfast they went to the church in which a service was to be held when some other towns had been visited; and after a short prayer-meeting a start was made for The Hague, which was reached early in the afternoon. In that historical place the distinguished London preacher was met by Baron van Wasnaer, who entertained him at his mansion during the visit. This official, who held a high place at the Court, was a genuinely pious man, and his wife was in full sympathy with him; and to have his acquaintance was a great advantage. On their arrival at the house, the visitors found themselves in one of the most stately residences of the city: the rooms were magnificent, and in one of the saloons, on that same evening, Mr. Spurgeon gave an address to 120 persons from the words, "We have seen the Lord." It was said that religion was fashionable in Holland at that day, and that as it was a reproach rather than otherwise not to make a profession, hypocrisy was common. In a plain but forcible manner the necessity of personal and genuine godliness was set forth; and one who was present said he believed that the Word was with power to many hearts. After the service the people lingered about the saloon, now offering words of welcome to the young English pastor, and then offering congratulations on what he had been able to do. Spurgeon was already quite popular among the Dutch; for through a translation his sermons, as we have seen, were already read in all directions. On Thursday, April 23, there was service in the King's Church at two o'clock;

and the Queen would have been present but for the illness of her son. The Princesses were in their places, however, as well as others from the Court, and as these appear to have understood English, they all, as one present remarked, "for once in their lives heard the Gospel fully and faithfully preached." One who was present describes the service:—

"Mr. Spurgeon was mightily helped. His text was from 1Pe 5:12, 'This is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.' It was like a great swivel gun, made to turn every way, and aim at all deceivableness of unrighteousness. He spared no powder, no shot, but went on demolishing all their refuges of lies till they were left desolate and unsheltered before God. Then he preached Christ, showed them their only refuge, pleaded with them for their souls' salvation as if it were for his own life, and finished by urging them to self-examination by picturing the awful result of deception in so momentous a matter. There were many tears from many eyes. May the Lord grant that there may have been many a broken heart." In the evening, Baron van Wasnaer had another assembly at his mansion; and before a brilliant assembly of many of the chief personages of Holland, Mr. Spurgeon spoke for an hour and a half on the opening words of Psalm xxiii. Of this address the correspondent already quoted, says:—

"It was very sweet: he spoke as he sometimes does, calmly, gently, with a persuasiveness which melts the heart. Said one lady to me, 'This is like dew after a thunderstorm; that was a terrible sermon this morning.' He gave us pictures of Eastern life among the shepherds and their sheep, showed us the fond ones who kept close to the shepherd and fed from his hand, and said that if we were sheep, we had the privileges of guidance, provision, and protection; and our duties were obedience, trust, and love." The Dutch audience were thoroughly charmed with their English visitor; and the gratitude of the pious among them was very manifest. While blessings on the preacher were generally invoked, there came from every direction requests that he would come again to The Hague. On Friday morning, April 24, Mr. Spurgeon's attendance at the royal palace was commanded, and he had an interview with the Queen of over an hour's duration. At noon the party left for Leyden, celebrated for its university, which was founded in honour of the manner in which the citizens held out while besieged by the Spaniards in 1574, when 6,000 persons died of famine and pestilence. Spurgeon here held a service in the spacious Church of St. Peter, and the professors and students were present in great force; the discourse was founded on the words of Christ, "I am the way." When he left the church at two o'clock, the great English preacher appeared to be more than satisfied with his adventure, for the smiles which lit up his face told of joy in the heart. "The Lord gave me great power in preaching," he said to his friends, who. were equally gratified. The preacher thoroughly realised the characteristics of those who made up so large a proportion of the congregation, He said, "I preached very boldly, ridiculing their new philosophy, and exposing their errors, but very simply setting before them the Cross, and warning them against knowing anything among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

Amsterdam, famous for its wonderful harbour and magnificent royal palace, was reached on Friday night. On Saturday morning a sermon was given to a densely crowded congregation at the Mennonite Church, and in the evening another service was held at the Dutch Reformed Church. On Sunday there were two more services, in the morning at the Scotch Presbyterian Church of Mr. M'Braith, and in the evening at the Dutch Church of Pastor Schwartz. A correspondent who accompanied Mr. Spurgeon said:—

"These four sermons in Amsterdam have caused quite a commotion there. Rich and poor, old and young, Dutch and English, are there alike enthusiastic in their joy. Such a reception as Mr. Spurgeon has met with in Holland is, I should think, rarely enjoyed. Everywhere his presence has been hailed with rapture, and the people seem to feel that the Lord has indeed sent him among them to do a great and special work. Many a fervent blessing has he received from the poor. They read his translated sermons, and get good from them, and then, though they cannot understand his language, they come just to gladden their hearts by a look at the man whose printed words have comforted, refreshed, or edified them. One peasant-woman, at the door of the Dom-Kirk at Utrecht, caught his hand, and with intense emotion said (in Dutch, of course)—'Oh, Mr. Spurgeon, God bless you! If you had only lived for my soul's sake, you would not have lived in vain. God bless you!' So from the Queen upon the throne to the humble peasant, God has given him favour in the sight of all the people." The party left Amsterdam on Monday, April 27, and reached Utrecht in the afternoon, the University, the Cathedral, and the pleasant gardens of the environs having an attraction on the one hand, while the manufactures had an interest of their own on the other. Spurgeon had come with his message of peace to a town which was remarkable for its foundry for cannon-balls. An hour after his arrival the preacher was in the pulpit of the Cathedral, and here also professors and students from the University attended in force to hear what he had to say. The audience was immense, and representative of the people of all classes. In Utrecht, Mr. Spurgeon was the guest of Baron van Boetyclace, who in the evening gave a reception, at which between one and two hundred persons were present, all of whom were supposed to understand English. All of these had come for an address, and they were privileged to listen to one of two hours' duration on the words, "I have given thee all them which sail with thee." At the close the expressions of approval were many, and they came from every direction. "I am more and more astonished at the spirit of hearing which seems poured out on the people of Holland," remarked one friend who was present. "They seem to thirst, to pant after the living water; their souls long for the pure simple Gospel, but their preachers give them instead Rationalism, and well-nigh starve them to death." The next stage was to Rotterdam, of which Erasmus was a native, and which next to Amsterdam is the greatest centre of commerce in Holland. The round of visits arranged for was now completed: the preacher had arrived at the port where he had landed a week before. Several services were arranged to be held in this city, as well as some gatherings in private houses, ministers and others being invited to attend. This was in all respects a striking journey, and no one was more surprised than Mr. Spurgeon himself at the size of the congregations and the enthusiasm of the people. Although the May meetings were in progress when the preacher returned, the tour excited considerable interest in England. In the course of a leading article a provincial daily paper said:—

"Mr. Spurgeon has recently made a short tour in Holland. Merely as a tourist in search of the picturesque he would probably not have selected a country without mountains, trees, or springs, but he went there in the exercise of his calling as an eloquent preacher of the Gospel, and had reason to be abundantly satisfied with his reception. The event is singular in its way, but withal unimportant, and we should not raise it above the dignity of small type were it not that the incidents of this preaching tour are rather startling to English prejudices. Everybody knows that Mr. Spurgeon belongs to almost 'the straitest sect of our religion.' He himself, of course, would trace his ecclesiastical lineage to the days of the Apostles, but his pretentions lack the visible seal of sacerdotal rank and Act of Parliament orthodoxy. In short, he belongs to a class of tolerated

personages usually known as 'Dissenting ministers.' Measured by success he is the first preacher of the day, and those who include character and motive in their estimate of a Christian minister will find all possible suspicion as regards Mr. Spurgeon dispelled when they learn his incessant labours, his unwearied zeal, and his pecuniary disinterestedness. Yet, who can doubt that if it was announced to-morrow that he had been permitted to preach within the walls of any consecrated edifice in England, the most tremendous consequences would follow? The preacher's voice would do for our venerable Establishment what the celebrated rams' horns did for Jericho. Its hoary walls would fall down flat, crushing to death a host of beadles and bell-ringers, and disclosing to view a helpless host of mitred bishops and portly deans, rending their lawn robes, and howling over the day of conquest and profanation. We cannot for a moment suppose that Archdeacon Denison would survive such a catastrophe; but if he did, it would only be to end his days in pious solitude or to grasp his pilgrim staff and march off to Rome. We need not add that a fatal blow would be struck at the religious sensibilities of the nation, and that ten thousand pulpits would re-echo to terror-stricken audiences the voice of weeping lamentation and woe."

After giving a brief account of the tour itself, the writer goes on to take a more optimistic view of religion in Holland than the English preacher himself held, and a contrast is drawn between the Low Countries and England in regard to Protestantism:—

"Mr. Spurgeon gives, as well as might have been expected, a rather cheerless view of Dutch orthodoxy. 'Holland,' he says, 'is fifty years ahead of England in infidelity.' We are sorry to hear this statement, and we are tempted to fancy that his oratorical labours left him insufficient leisure for forming an accurate opinion, since it must be admitted that if the Dutch are fifty years ahead of us in infidelity, they are a couple of centuries ahead of us in Christian charity. It is not given to any man to be at once a fervid preacher and a calm and accurate critic of the tendencies of other minds. Certainly the immense crowds which followed him in the principal towns of Holland proved anything but a state of religious apathy, and if the tree is to be known by its fruits, Mr. Spurgeon must admit that the Dutch stand the test uncommonly well. But we do not care to dwell upon this point. Our purpose in referring to the subject at all is to hold up before the eyes of the Protestant public in England the singular contrast which Dutch Protestantism presents to ours. We sometimes fancy that we enjoy a monopoly of 'civil and religious liberty.' We never tire of felicitating ourselves upon the triumphs of freedom, as if nowhere else in Europe was the same unfettered scope permitted to the manifestation of religious conviction. We pass no judgment upon this complacency. Perhaps we are better Christians than the Dutch, and our way is more excellent than theirs, but it is also worth while to ask whether or no this is really the case, and at all events the contrast is instructive. Amid the fierce sectarianism of this country, religious people absolutely make fools of themselves if they chance to light upon some little humble flower of Christian charity. If the Archbishop of Canterbury shook hands with a Dissenting minister, the great event would forthwith have the run of all the papers, and provoke the fiercest denunciations in some section of the Press; and if a Dean just popped into a Methodist prayer-meeting, there are thousands who would set him down as worse than Colenso. The excellent Bishop of Melbourne once visited the dying bed of a distinguished Independent minister, and offered prayer with his family. It was a glorious prodigy of Christian sentiment; a sure sign of the millennium. A Dissenting minister in London preached a sermon on the marriage of the Prince of Wales, and having been induced to print it, he sent copies to Her Majesty and the Prince, who graciously accepted them. A

denominational journal thought it worth while to chronicle this pleasing fact, and to moralise upon it as showing the immense advance we have made in late years in something, it is hard to say what, unless it be a sense of common politeness at the British Court. Yes, it is added, this sermon actually bore on its title page proof of its 'Nonconformist origin,' and yet it was not flung back in the face of the sender, as happened to an eminent Nonconformist divine under similar circumstances twenty years ago! It must, no doubt, be very grateful to a minister to have a copy of his sermon accepted by the Queen. He is justified in telling it to his wife, or explaining to his children the honour conferred upon him, or even perhaps in making a note of it in the family Bible, just to let his descendants know that they had a distinguished ancestor; but to inform the world that the loyal offering was not disdainfully rejected, and to parade it as a proof of wonderful liberality, makes us painfully aware how deeply the iron of State Churchism has pierced the soul of English manliness and self-respect. The process is quite natural. Preference leads to patronage and servility; assumption on one side provokes flunkeyism in the weaker natures on the other. We don't envy for Dissenting ministers the honour of being invited to Court, and it is not a matter of transcendent importance that they should be allowed the run of the Cathedrals. But it is a matter of some moment that Englishmen should become wiser, less prejudiced, more appreciative of mutual differences, more proficient in the graces of Christian charity. It is a matter of some moment that some of the many walls of partition which fence class from class, and make us strangers and aliens to one another in our own land, should be broken down, and the great elements of Christian character, wherever found, be recognised as superior to clashing doctrines. All this pertains to the growth of the nation in solid virtue and the development of the Church in honesty, manliness, vigour, and breadth." The effect of this tour was so exhilarating that the pastor felt stronger and more refreshed when he returned than when he set out. Some references were made to the subject at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on Sunday morning, May 3. At the annual meeting of the Religious Tract Society at Exeter Hall on the following Friday, Mr. Spurgeon was among the speakers. Some allusions were made to Christian union, as it had been understood, and as it was understood and practised at that time. The duty of putting good doctrine into all publications intended to diffuse the Gospel was then insisted upon by Mr. Spurgeon. The day, he said, had happily gone by already when it was thought necessary to talk much about Christian union, because it had been realised. It used to be thought something like the "Happy Family" on Waterloo Bridge to see ministers of different denominations met together on the same platform. They had now learned to see this to be their duty, and to feel that when they had done all in this matter they were unprofitable servants, that they ought to have loved each other long ago, and even now far better than they did. There was still "one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church"—and that Church was not loose in its creed. It had a creed as firm as if it were of cast-iron, and could no more be removed than the granite foundations of the globe; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, seen most plainly by us around the cross where the bleeding Saviour offers himself a sacrifice for sin. These truths constituted the warp and the woof of the Christian's creed; they felt that they could not disbelieve them, could not be Christians if they did not hold them fast, especially those truths about Jesus, of whom they could always say, "We cannot be right in the rest unless we think rightly of Him." But there were some rising up who objected to doctrinal preaching. It was not necessary, they said, in these days: practice, and perhaps a little experience, but no doctrine. But really, if you take away the doctrine, you have taken away the backbone of the manhood of Christianity—its sinew, muscle, strength, and glory. These men reminded him of

Philip when he wished to enslave the men of Athens, and would have them give up their orators. Demosthenes replied, "So said the wolves; they desired to have peace with the shepherds, but the dogs must be first given up—those pugnacious dogs that provoked quarrels. The wolves would lie down peaceably with the lambs, and delight themselves with the sheep, if only those bad-tempered dogs were hanged." So perfect peace was promised among the sects if doctrines were given up; but, depend upon it, these were after all the preservation of the Church, which without them would soon cease to be. These men said they loved the house; they would not touch the furniture in it, not they; they loved the doors thereof, and the floor thereof, and especially the table thereof, and the cupboard thereof. They would by no means touch those things—they only wished to remove certain stones that projected a little above the floor; they would be quite content to get rid of the foundations, to have them torn up and sold for old bricks. His reply was, "We don't see it, gentlemen; we cannot agree to the terms." The men and their communications were known, and the school in which they had studied; and they were not ignorant of his devices who is the master and head of the school. "Burn the charts; what's the use of the charts? What we want is a powerful engine, a good copper-bottomed ship, an experienced captain, and strong, able-bodied mariners. Charts! Ridiculous nonsense—antiquated things; we want no charts; destroy every one of them. Our fathers used to navigate the sea by them; but we are wiser than they were. We have pilots who know every sand and sunken rock, who can smell them beneath the water—or by some means find them out. Men know what's o'clock nowadays; we don't want chronometers." So they put out to sea without the charts; and looking across the waters, they might expect to witness the shipwreck of those who thought themselves so wise, and fear sometimes lest they should hear their last gasp as they sank and perished. Supposing themselves to be wise, they became fools. The cry of those who were opposed to sound teaching was "Liberty;" but that did not mean liberty of conscience in the proper sense; it was the liberty to insist that black was white—a kind of freedom which was once illustrated by a diverting occurrence which took place in Ratcliff Highway. A man had a menagerie of wild beasts; and the elephant, fumbling about with his trunk one night, got hold of the peg which fastened his den. So he got out, and, being a member of the Liberation Society, he proceeded to let out the lions, and the wolves, and the jackals. There was soon a terrible noise in the back yard; and the master, waking up, rushed in among the animals with his whip, and soon had them back in their respective quarters. But for his promptness there might have been great mischief done to the people of London. The teachers of false doctrine were playing the part of the elephant, and the lies which they were letting loose upon society must be hunted back to their dens. There must be no liberty to pull up the buoys and to destroy the lighthouses of the Christian Church. It was an entire mistake to suppose that the people did not want doctrine; for the unlettered folks were just those who would receive it best and love it most. An illustration of this had lately happened to himself. Staying at the house of a lady in Holland, he was requested to speak to the three female servants, who had been interested in the reading of his sermons. He asked them in the course of the conversation which sermons they had liked best. One mentioned a discourse on the doctrine of election, the second one justification, and the third one on imputed righteousness—all devotional sermons. Depend upon it, if rich people did not want doctrine, the poor did. And observe, the Reformation had never succeeded in any country where its principles had only taken root in the minds of the higher classes. There were several nobles among the martyrs during the Reformation in Spain, but it was short-lived, because the people were not with it. When the sun shone only upon the mountain-tops the day had not fully dawned;

but when the lowest valleys were flooded with its light, then the day had fully risen.

It was pointed out that if the Gospel was to be generally diffused throughout England, it would be necessary to begin low down; but if the people were to be instructed by reading, the reading needed to be made interesting. There were tracts so dry that they resembled chips in porridge, and their stupefying effect insured the reader a sound sleep. Mr. Spurgeon always held that the most effective way of opposing error was to proclaim the truth. Thus, he said on the present occasion, "You may shoot at the man of straw in the cherry tree if you will; but assuredly the best controversy in the world is the preaching of truth." He was also of opinion that Sunday reading was often duller than need be the case; and by way of proving this, he pointed out that the readings for Sundays in Kitto's "Daily Bible Illustrations" were less interesting than those for weekdays. "I see no reason why the highest truth should always be done up dry," he added. "A stroke of humour even in a sermon is not always out of place; but, like a flash of lightning on a dark night, it adds to the general impressiveness and the effect upon the mind." From this it will be seen how well the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle understood the fact that no man could really gain and hold the attention of the multitude unless he succeeded in making his addresses interesting. This was always Spurgeon's aim as a preacher and a platform speaker, and how well he succeeded can be testified by those who listened to him. He also tried hard to get his students to imitate him in this respect, insisting that devotion and hard work would commonly carry a man through; and that genius, even if possessed, would never become a substitute for labour.

Some little time before the breaking up of the College for the summer vacation this year, Mr. Paxton Hood concluded a series of lectures which he had been requested to give to the students. Mr. Spurgeon and the other tutors attended most of these lectures, and expressed themselves as being greatly pleased. The session ended on Friday, July 31, with a meeting at the Tabernacle. "This is my one life's work, to which I believe God called me, and therefore I must do it," said the president on that occasion. "To preach the Gospel myself, and to train others to do it, is my life's object and aim." Only a short time before, one who was converted through reading one of Spurgeon's sermons had come all the way from Ceylon to be admitted into the College, and was not disappointed. Fourteen students also found settlements during the year. At this time, Mr. Spurgeon often preached in the open air, and seemed to delight in the practice. A London friend supplied the late Gawin Kirkham with the following reminiscences:—"In the year 18G3 I was living at St. Ives, Hunts. Hearing that Spurgeon, the young preacher, whose fame was everywhere, was to speak in the open air, my sister desired me to be ready for the driver who was to take me at the appointed time for 7 o'clock service in the summer evening.

"I sat somewhat behind, but where I could plainly see the dark figure and earnest countenance, and the clear voice was well heard all round.

"The portions read were from Numbers 21 and St. John 3; the text, Num 21:8-9. I hear him now, as he said, 'How those mothers would lift their children up and bid them look, and turn their faces toward the serpent. We cannot make our children look to Christ, but we can lift them up and turn their faces hitherward.' The service ended, but it was not forgotten. For many years afterwards I had charge of a mothers' meeting, and the one sentence quoted, if no other, was often repeated.

"I never saw Mr. Spurgeon again until the Sunday morning of October 19, 1879, when being within walking distance of the Tabernacle—or, at least, distance which I did walk—I went with a friend to

hear him. After a time I had a seat in front of the platform, and not very far from it. The preacher entered, facing a mass of living souls—a mighty throng, above and below, every corner full, his students around him, near a small table a chair, on the back of which he laid his hand. Oh! what a different Spurgeon in physique those years had made him, in evident pain all the time he stood: the service proceeded. The hymn—

'So did the Hebrew prophet raise, The brazen serpent high,'

seemed to savour of a past day, but when the portions were read, and the text was given out as Num 21:9, I felt the coincidence to be remarkable. Waiting for the well-remembered sentence to mothers, I was not disappointed, and was able to recognise the whole sermon as the same. At the end of the service, a lady next me hastened to express to me her admiration; when I told her I had heard the same sermon twice, I fear she considered it a poor 'tribute,' for she remarked, 'He does not often preach the same sermon twice.' I replied I thought it was a good feature that he preached the same sermon in the little Huntingdonshire village that he did fifteen years afterwards to the great London congregation in the Tabernacle.

"At the close of the service Mr. Spurgeon told us that that sermon would be the 1,500th in the published series."

Chapter 50: Waterbeach Revisited.--Spurgeon and Ingoldsby

Chapter 50.

Waterbeach Revisited.—Spurgeon and Ingoldsby

Preaching Tours—Waterbeach Chapel burned down—Spurgeon's Visit—Birmingham—The New Zealand Settlers—Spurgeon in "The Ingoldsby Letters "—Weekly Communion—Mr. J. A. Spurgeon removes to London—Scotland revisited—Death of Friends.

After his return from the Continent, during the spring and summer of 1863, Mr. Spurgeon was frequently found away from home, opening new chapels or preaching on special occasions. On Tuesday the 5th of May he again visited the pretty Cambridgeshire village of Melbourne. At such a time the congregation came in from the surrounding country, there was a great tea-meeting, but not as a rule anything very considerable in the way of a collection. The money was not the first thing which entered into the preacher's calculations, however; he accepted no honorarium for his services, and the ingathering of converts into the Church by the preaching of the Gospel was the only reward he sought. On Monday the 1st of June the pastor had the happiness of attending the opening meetings of Wandsworth Chapel, Mr. J. W. Genders, who had been trained in the College, being the pastor. He made an earnest speech on the duty of giving, remarking that the collections of Christian people were as sweet music in the ears of the Lord. Judge Payne was also present, the subject of the indispensable "tailpiece" being the seasonable one of "The glorious first of June." On the day following Mr. Spurgeon preached twice on behalf of the cause, and in addition he and his people sent £100 to the building fund. On the following day he was found at the stone-laying of Walworth Road Chapel, Mr. Howieson, his neighbour, being the pastor. Mr. Spurgeon strongly commended this enterprise, remarking that though he did not believe in salvation by works, he knew that God still poured out His blessing on works which were rightly done. On Monday the 27th of July, Waterbeach presented a holiday-like appearance, the occasion being the laying of the memorial-stones of a new chapel which now occupies the site of the older structure wherein Mr. Spurgeon commenced his pastoral labours. At that date the sanctuary was hardly sixty years old, having been opened in the spring of 1803, and comely as it may look in a picture, it was hardly adapted to modern requirements. After it had stood for nearly sixty years, on April 25, 1862, the building was totally destroyed by fire, and had it not been for the unique associations of the previous decade, the loss need not have been very greatly deplored, a more commodious meeting-house being desirable. As it was, the villagers looked with dismay on the havoc wrought by the fire, and as a member of the congregation afterwards remarked to the writer, they revered the very smoke as it ascended, so closely connected seemed the great London preacher and that odd-looking little chapel. When they thus lost their chapel, the people did the best they could under the circumstances: they made a barn their Sunday meeting-place, and meanwhile the builder of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London supplied plans for a new chapel at a cost of £750, which were generally approved. There was some ambition to erect a chapel worthy of the village and its great memories. On the summer day already mentioned, Mr. Spurgeon went

down to Waterbeach, and in the presence of between one and two thousand people laid the first memorial-stone of the new building, to the fund of which he presented a sum of £120. The silver trowel, which was brought away as a memento of the occasion, was presented by a deacon of the Tabernacle. Deacon King, an old friend of the preacher, offered prayer, Mr. Ewing, then the pastor at Waterbeach, gave an address, and a second stone was laid by Mr. James Toller, a local gentleman. Then followed a great tea-meeting, and in the evening there was the irresistible attraction of a sermon by Spurgeon in the capacious barn to two thousand delighted hearers.

Distinguished Ministers Trained in the Pastors College The preacher's incessant labours at this time prompted Dr. Campbell to remark, "Mr. Spurgeon would seem to be superior to all the frailties of humanity. In point of labour every day is almost a Sabbath, while his Sabbath efforts are such as might well exhaust and lay up for a day or two the strongest man." The pastor of the Tabernacle was compared to Whitefield, for as the great evangelist of the eighteenth century had had to travel far and wide on account of the orphans he undertook to feed, so did his modern successor have to itinerate in the interests of his College. Immense as was the liberality of his own people, he had to seek additional supplies in the distance. Thus we find Spurgeon preaching twice at Birmingham to 6,000 people, the collection of £133 averaging 4fd. each person. Two sermons were also given to 3,400 people at Dudley, where the collection of £112 averaged 81/2d. At Wolverhampton 3,000 gave £91 at two services, the average being 71/4d. Smaller places were also visited in turn, and to such an observer and lover of nature as Spurgeon some of these were of far greater interest than the large manufacturing towns. Take by way of example the visit made at this time to Lymington and the New Forest district:—

"This celebrated preacher paid his long anticipated visit to Lymington on Wednesday last. The event having been duly set before the public in the shape of handbills, posters, notices from the pulpit, etc., one of the largest crowds ever seen in this town gathered from all parts of the neighbourhood to welcome Mr. Spurgeon to Lymington. A monster booth had been erected, capable of holding from two to three thousand persons. It was, however, not large enough to hold the congregation, many of whom had to listen outside the booth to the preacher. The weather was showery, but the people were so determined to hear this remarkable man that the rain was scarcely heeded. Mr. Spurgeon preached in the afternoon and evening, the booth being crammed each time. The appearance of the huge congregations as they defiled out of the tent was very remarkable and striking. We fancy no other man living could create such an excitement in this usually steady-going town. We trust Mr. Spurgeon will pay Lymington another visit, and can assure him he will meet with a cordial and earnest welcome from the public. We are not bold enough to criticise his preaching. His style is peculiarly his own, and is not to be judged by ordinary rules. He is a gifted, earnest, eloquent man—cut out for hard work and plenty of it—and will leave a name behind him when his work is done that will excite the envy of many and the admiration of all. We wish him God-speed." The news which came to hand from time to time respecting the large body of New Zealand settlers on whose behalf the great farewell meeting was held in the Metropolitan Tabernacle must have been somewhat disappointing. "We regret to find that a very serious misunderstanding has occurred between Mr. Brame and his co-trustees," remarked the denominational organ. "The lands in question were sold under the authority of Mr. Brame, who is charged with having secured a Crown grant of them in his own name, while he was understood by the settlers to be acting only as their agent. He, in return, makes large money

claims upon the settlement." This would be a sore disappointment to Mr. Spurgeon, who had shown such interest in the welfare of the emigrants. The deserters from the settlement increased rather than diminished, and the number who remained had gone down to about two hundred. The outlook, nevertheless, was in some respects promising. The Sabbath services were well attended; the sale of intoxicants was prohibited, but there was a lack of good schools. The courage of some had failed on account of the heavy expenses of transit.

About this time, some interest was excited in the portraiture of Spurgeon, as given to the world by a High Churchman in the second volume of "The Ingoldsby Letters." It was manifestly a sin in such a writer, as he ingenuously confessed, to leave his parish church for the sake of repairing to the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The indiscretion, being once committed, however, was repeated, and the visitor was so deeply moved by what he saw and heard that he could not well refrain from giving his impressions to the public. The service commenced at 10.45, and lasted two hours, and half of the time was occupied by the sermon. In regard to this, it is observed, that "it is not so much the absolute length as the unvarying routine, the repetitions, and icy formality of our Church system which renders the usual morning service tedious even to religious persons, and notoriously repulsive to others." The preacher appeared exactly to time, "dressed in a plain frock-coat without any robes or bands;" but it excited no small astonishment when the first hymn was sung to the tune of "God save the Queen." Having no book and no knowledge of the words of the hymn, both mind and tongue were disposed to get into the groove of—

"Confound their politics;

Frustrate their knavish tricks," etc.

So that it was submitted "to the Coryphaeus of that vast assembly whether it might not be in better taste to confine his selection of tunes to such as are commonly applied to words of seriousness." The writer continues:—

"The hymn concluded, Mr. Spurgeon walked to the table, and taking his stand between it and the sofa, opened a large and handsome clasped Bible (the gift, I was told, of the congregation), 'and when he had found a place,' which was on this occasion the latter part of the sixth chapter of Ephesians, he proceeded to read it with a slow and articulate voice, dwelling upon the more impressive passages, which he illustrated by a short extempore comment as he went along. Never did I hear the 'first' or 'second' lesson in our churches delivered with like effect. Often, too often, have I mourned to hear them mangled in the reading, or hurried through as if a secondary portion of the service for the day, and never (as is well known) accompanied by the smallest attempt at exposition, however 'hard to be understood,' or however fertile or profitable instruction for the humbler class of worshippers. Not a word must pass the lips of the orthodox minister—the unfeigned-assent-and-consent-subscriber to our Liturgy—during the time of reading the prayers and appointed lessons of the day, but what is set down for him in the book, and has been so set down for the last two hundred years, and (according to the Bishop of Oxford) will be set down for the next two hundred. If the officiating minister break this rule—if he attempt, for example, on the 26th of next month, upon reading the second lesson for the evening service, to interrupt the course of Scripture by explaining how the feet of a Christian may be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, or his head covered with the helmet of salvation—he renders himself liable to an action for brawling in church, and may be sequestered from his living for as long a period as if he

had been guilty of immorality, or had contravened any of the Thirty-nine Articles of religion.

"This same chapter, or rather a portion of it, explained as he went along by Mr. Spurgeon, was a sermon in itself; and was listened to with profound attention, and I will venture to say, corresponding edification, by all that multitude, who thus drank in the words of the Apostle, made plain and intelligible to the humblest comprehension, at the same time impressed upon all with a fervour and simplicity of illustration worthy both of the matter and object of the writer."

Attention was drawn by the writer to the singing of the second hymn and to the second prayer, which was more special in its character than the first, cases of individuals being mentioned, thus bringing home to each present the value of personal prayer, the Established Church service, with the exception of the Litany, being defective in that respect. Other things are also mentioned; then follows something concerning the preacher himself and the causes of his unique popularity:—

"Meanwhile, I would ask my readers to review calmly what I have written, and to bear in mind that I can have no possible motive in exalting the Conventicle at the expense of the Church; while I would fain have the latter, where it can, take a lesson from the former; as on the other hand, as far as rests with myself, I would see the former amalgamated with the latter by such a relaxation of the terms of subscription as I am persuaded might with safety be undertaken.

"That something is wrong somewhere, when thousands are thus seen to rush Sunday after Sunday (for several years' continuance) to listen to an unauthorised teacher, and to partake of what, without offence, I must designate as a schismatical form of worship, is but too manifest; while the contrast is made more painful by the languid manner in which the ministrations of the Establishment are but too frequently attended, and the vacancies seen along our benches, notwithstanding all the appliances used to induce a cheerful and ready attendance.

"All the learning and piety in the world will not supply the want of a good delivery, and the tact to suit your discourse to the character of your audience. Herein lies the first secret of Mr. Spurgeon's success. He has taken the measure of his congregation's taste and capacity, and adapts himself to it. Like the cunning doctor in Lucretius, he anoints the lips of his cup with honey, and so cheats his patients into swallowing the salutiferous draught. Religion was made agreeable to his hearers, but it is still religion. He makes it apparent both in his preaching and practice that her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.

"The second great cause of Mr. Spurgeon's continued popularity is that he is mighty in the Scriptures. This is his deep well, and he is not sparing of its resources. He draws and draws again as he has occasion, and he does it without forcing. He has carefully studied John Bunyan, and copies him here with considerable skill. Thirdly, he is evidently a man of prayer, and feels therein a hidden source of strength which will not fail him at his need. The same gift which empowers him to pour forth his two extempore prayers in the early part of the service, accompanies him throughout his sermon, and chastens and subdues even the more attractive portions of the discourse. In his lightest illustrations he does not forget the object and the occasion, and thus escapes splitting on a rock that has foundered many a preacher of oratorical powers equal or even superior to his own." So far, the gifts and attainments of the preacher, in this writer's opinion, were sufficiently striking to account for his success; but of course the portraiture would not have been complete without reference to his "full, clear, and melodious voice," which struck most of his hearers in those early

days as one of the preacher's most unique endowments. In connection with his manner in the pulpit, however, there were other things which attracted this shrewd observer's attention:—

"He has, moreover, an accurate and quick ear and an expressive eye, developing in a remarkable degree the organ of language, aided by those of ideality, comparison, gaiety, wonder, veneration, and constructiveness. His manner is agreeable, and he is blest with a large fund of animal spirits and considerable strength. Such are Mr. Spurgeon's natural and acquired qualifications as a preacher, to which he has not disdained to add the great advantages of careful study and long cultivation. He understands, too, the art of concealing his art. He holds himself entirely under control. And if for a moment he appears to give way to the excitement of the topic and allows free rein to his tongue, he still has it under subjection, and returns to a quieter mood without effort and without constraint. His transitions are natural, and pleasantly relieve the outline of his bolder strokes. He is no windy orator, and knows when to pause, when to turn. He does not run either himself or his subject out of breath. His diction, though rapid, is sufficiently choice; his figures well selected and full of meaning. His energy is prodigious, and his earnestness bears all the appearance of sincerity and truth."

Spurgeon had thus recommendations which would have made any preacher popular; but there was something else which had to be reckoned among his peculiar advantages, and which so largely accounted for his standing in the front as the "phoenix of Nonconformity." This lay, the writer unhesitatingly declared, in the freedom of the preacher's position:—

"Mr. Spurgeon neither prays nor preaches in chains. He is unconscious of the sword of his bishop hanging by a hair over his head. He is not, I believe, of the Independent persuasion, but he is independent (notwithstanding) of everything except the favour of his flock, who are worthy of him and he of them. They are mutually fond of one another; exacting and expecting no more than is the due between minister and people. The latter not extreme to criticise; the former not fearful to give offence.

"It is this mutual good understanding which, as it first contributed largely to secure his congregation, now serves to cement it. Meanwhile it should not be forgotten that Mr. Spurgeon possesses the additional stimulus of a remarkably propitious soil for the full development of his genius. His tabernacle stands in a densely peopled district of the middle orders, where the voluntary system will always work to the best advantage; a system which, be its effects what they may (and we are far from advocating it for general adoption), has at least the merit of drawing out and bringing into the foreground all the talent and capabilities of its teachers. Under it a preacher finds his level as surely and almost as quickly as do air and water. No envy depresses him. No nepotism or favouritism keeps him perpetually in the background. Conservatism or Radicalism form no part of his religious profession. He has neither to crawl into favour with his diocesan, nor to set his barometer daily to the level indicated by the public horizon.

"Can the same be said of the 20,000 ministers under the Establishment; and is it, then, surprising that we meet with few or no Spurgeons in the Church? I have heard it remarked by a London physician of extensive practice, that there is no profession in which there is such a waste of power as in the Established Church."

What was the remedy for this state of things? The answer of this writer was, "Let us Spurgeonise the Church." The skill which enabled a preacher to give the Gospel to the people in the most acceptable manner could hardly be supposed to be the possession of only one man: Churchmen as well as Baptists could adopt popular methods. In bygone days Simeon, of Cambridge, had attracted a full congregation: why should he not have imitators of his example? There were a few already; but what would be said if there were to be a Simeon or a Spurgeon in every church? "Let them say what they please, so long as they cannot say, with some show of truth, that while the ministers of the Establishment are idly busy purging away common sense amidst whole acres and furlongs of empty benches, their would-be congregation is being gesticulated away by the fervid eloquence of a Spurgeon, or the ungrammatical nonsense of Mr. Stubbs." The sentiments of this talented author may possibly have found as much sympathy among Nonconformists as in the Establishment itself. The two volumes contained 128 letters which had previously appeared, and three letters were devoted to Mr. Spurgeon. "Men of such a spirit are the bonds of all that is good in the Establishment, and the magnets of all that is good beyond it," said one reviewer. "A thousand men, such as the author of 'The Ingoldsby Letters,' in twenty years would put a new face on the Church of England, and would operate in a manner the most salutary on the spirit of Dissent." A work published in 1863 drew attention to the question of the Lord's Supper, advocating the practice of a weekly celebration, references, by the way, being made to Mr. Spurgeon. As is well known, the Church at the Metropolitan Tabernacle maintained the rule of open communion, while the membership was strictly confined to Baptists. This rule was pretty common in the denomination to which Mr. Spurgeon belonged, while the General or Arminian Baptists on the one hand, and the Strict Baptists on the other, were usually of close communion principles. The book just referred to was not concerned with such controversies, however; the object of the author was to prevail on all the Churches to practise weekly communion. Some references were made to New Park Street Chapel and to the Metropolitan Tabernacle as follows:—

"I may here remark that Mr. Spurgeon had fortnightly communion when in Park Street Chapel, and found nothing inconvenient, much less impracticable, in it, although he had latterly in that place a congregation numbering more than 2,000 persons, and a Church consisting of about 1,000 members. And if Mr. Spurgeon administered for years the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to his large Church in Park Street Chapel once every second week without any inconvenience whatever, the inevitable conclusion to which we must come is, that there can be no admissible excuse on that ground for not commemorating the death of Christ on the first day of every week. Indeed, I have great pleasure in being able to say that I have ground for believing that ere long Mr. Spurgeon will see it to be his duty to institute the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper in his Metropolitan Tabernacle, with its congregation of between 5,000 and 6,000 persons, and members of the Church numbering not much short of 2,500. I fondly trust that my expectations in this matter will be speedily realised, because the fact of weekly communion being established by him would have a powerful influence on other ministers of the Gospel and Churches throughout the land; while the circumstance of weekly partaking of the Supper in the largest place of worship—having also the greatest number of Church members in the world—would prove an unanswerable argument in opposition to those who urge, as their reason for neglecting weekly communion, the inconvenience, if not the impracticability, of dispensing the Sacrament of the Supper weekly in large congregations and Churches." The removal of his brother from Southampton to London during the summer of 1863 would naturally be a matter affording great

satisfaction to Mr. Spurgeon. Sir Morton Peto had erected a handsome chapel in Cornwall Road, Notting Hill, and of this Mr. James Spurgeon accepted the pastorate. The chapel was opened on Wednesday, the 1st of July, and the pastor commenced work immediately afterwards. Among the speeches on that occasion was one by Henry Ward Beecher. who had been present at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on the preceding Sunday morning to hear Mr. Spurgeon's sermon on "The Rainbow."

Another visit to Scotland appears to have been undertaken during the summer; and Sunday, the 9th of August, was passed at Helensburgh at the manse of the Free Church minister, John Anderson. It was not quite a day of rest to Mr. Spurgeon, however; for after preaching in the church in the morning he preached again in the evening in the open air near the railway station. The text of the first sermon was St. John 20:25, "We have seen the Lord;" that of the evening was from the same Gospel—vii. 37: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." As regarded entertainment, Helensburgh was probably at this time the place which Mr. Spurgeon loved best to visit in Scotland; but now he had the additional satisfaction of seeing his son in the faith and "First Student" settled as pastor over the Frederick Street congregation in Glasgow. Mr. Medhurst had accepted that charge only a few months previously, and was doing a work which gladdened the heart of his Chief. Great advances had been made by the Baptist denomination in the city; for we find it stated on good authority that a century before "there was not an individual to be found in Glasgow who avowed his conviction of adult baptism." We find it added, that "when a native of a neighbouring parish had his attention drawn to the inquiry, there was none with whom he could communicate." The individual referred to, Archibald McLean, became a Baptist at the age of thirty in 1763. That being then a hundred years ago, we find that there was some desire to have a centenary celebration. "Dr. Gill has passed away," it was remarked. "Mr. Spurgeon treads in his steps, Mr. Medhurst follows in the rear, and the Baptist friends in the capital of the West gather round him to sustain and support him." From first to last it was a most unusual thing for Mr. Spurgeon to leave his own pulpit on a Sunday in order to preach elsewhere; but this happened on Sunday morning, October 18, when he gave a discourse to his brother's congregation at Cornwall Road Chapel, founded on Deu 1:38, "Encourage him." The people received some excellent advice in regard to their conduct towards their minister, some things being said which were very necessary to put in practice, but which the pastor himself could not have spoken with so much effect. The progress made during the year 1863 appears to have been in all respects satisfactory. The Church at the Metropolitan Tabernacle was rapidly growing in numbers, while the College, which was now seven years old, had a staff of competent tutors and sixty-six students, besides nearly two hundred young fellows in its evening classes. The money for all this enterprise was never wanting; no debt was ever incurred; and the pastor himself always declared that all the necessary supplies came in answer to prayer. George Müller, at Bristol, and Spurgeon, in London, were thus alike in their faith and methods. The students prepared for service readily found openings; forty had already settled, and the applications were more numerous than the men to respond to them. The men who were sent forth were found to be peculiarly successful in breaking up new ground, or in making new spheres for themselves. Thoughts of erecting a college building were now first entertained. What was being effected by certain of the more successful of the former students was already justly regarded as striking evidence of the success of the College; and in the number of his paper which appeared on Christmas Day Dr. Campbell said:—

"As one example, take Mr. Gauge, of Portsmouth. He has laboured there a year. His hearers at first were fifty; in a few weeks nine hundred. To protect those who hold seats, he has been obliged to adopt the ticket system of his metropolitan patron. Not a single sitting is unlet. Many persons go away unable to get in. He has received into Church-fellowship considerably more than a hundred persons, his own converts. Besides an inquirers' class and male and female Bible classes, he has also a preachers' class—that is to say, no fewer than thirty-five men, probably young men, meet him every Saturday night, when he trains them in the art of extempore speech as preachers, which holy art they exercise on Sunday afternoons in the open air." The chapel which was soon afterwards erected was the largest Nonconformist place of worship in the county of Hampshire. There for some years Mr. Medhurst, the "First Student," also laboured, Mr. Gange having succeeded to the pulpit of Robert Hall, at Broad-mead, Bristol, where he still remains. The last day of the year falling on a Thursday, the usual week-night sermon at the Tabernacle was succeeded by a watch-night service. The weather was very wet, so that the attendance was not so large as usual. Those who waited were regaled with refreshments in the rooms below; and at eleven o'clock, when the pastor again appeared on the platform, there was a very large congregation. The address was founded on Heb 3:7, "The Holy Ghost saith to-day." It was, he said, a short text, and he meant to preach from it a short sermon. They were words full of meaning and import to everyone present. They set forth, in the first place, their opportunity. That opportunity was the day of mercy. That day might not be past to them; but they must remember it was "to-day." To-morrow it might be gone, and once passed it was lost for ever. It was very variable in its duration. To some it was seventy years, to others not so many weeks, and to some there might not be seventy minutes. Let them, then, seize it while it was to-day. Then the words implied his importunity. The thought of eternity made him earnest in his entreaties with them to flee to the Saviour, and he concluded by calling upon them to spend the few remaining moments of the year in silent and fervent prayer to that Saviour, that He would hear their cry for mercy and enable them by the Spirit to lay hold upon Him as the only medium through which it could be extended towards them.

According to custom, the people spent a few moments in silent prayer while 1863 passed away and the new year came in.

Among those who died during 1863 were Dr. Reed, the philanthropist, Dr. Raffles, Sir Culling Eardley, and Archbishop Whately. Perhaps the loss which would most affect Mr. Spurgeon, however, was that of Dr. Gaussen, the Geneva professor, whose work on the Plenary Inspiration of Scripture the London preacher afterwards republished as one of the books on this subject which he most valued.

Chapter 51: The Work at the Metropolitan Tabernacle

Chapter 51.

The Work at the Metropolitan Tabernacle

Statistics of Church Work—The College—The Annual Supper—Intellectual and Moral Growth of the Preacher—Success of his Students—Death of Mr. Spurgeon of Stambourne—Walworth Road Chapel—At Exeter Hall—Winslow.

At the opening of the year 1864 we find the Metropolitan Tabernacle spoken of as "that great ecclesiastical wonder," the spiritual influence for good of which was still extending. While he looked upon it with astonishment, Dr. Campbell likened the place to a great healthy tree which was continually extending in every direction. The chapel was no longer a novelty, but it seemed to be ever growing, and were it double the size there would be a congregation to fill it. "The aggregate, with the households it represents, would form a considerable township, requiring, for decent accommodation, well-nigh 3,000 residences," it was remarked. At the rate of increase of Church members which had been going on, it was calculated that the regular communicants would soon exclude the ordinary congregation of outsiders who were attracted. It was supposed that that might occasion some perplexity; but in point of fact Mr. Spurgeon did something to keep the numbers down by encouraging the secession of a body at one time who settled elsewhere to found or revive another interest.

During the year 1863 the number baptised was 311, while 116 were received by letters from other Churches, making a total of members received 427. There were 22 deaths, 50 were dismissed to other Churches, 4 were excluded, and 23 names were removed from the roll for non-attendance, the total number of members being 2,517. The small number of deaths in proportion to the congregation was regarded as something like a phenomenon:—

"How is this to be explained? Only in one way: the mass of the people consist of persons in the prime of life or in its early morning. Nor is this all; the male sex, who in London are the better lives, preponderates to an extent we have never witnessed elsewhere in any regular assembly. But while the vast majority are males, the bulk of them are also younger men, which, we believe, goes some way to account for the absence of the usual mortality, as well as for the moral force which distinguishes the place in everything. It also serves, to some extent, to explain the extraordinary liberality in the way of pecuniary contribution. The power of a mass of men and a mass of women, although their numbers were equal, is not for a moment to be compared, because of the difference of their respective earnings and incomes. But here a question occurs. Whence this mighty gathering of young people? The reply is, we think, obvious: the preacher began a lad, and is still but a young man, with an extraordinary power of fascination over his own class. Youth naturally cleaves to youth. There is also in the place, its associations and employments, an endless attraction, an inexhaustible excitement, which carries all before it. There is about the whole concern a social grandeur, a moral romance, that dazzles, delights, and captivates the rising

generation."

Other characteristics of the congregation were also sufficiently remarkable to such as took intelligent account of them. The general liberality of the people for all purposes was far above the average, and thus beyond what might have been expected. The assembly was a middle-class one, the very rich being as conspicuous by their absence as the very poor. The amount raised in 1868 for all purposes was £7,645 15s. 10d., or something like an average of thirty shillings a sitting.

Because every member who joined the Church was expected to do something in the way of Christian service, the aggregate accomplished was very great. The pastor himself was not only an earnest worker, his enthusiasm appeared to be contagious. Many compared him with Whitefield, who frequently actually commenced preaching at six o'clock; and Cornelius Winter, who lived with the great eighteenth century evangelist, was wont to say, "There was no rest for man or beast after four o'clock in the morning." One of Wesley's comrades also said of him, "While calm and even cool himself, he set fire to everything around him." Spurgeon was regarded as an inheritor of the characteristics of these great leaders. He seemed to understand the art of prompting people to give and of stimulating them to work. It was thought that the wide world contained nothing worthy of being compared with the Metropolitan Tabernacle's system of instrumentality. The golden motto of Methodism was clearly applicable to Spurgeon—"At it, all at it, and always at it." It was evident that the pastor was "alike ready to run a race with John Calvin in doctrine and with John Wesley in practice." The College had, at this time, outlived most of its early difficulties; and those who had at first put down the idea of founding a college without large funds and titled professors as "fanatical and preposterous," found out that their misgivings had been unfounded. The work widened and became more important as it progressed; and it was thought to be not a small wonder in the history of Providence when over £100 a month was put into the Tabernacle collecting-boxes to make good the failure of supplies from the United States. On Wednesday evening, February 10, of this year, Sir Morton Peto presided at what would appear to have been one of the first of the annual suppers on behalf of the College, which have been continued until the present time. In the first instance the feast was wholly given by one friend; but afterwards the cost was subscribed by Mr. Spurgeon himself and one or two others. On this occasion, in 1864, two hundred persons attended and gave £2,000—a striking success when compared with the £500 which had been raised when the publication of the 500th sermon was celebrated. The facts of the year's work, as given in The Morning Advertiser of the time, were regarded as being remarkable. There were seventy students in course of training; and some who had gone out had gathered congregations for themselves, and had managed to get their own chapels erected. One young Jewish convert had undertaken a preaching tour in Poland at the expense of the College; and other things which had been done showed that the managers were hampered by no strait-laced rules. They did whatever promised best to further the gathering-in of the people into the Church. They maintained that they were succeeding in a way which had never been surpassed. As a Pædobaptist, Dr. Campbell was not likely to be over-biassed in favour of the Baptist president's methods; but when he contrasted his own experience with what he saw at Newington, he yielded the palm to Spurgeon:—

"We have ourselves gone through the full University curriculum, half in one and half in another of the national institutions, and we feel bound to say that the system then, however admirable in

other respects, was most defective as it related to the preparation of preachers. It did not admit for a moment of comparison with the method pursued at Spurgeon's College. The last thing that seemed to be thought of was the preacher and the pastor. The exercises in the Divinity Halls, which followed the courses of language, literature, and philosophy in those days, were of small account. When a man had finished his seven or eight years, whether for platform or pulpit labour, or pastoral work generally, whatever might be his talents, or even genius and scholarly attainments, he would have been eclipsed by a large portion of Spurgeon's young men, even at the close of the first year. Allowing for the immense improvements which have been made on all sides since that day, there is still, we feel assured, need of great advancement. Spurgeon has the true idea of the wants of the Church and of the times, and he has fully provided for them. He is not the foe of learning by any means, but he is more the friend of souls. What he deprecates is, not education, but non-adaptation to the work contemplated, and every man of sense and reflection will join him. He does not view the great national establishments as over-educating, but as miseducating the labourer for his field of service. With respect to numbers, the absence of all academic training had, on the whole, been better than a training which only tended to incapacitate a man for preaching. Real ability, sound conversion, fervent zeal, a thorough knowledge of the Word of God, and constant practice in speaking will, in the end, go a great way to make a man a good and an able minister of the New Testament. Such was that prince of commentators, Thomas Scott; such was that prince of epistolary writers, John Newton; such was that prince of polemical authors and genuine theologians, Andrew Fuller; such, too, were Abraham Booth, Adam Clarke, and Richard Watson—men constituting the mighties of the age they lived in."

We also find it remarked at this time that the College which Spurgeon had founded, and which he managed with a success that surprised his friends while it dumfoundered his enemies, was a standing protest against read sermons. The students learned their leader's ways until it was not to be wondered at if they were suspected of unduly imitating him. At all events, they learned to preach without a manuscript, and it was considered that this was so far a gain that it was one of the things which contributed to the preacher's wonderful success. It was impossible to conceive of Spurgeon with a MS.; and it was declared that the use of paper would have reduced his hearers from thousands to hundreds. The ninth volume of the Sermons appeared at this time, and enabled those who were interested in him to take notice of the intellectual and spiritual growth of the preacher, and also to mark the progress of his work. It was already clearly seen that these discourses would be the preacher's greatest and most enduring monument. "Where is the man in England or Europe who preaches a discourse every Sabbath morning throughout the year, which will bear publication every week, and sell in all lands by the million?" it was asked; and then it was added, "He pours out sermons as Shakespeare did plays, apparently as unconscious as the poet was of doing anything at all extraordinary." By some of his more ardent admirers the preacher was thought to be almost past criticism; and so greatly had he improved that the volume for 1863 appeared to be better than any which had preceded it. "It is replete," said this friendly critic, "with truth and love, force and fervour. From the archbishop down to Thomas Blyth, the worthy bargeman, who speaks a word to the weary on Sunday evening, there is not a preacher in the land who may not read and ponder the volume with benefit. Spurgeon was born with a key to the heart of humanity in his hand; and the volume before us shows the marvellous skill with which he turns it. It is interspersed with numerous passages which for power and pathos are equalled by very little, and surpassed by nothing, in the sermonology of the world." A remarkable circumstance in

connection with the Pastors' College is, that many of the men who have achieved the most striking success were students in the early days now under notice. Among these is Frank H. White, who settled at Chelsea, and whose work has for some years been associated with Talbot Tabernacle, Notting Hill. At the outset of his course, Mr. White was pastor at Paradise Chapel, Chelsea, and he was one of the men in whose labours the president of the College showed the greatest interest. It was proposed to erect a new chapel to accommodate a thousand persons at a cost of £3,500; and when a meeting was convened to further that object, Mr. Spurgeon wrote:—

"My dear friend, Mr. Frank White, has worked hard in that inaccessible place so blunderingly called Paradise Walk; his ministry has been blessed to the conversion of many; but he now sees what I have long seen, the imperative necessity of leaving Paradise and walking elsewhere—an emigration which, I trust, will be for the good of thousands. The Church at Paradise Walk is very small, and quite unable to erect a structure such as the denomination requires; but with the help of Christian friends the task will be accomplished. I shall give Mr. White my most earnest aid, and trust that all lovers of Jesus will do the same. The edifice will be of such a character that I may safely guarantee that no money will be wasted either in expensive ugliness or trifling ornament."

Mr. White cheered the heart of his Chief by advancing to far greater things than might have been looked for in those days. In due time he became the recognised Remembrancer of the College, and as such, at each successive annual Conference, he gave an account of the collections which had been made by the Churches during the year on behalf of the institution.

Mention may here be made of Mr. James Cubitt, pastor of the church at Thrapston, Northamptonshire, who assisted as tutor in the College for over two years, commencing with the summer of 1861. Health failing, he retired for a time from active service; but disease had made such inroads into his constitution that he passed away at the age of fifty-five. On Friday, the 12th of February, 1864, the venerable James Spurgeon, of Stambourne, passed away at the age of eighty-seven years. After the afternoon service at the chapel on Sunday, February 21, the remains of the late pastor were buried in the adjoining graveyard, thirty children and grandchildren of the deceased standing around the grave. Mr. Spurgeon does not appear to have been of the number; but at the Metropolitan Tabernacle he preached from St. Mat 10:22, "Enduring to the end," and paid a glowing tribute to his grandfather's memory.

Born on Michaelmas Day, 1776, James Spurgeon, of Stambourne, was almost a nonagenarian at the time of his death. The Spurgeons appear to have been a long-lived race, and from this, and also from the fact that former pastors of the Tabernacle church had held their office till old age, it was inferred that C. H. Spurgeon's pastorate would also be a long one. Like Gill and Rippon successively, the young pastor of Waterbeach had been first asked to preach at the age of nineteen, and having commenced like the veterans of the past, it was fondly hoped that he would finish like them. "It is not decreed that we can know of certainty," we find it remarked, "but it seems both possible and probable."

Some account of James Spurgeon, of Stambourne, has already been given; but it may be added here that his father, Clement Spurgeon, was a cane-reed maker of Halstead, who gave his sons the best education possible under the circumstances—James remaining at school until he was sixteen. At the date of his death in 1864, The Wesleyan Times gave some particulars which may be quoted, as showing the condition and surroundings of the Spurgeon family a century ago:—

"Some difficulty presented itself at that time as to the best way of disposing of the youth, his father not being anxious to put him out as an apprentice; but a friend of the family recommended him to a gentleman at Finchingfield to learn the combined business of grocer and linendraper. Here, as far as worldly circumstances went, he was favourably situated, meeting with great kindness and consideration from the family in which he was placed. But the young man was not happy, there existed within him a feeling of void, a consciousness of something wrong, which required prompt and decided attention. Religion had no place in their dwelling, and even the form of family worship was not observed. In a state of mind far from happy, he heard of the illness of his father, after he had been three years in the general store at Finchingfield; and in 1795 he left the place, glad that even so sad a dispensation as the failing health of his father had interposed to bring about the change he desired. He had given his heart to God in very early life whilst attending the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Ball at Halstead.

"Remaining at home till Christmas of the same year, he had anxiously prayed that whatever opening for him might next be made, he should be placed in a religious family; and his prayer was answered. Mr. Rudkin, of Coggeshall, Essex, engaged his services in his business, and there he found himself surrounded with all the blessings of a God-fearing family. These, however, were considerably restrained by the low religious condition of the Independent church which the family attended at Coggeshall. The old minister had run his course of useful labour, and young Spurgeon heard the old man on only one Sabbath, the pulpit being afterwards supplied with students from Hoxton. One of the students thus sent was Mr. Fielding, whose piety and amiability soon won over to him the affections of the young shopman, so that a very close acquaintance was formed between these young men. An invitation to the pastorate was given and accepted. His mind being already prepared by Divine grace for the sacred union, Mr. Spurgeon shortly afterwards joined the Church. So entire was the change which grace had wrought in his mind, he diligently set himself to do good to others; and one way in which he carried out his holy purposes was by establishing a prayer-meeting in the vestry of the chapel on Sabbath morning and evening, which was well attended; and in carrying it on the founder had the satisfaction of seeing much good done. At first he was content with reading the Scriptures and prayer; but after receiving encouragement from his minister, and prompted by the kindness of his employer, Mr. Rudkin, he advanced a step further, and occasionally gave a short address of encouragement or warning as an exhortation. For nearly eight years—namely, from Christmas, 1795, to the year 1803, Mr. Spurgeon continued to conduct this excellent and profitable means of grace; and he had the joy of seeing much good result from his labours.

"Prompted by his pastor, Mr. Fielding, and encouraged by his good friend, Mr. Rudkin, with whose family he resided, he consented to go to Hoxton College to prepare for the ministry; there he spent two years, having knowledge of several instances of conversion during his labours as a supply at various places near London. In 1805 he received a call to the pastorate over the Independent church at Clare, in Suffolk. There he commenced his stated ministry at Christmas, 1805, and was ordained on the 23rd of the September following; the ministers who took part in his ordination being Mr. Fielding, of Coggeshall; Mr. Ray, of Sudbury; Mr. Stevenson, of Castle Hedingham; Mr. Hickman, of Larringham; and Mr. Beddow, of Stambourne. The desire to be a minister of the Gospel entered his mind in very early life, and it was strengthened when his conversion took place. He had a very pious mother, who tried to instil into the minds of her children the fear of sin

and a love of God, and her efforts were not in vain as far as her son James was concerned."

After serving during five years at Clare, James Spurgeon settled at Stambourne in 1810. He Lad many converts; and in his latter years, before the death of his wife, he spent about six weeks of every year in visiting friends who had been benefited by his ministry, although even then he found time to write letters of Christian counsel. It was his opinion that all ministers should have some knowledge of a secular business; for the attaining of such a knowledge was a profitable discipline, while it extended their knowledge of human nature. The multitude who gathered at the graveside on the occasion of the funeral sufficiently testified to the venerable pastor's popularity. The large chapel in the Walworth Road, of which Mr. Howieson was pastor, and which is a near neighbour of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, was opened on April 20. Mr. Spurgeon attended the opening service and gave a vigorous speech, congratulating the pastor, and hoping that the chapel might become the scene of a genuine revival.

Spurgeon had now become such an attraction at any great gathering that his services were eagerly secured for any May meeting whenever he could be prevailed on to appear. On April 28, 1864, he attended at Exeter Hall to advocate the cause of the Baptist Missionary Society; and we find it remarked that he then spoke "with a warmth, a vigour, and an eloquence surpassing even himself." He was thus thought to be as capable on the platform as he was in the pulpit, and if the work of the platform had been too much eschewed, it seemed that the error might profitably be corrected. At the great missionary meeting referred to, something happened which helped to enliven the scene, and so to add interest to the speeches. As Dr. Campbell tells us, Mr. Spurgeon "seemed to think that one of his cherished notions touching church action and obligation was hinted at, and questioned, if not repudiated, by Dr. Angus, and be broke out into an argumentative oration in favour of bis own principle, which carried the assembly with him as a whirlwind." Mr. Spurgeon began by remarking that he harboured profoundest respect for Liberal politicians who were for reform; and he had also some respect for the Conservatives who sat under the nearly rotten branches of their favourite shelter and sang, "O woodman, spare that tree," etc. There was something so beautiful in all this that he could not find it in his heart to speak against the old Conservative tree. There was, however, something beautiful about the youthful flash and fire, which, in order to put things right, turned them upside down. A middle course was nevertheless to be preferred, although true lovers of their country were probably to be found in both extreme roads. The Missionary Society might have friends among those who would have nothing altered; but they were equally friends who would follow more closely what was believed to be a more Scriptural method. There had been some misapprehension, for one and all had prayed for a blessing on the society. It was not a question as to whether there should be a society or not, but rather whether the churches should not be more fully recognised, and individual action be brought more fully into play. "When the gage of battle is thrown down I am not the man to refuse to take it up," said Mr. Spurgeon; and then after this reference to Dr. Angus, and to the solemnity of the work in progress, he added:—

"Did it not seem strange, according to human reason and the law of cause and effect—did it not seem absurd and ridiculous that a few people in England should meet together to talk about the conversion of India? I excuse Sydney Smith for his belief that it was indeed the freak of a raving madman, though I cannot excuse the ribald language in which he expressed the thought. But it does seem, on any principle but a supernatural one, to have been the maddest enterprise in which

men ever engaged. We must understand, then, where we are. We take our stand on the supernatural. We are to depend for our success on Him who has bidden us go and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. It becomes us, then, to be exceedingly careful how we lose this principle or do anything whatever that might rob us of its strength, for we must lean entirely on that arm. If neither committee, funds, nor subscribers can do anything without Him, we must mind we do not grieve Him; but we must go to work on such principles as may ensure us success, because He has promised it. We are willing, dear friends, to hear arguments on the other side at all times, provided they are not those equivocal arguments which say 'the thing is right in principle, but in practice it is right but not important.' To us to be right is to be important, and to be true is to be necessary. Let it only be shown that a thing is wrong and unscriptural, and in an assembly of Baptists we never ask the question whether we shall keep it any longer. If it be wrong, to the winds with it. When I joined this denomination I was enchanted with that which seemed to be written on the banner. We will have nothing but what we find in Scripture. We will not even have infant baptism, because we think it merely a tradition, and wo will order our church government on Scriptural principles. It seems to us that to say a thing is right and Scriptural, but does not signify, would be to cut the rock from under our feet and stand upon the sands for ever; and to this, by the grace of God, we cannot possibly submit. Now, it has seemed to us that an association of good men working out God's purposes was a noble idea, but indeed the outgrowth of the idea of a Church, and we have therefore never said a word against it, but have, on the other hand, fondly cherished the hope that we might see such an association. We have not believed in an association composed of ten-and-sixpences; and we have always said piety is an essential, and the profession of that piety before men. We have always thought that any connection with the world, merely on account of ten-and-sixpences, or even thousands of pounds, was almost as great an evil as uniting the Church with the State, which contains so many worldly elements. And therefore we have not spoken about words and phraseologies, but about what is to us a very solemn principle. We are prepared, as Christian men, to maintain in its fullest strength this society, but we are not prepared to work with any society which either ignores the Churches or does not distinctly make itself a Christian society by having no members but those who profess to be Christians. Wo don't believe we could expect to have God's blessing unless we purge out the old leaven. We think that just as in the human body, if there is a piece of bone that is dead, there will be an ulcer and a swelling till the bone is cut out; so the admission, even in phraseology, of anything like a dead world, and the unrenewed nature of man, into the working society of Christ, would only be to breed an ulcer in it, which would mar the whole body in its beauty and strength."

Leaving that question, the pastor went on to say that he wished to see a more widely spread interest in the work of the Missionary Society, and dissatisfaction with what was then being done. He wanted the Churches to do more and to see more done in India to advance the kingdom of Christ. His heart rejoiced at what had been done; but when he thought of millions being still unconverted, the dread thought came that the world still lay in the power of the wicked one, and that the prince of darkness swayed his sceptre over mankind. If they desired greater things, however, greater things would come:—

"To a great extent our prayers and expectations are prophetic. They show what God is going to do, and if we are content with what we have—grateful I know we must be—if we do not pant after

wider and larger things, we shall not have them. But when the groan has gone up, 'O God, we cannot endure this any longer; Lord, Thou who didst work so mighty a work at Pentecost, is Thine arm shortened that it cannot save; were not whole continents covered with the truth in a short space of time, and may we not expect the like wonders now?—then we may expect to see something more done by God for the salvation of men. Now, it struck some of us that to get the whole country into something like dissatisfaction with the results hitherto obtained would be one of the best ways towards making every man feel more than he does his own individual responsibility, and to make every church feel more than it does its own individual responsibility. If you could see my heart, you would see nothing in it but the purest love to this society, even when I say everything about its faults. It is because I love the society that I want to see a more thorough revival of the sense of individual responsibility. To whom did Christ give His commission? Not to a society, but to individuals. We gain immensely for God and His cause when we make every believer begin to cry over souls and to say, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?' If our committee get on fire with enthusiasm, we will get water and pump on them, and do our share to save them from combustion, spontaneous or otherwise. Yea, if they should do anything absurd, and be arraigned for attempting impossibilities and getting into debt, some of us will come and plead guilty side by side with them, for we shall be too glad to find them offending—delighted to catch them falling into something like extravagance for God. Oh, for a circular all round to pray for a sevenfold blessing, setting forth the faith of the society in her God, and then for immediate action, depending upon God!" On Tuesday, May 3, an interesting visit was paid to Winslow in Buckinghamshire, where a Southwark predecessor, Benjamin Keach, laboured in the Puritan days. A large tent was erected, and in this Mr. Spurgeon preached in the morning from Rom 1:16, and in the evening from St. Mark 7:32. A cold collation was provided in the assembly room of the Bell Inn, after which the ceremony of laying the foundation-stone of a new chapel was gone through by Mr. Henry Kensall, of Rochdale. Mr. Spurgeon gave £20 to the building fund, and promised to contribute the last £20 required. There were 400 persons at the tea-meeting which followed, and the evening service, conducted by the popular London pastor, attracted an overflowing congregation. Another stone-laying ceremony, of great interest to those who took part in it, came off soon afterwards in connection with Mr. F. H. White's chapel at Chelsea. On June 20 a visit was paid to Golden Lane, the occasion being the opening of the Evangelists' Tabernacle, which a City merchant had erected at his own expense. Mr. Spurgeon preached, and was evidently greatly interested in the surroundings. "The neighbourhood in which I am preaching was two hundred years ago inhabited by the fashionable and wealthy," he remarked, "but now they have migrated to the West End of London, whilst poverty and crime crowd together in the adjacent courts and alleys, and souls are dying unnoticed and uncared-for by Christians who live in more respectable localities."

One of the preachers in this building was the present Mr. W. J. Orsman, L.C. C, who laboured perseveringly on until the headquarters of the costers became one of the most successful mission-stations in connection with the Metropolitan Tabernacle. As a youth, Mr. Orsman served in the Crimean commissariat department during the war, and on his return to England he accepted an appointment in the General Post Office. His philanthropic work was carried on after business hours, and Mr. Spurgeon always regarded him as one of the most valiant of his sons in the faith. As will be seen presently, Mr. Spurgeon more than once visited Mr. Orsman's headquarters to preach to the costers and others who are chiefly benefited. Since the clearing away of the rookeries of Golden Lane, the work has been transferred to Costers' Hall, Hoxton, which was also

visited by Mr. Spurgeon. In 1864 the late Dr. Campbell entered upon his seventieth year, and Mr. Spurgeon subscribed £50 to the testimonial fund which was raised on behalf of the veteran journalist. No one realised more than the young pastor the sacrifices which his older friend had made. It was said that in Dr. Campbell "the Evangelical churches of all lands have an enlightened exponent and defender of Christian truth;" and he was regarded as an advocate for philanthropy, a helper of Sunday-school teachers, and a bold leader in the enterprise of ensuring a cheap Press for the people.

Chapter 52: Spurgeon and the Bible Society

Chapter 52.

Spurgeon and the Bible Society The Strict Baptists—The Bible Society—Great Speech at Exeter Hall—The Calvin Tercentenary-Estimates of the Reformer—Evangelical Alliance Soiree.

During this year (1864) the Strict Baptists still regarded Spurgeon as the hero of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, as well as a figure in the religious world of singular interest, although there does not appear to have been any controversy in regard to practice and doctrine. To them the popular preacher was, of course, much more than he could otherwise have been to persons who viewed him from the standpoint of the Surrey Tabernacle, because he came so near to their recognised standard, and yet not near enough to be altogether approved. Thus it happened in due course that the same people who maintained that "Fullerism" wanted the marrow of the Gospel, saw little or nothing more in Spurgeonism than the practical side of Christianity. At the same time, Spurgeon's old friend, Charles Waters Banks, as the chief literary veteran of the Strict Baptists, still continued to harbour sincere affection for one whom he had been among the first to welcome to London. In taking a retrospective and prospective view of things about this time, Mr. Banks wrote:—

"It is now eight or nine years since we bent our knees beside Mr. Spurgeon's little bed on a certain occasion when he was very ill; and in the arms of our faith, and in the simple affection we feel for all young men who are enlisted under the banner of Christ, we were helped to plead with the Lord for his speedy recovery. It was such a season of holy fellowship and of earnest wrestling with God as we have known but seldom during our five-and-thirty years' pilgrimage in the truth; and so fully did we receive that young brother into our heart, that neither his rapid rising, nor our circumstantial descending, has ever caused us to forget. He has gone up into the skies of popularity; we have gone down into the valley of adversity; he has stretched himself so extensively as to take in almost everybody; and almost everybody, in some shape or other, has taken him in: the circles of his ministry are so immense that you can never say of him he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. He travels round the whole of the evangelical globe, and touches, more or less, at every point; while we, having sunk almost into obscurity, can, perhaps, understand but little of what passes in these days for religion, for revivals, for conversions, and for Christian churches.... We have always believed him to be a tender-hearted child of God; and although he hurls dire contempt down upon us poor little Zionites, Zoarites, and Bethlemites, sometimes, still, having had some boys of our own, we know they will be naughty now and then; but love covers their folly and aims to correct their fault. Whatever C. H. Spurgeon may do, or not do, on this imperfect stage of time, we hope, through grace, to meet him in that kingdom where pleasure in perfection is, and all are like their Lord. We have thought—we hope it is not a wicked thought, but we have thought—what a changed scene it will be if, in that bright celestial world, on some future period, and sitting on one of the heavenly hills, we should happen to see a company of the Southwark divines, good old George Francis, in all the youth and beauty of a Saviour's healing life; 'dear Master Thomas Gunner,' with a heart as soft and a mind as refined as the loving John and the holy

Jesus Himself; Hugh Allen, as tame as Noah's dove; James Wells, in the shining robes of his loving Master's righteousness; and Charles H. Spurgeon close beside John Foreman and J. A. Jones (for we believe the ancient Jireh patriarch will go home some day), and then and there, as our favourite poet says, we, yes, even we, hope to see—

'The glorious tenants of that place Stand bending round the throne.' "

Apart from the fact that Mr. Spurgeon was the chief speaker the great meeting of the Bible Society at Exeter Hall this year would seem to have been of more than ordinary interest. The report of the year's work was encouraging, the income being larger than in any former year; ambassadors from Madagascar were upon the platform, and the speakers included Lord Shaftesbury, who was in the chair, the then aged Bishop of Winchester, Lord Charles Russell, William Arthur, and Dr. Edmond.

Mr. Spurgeon was no doubt at his best. He thought the history of Scripture was to be divided into certain epochs—the Reformation being the period when the Bible was liberated. With its feet, as it were, in the stocks, the Word had borne its testimony through the dark Middle Ages, "When suddenly there was a great earthquake, and the bonds of all thought, of all science, of all truth, were loosed, and then, like Paul and Silas, the Bible came forth to its glorious liberty." The period of bondage was over, and that of the multiplication of Scripture had come. When the Bible first came, it might, by reason of the fewness of its copies, be compared to the one glorious angel who heralded the advent of Christ; but in its multiplication it more resembled the host who sang "Glory to God in the highest." The multiplication needed to go on so long as mankind multiplied; but the Word needed to be brought home on a larger scale to the masses of the people. That was better than controverting objections, which did not appear to be the particular work required of Christians. Really to know what were the fruits of the Gospel, the Gospel needed to be applied. The speaker then proceeded:—

"There is a tale that when Scanderbeg's sword was hung against the wall, one who had heard of the trenchant deeds of valour done by the barbarous conqueror, said, as he looked on the sword, 'I can see nothing in it.' 'No,' said the man who showed it; 'but if you could have seen the sinews of the brawny arm that was wont to wield it, you would have admired the sword and the arm too.' Now, the Word of God is nothing but a dead letter till the Spirit of God, with omnipotent arm, grasps it, and then it cuts to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And we want to cry out to-day, 'Lord, if Thine adversaries doubt whether this be Thy sword, lay Thou hold upon its hilt, and cut them to their very quick, and make them know that there is a God in Israel still, and that there is still God's word.' Merely to circulate the Bible will not prove its virtues. There is no virtue in the Bible any more than there is harm in a three-volume novel, if I do not read the one or the other. If they lie there on the shelf unread, the one will do me no good and the other no harm. Erasmus laughs at the idea of the man who attaches a benefit to the mere possession of the Bible. He likens him to one whom he calls Cyclops, who wears in his belt on this side a goodly bottle of sack, and on the other side a richly ornamented copy of the Word of God, and says in his swaggering style, 'In truth I am as good a saint as any.' Erasmus tries to disprove this, in his witty way, and says, 'Prithee serve thy sack bottle as thy Bible. There are many virtues in that bottle of sack; it warms you when you are cold; it gets your valour up when you are half afraid. But do not take it; never take the cork out of it, and then see what its virtues are.' Of course our friend objects. He admires the bottle of sack, but he

likes it better when the cork is out, and, most of all, when it is against his lips, and the stream is flowing merrily. 'Aye,' says Erasmus; 'but what do you say to this Book?' He says, 'It is tedious.' But begin to read and study it. 'Ah,' he replies, 'it is all dry matter that does not concern me.' 'Verily, then,' adds the other, 'I see thou art indeed a true disciple of the sack, but a false disciple of the Book.' There is much truth in that wit. If people carry their Bibles as Erasmus wished this man to carry his sack, they will get no good out of them. We may scatter Bibles by millions, and reduce the price to twopence or nothing, but we have done nothing but add to men's responsibility, unless we pray earnestly that God will lead men to study it, and by His Spirit bless it to their conversion, their edification, their sanctification in righteousness. I take it that while this is necessary to show the true quality of the Bible, it is also necessary to show the true answer to objectors." The speaker went on to speak the true sentiments of his heart when he declared, in face of the cheering thousands in Exeter Hall, that he was of that kind of metal that he thanked God when the adversaries of truth were loudest in their objections; for he feared a sleeping devil more than a roaring one. "Let the devil roar; he shall but wake us up from our slumbers, and make us the more earnestly to contend for truth." How had it happened that in the generation before there had been no objections to Scripture from persons in high places? Because they were not necessary to Satan's ends? What was the Bible then to many of us who were slumbering and even sound asleep—what was it but a harp that was getting out of tune because it was not played, a sword that was growing rusty because it was not used? "And Satan said within himself, 'As long as they do not handle their edged tools I will not care to blunt them.' I am glad to think that the Church is being urged to activity, and I am reminded of the cynic who, sooner than be still, would roll his tub about. Sooner than the Church should be still, I would have her roll her articles and doctrines about. Keep the Church still, permit its voice not to be heard crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' and you are hindering its course and depriving it of all power to bless the world." Hence the need of bringing home the Bible to the people, in order that they might be better acquainted with its doctrinal truths and historical narratives. When spoken to angrily by his envious brethren, David, by giving no answer, set the best example; and then he proceeded to kill the giant, which was a triumphant refutation of all cavils. The best answer to objections, therefore, was to verify the truth of the text, "The entrance of thy words giveth light." Let the Bible go forth into the courts and alleys of London, as well as into the dark places of the Pagan world. That was the best logic; and the Bible Society should promote Bible reading and Bible understanding as well as merely promoting the circulation. To show the importance of this, a contrast was drawn between the youth of Scotland and the young persons who came from other parts of the empire—the men from the North who entered the Pastors' College being, as a rule, much better acquainted with the Scriptures than Southerners. That was no doubt one of the good results of catechising. Mr. Spurgeon then entertained his audience with the story of the apple in the bottle:—

"One of my earliest difficulties was—not the source of the Nile, I had not got the length of that; but a certain matter which was far more wonderful. On a shelf in my grand father's parlour was a little vial, containing an apple just the size of the largest part of the bottle. Now, I had no business to touch anything on the mantelshelf; that was forbidden. But whenever I could get alone, I took a chair and got the vial down, and tried to find out how the apple could possibly have got down that small neck. I thought the vial must have had a false bottom, and I really wonder how it was that in my various essays I did not, in my zeal and scientific diligence, manage to break the bottle, and so get a sound thrashing. But it happened, quite accidentally, that this great mystery of nature—one

of the problems that I thought scarcely the wisest men of the East could solve—became unravelled. One day, as I walked in the garden, it came to me that my grandmother had put a little apple inside the bottle while it was growing, and that it grew there to its present size. And thus,

'Nature, well known, no prodigy remained.'

I could not but think of that while standing here. We cannot get men under Biblical influence very readily after they are grown up; but if we can put them inside the bottle when they are little ones I am sure we shall be following the analogy of nature. And we have quite a Scriptural precedent for it, for we find that Timothy knew the Scriptures from his youth up. I am afraid that some Sunday-school teaching is not what it should be with regard to distinct Bible teaching; and I should like all of us who have to teach others to look very much after this, labouring for the good of the young people. And then, again, I think that the exposition of Scripture should become more and more a distinct feature in our congregations. It may possibly be that, in some cases, the service will not allow a practice into which some of us have fallen, of always expounding the Lessons as we read them; but there might be extra services, of which that should be the main feature. There might be little Bible-reading parties, intended to break up difficult parts, and presided over by some brother who had the ability to study the chapter, and that would be exceedingly profitable. In Wycliff's days it was the classes that used to do so much good—classes that met and studied Scripture, and then dispersed, scattering abroad the knowledge they had gathered in that manner. It was these classes that brought, on the Reformation; and I say it is thus that we must maintain the Reformation. We must get an intelligent knowledge of what God tells us in His Word, by studying therein, and then spreading abroad that same intelligent knowledge amongst others by expounding it." A greater deference or respect for the Word was necessary; and texts which refused to open to them otherwise became plain to them in prayer. It was then forcibly shown that in Scripture alone would they ever find a basis of true Christian unity:—

"When we shall all become reverent subjects of God, and obedient to God's will, as we find it in Scripture, we shall all come close to one another. All attempts to create unity apart from truth must fall to the ground, and let them. Unity of action for God's glory we can have, even despite our minor differences, and I trust we ever shall have it; but to attempt to form a Church on any other basis than that of definite fixed principles, must be an attempt to build a house upon the sand, and it must come down. First purity, and then unity; first truth, and then oneness. I would not sell a principle of God's Word for all the brotherly love under heaven, because I hold that brotherly love which will not let me keep my conscience clear is not such brotherly love as Christ inculcated in the Holy Scriptures. Firmness to truth there must be—aye, and to every particle of it—to everything that you have received of the Lord. Let us seek no union by throwing aside those truths which God has clearly revealed to us. The Bible is to be the great pacificator of all sects—the great hammer of all schismatics. The Bible is to be the end of all disunion. The Bible, when we shall be brought to read it with reverent eye, and receive it with meek and humble heart, bringing us to itself, shall, in the Spirit of God, bring us to one another. I would rather have a little discussion now and then as to the principles which divide us, and then, if we have dissented on any point without due grounds, let our dissent be ended. Oh! if we could get the Bible spirit, and say, Whatever I do not find here I will throw overboard, we should have a blessed unity established. And it is because this unity is coming on that Satan is very wroth. We shall live, some of us, to see the day when we shall be distinguished the whole world over for our unity. I think I see looming in the future, the

rising of the sun that shall scatter all the mists of our bigotry. Some of us shall live to behold that happy day. Already this very meeting presents to us the blessed presage of it, but the consummation can never come except we hold the Bible, spread the Bible, and press the Bible home upon the heart and conscience of everyone with whom we meet. May I beg of you—most of whom I have never seen before—this very day to try and teach something scriptural to somebody. Every day a line, and then what a poem will your life's psalm be! Every day a soul, and, oh, what soul-winners you will be! Every day a seed, and then what a harvest shall you have! Every day a star, and then what a galaxy of glory shall glitter there! Every day a gem, and then what a crown of honour shall you have to put upon the head of your Christ! Every day a note, and then what a song shall that be which shall roll from you poor mortal, but God-inspired, God-helped men, up to the throne of the great One who sits above us all!"

Mr. Spurgeon this year attended one other May meeting: he was one of the speakers at the early breakfast of the Young Men's Christian Association on the 6th of the month. The chair was occupied by Mr. Joseph Gurney Hoare, and the interest of the occasion drew together an overflowing congregation.

Mr. Spurgeon joined with great heartiness in celebrating the tercentenary of the death of John Calvin. The celebration itself took place on Friday, May 27, both at Geneva and in London; and the sermon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on May 29 was in commemoration of the event. The discourse—"Laus Deo"—was pre-eminently one of praise to God, the text being Rom 11:36, "For of him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." The distinguishing doctrines of the Reformation were well brought out; and the contrast between Luther and Calvin was that while one was the pioneer and iconoclast, clearing the way, or even knocking down what seemed to obstruct the progress of the Gospel, Calvin was the teacher, himself enlightened by the Spirit of God, who followed after. To such a preacher as the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, the Reformer of Geneva was second only to the apostle Paul himself as an interpreter of the oracles of God. Was Spurgeon's estimate of the Genevan Reformer's acquirements, genius, and devotion set too high? Some would have declared this to be the case; but it closely coincided with the estimate of other competent and conscientious judges. In the sixteenth century Knox wrote: "In my heart I could have wished—yea, and I cannot cease to wish—that it might please God to guide and conduct yourself to this place [Geneva], where I neither fear nor am ashamed to say it is the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the apostles. In other places I confess Christ to be truly preached; but manners and religion so sincerely reformed I have not yet seen in any other place besides." Then the historian d'Aubigné says: "After the mighty Luther, the bold Zwingli, the indefatigable Farel, such a man as the meditating Calvin was a necessity. The first three fought, the last built up; though at heart they all did both. Luther, Zwingli, and Farel held the sword; Calvin, humble and poor, yet held the sceptre. If the former were the generals of the Reformation, Calvin was its legislator and its king." The pastors of Geneva desired to observe the tercentenary of the Reformer's death in a becoming manner; but many difficulties seemed to hinder their plans. It was proposed to erect a building to be called the Hall of the Reformation, and Dr. Barde, a pastor of the National Church, was deputed to visit this country and invite Christian people to co-operate. On Friday, May 27, that being the 300th anniversary of Calvin's death, the Evangelical Alliance had a soiree at Exeter Hall, attended by leading men of all denominations of the Church; and a meeting also took place at Edinburgh. At Geneva the

interesting ceremony of dedicating the site for the memorial building came off, the scene being one of enthusiasm. "Here the members of all Churches will meet, with those who belong to no Church at all, and the net of the Gospel will be cast," said Pastor Demole. "That net, though it has often been exposed to the world's stormy waters, is unbroken still; it is powerful, and in it we shall gather those who will be brought to salvation. In doing this we shall lay a just claim to Calvin's inheritance." The question might be asked, Why was Spurgeon, at the great Evangelical Alliance reunion at Exeter Hall, in honour of Calvin's memory, so conspicuous by his absence? No one present at the meeting could have replied to such a question; but to us, as we look back through, the vista of nearly thirty years, the matter is plain enough. The great preacher was meditating on a subject which gave him some trouble; and when given to the world by the printing press, the sermon preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on Sunday, June 5, would create a sensation which was almost unparalleled. What this was will be seen in the next chapter.

Meanwhile, there appear to have been some honest souls in the world who thought that Spurgeon might have a counterpart, and some would, no doubt, have found pleasure in introducing such a rival of the popular preacher to the world. Of one who was expected to do great things we find it said in a newspaper leading article:—

"Our attention has been called to a young man from the country on a visit to town, who, if we do not much mistake, will yet be better known among us. We doubt not he is destined for distinguished usefulness in the vineyard of the Lord. He is richly endowed with every attribute required to great instrumental efficiency. The first condition of success to the popular preacher is voice; this constitutes a full third of his qualification, and in this respect the stranger we speak of has few, if any, superiors, either among Churchmen or Dissenters. So far as our experience has gone, it surpasses that of every speaker now in our midst, except Mr. Spurgeon's, and we incline to think that it will by-and-bye prove at least equal even to his. It is specifically a voice of the same class; so much so, that again and again, while there is not the slightest imitation, it suggested to us the magnificent accents and intonations and electric force of the great Metropolitan Tabernacle orator. It has, in a measure, all its excellencies, and defects there are none. There is the same clearness, fulness, energy, flexibility, and lashing power. The compass at times seems even somewhat greater; that is, it rises a note or two higher, adding to the sharpness and pungency of questions, and the scale of climaxes. It is also in a very high degree manageable, and hence, with Mr. Spurgeon's skill and experience, which years will impart, it will prove not less adapted to dialogue and bursts of the dramatic, a thing of wondrous potency, fraught with special pleasure in the ministrations of Mr. Spurgeon."

Chapter 53: Spurgeon and the Clergy

Chapter 53.

Spurgeon and the Clergy

Baptismal Regeneration Controversy—Attack on the Evangelical Clergy—The Hon. Baptist Noel's Letter—Mr. Bardsley's Reply—The Gorham Case—Mozley's View—Dr. Campbell's View—Other Disputants.

What is known as the Baptismal Regeneration Controversy belongs to the year 1864; and as that dispute occasioned the publication of a large number of pamphlets on both sides, this chapter may properly be devoted to it. The matter is even now not wholly forgotten; for Mr. Spurgeon's discourses on the subject have commanded an extensive sale, which has, in some measure, continued to the present day.

I have heard that the idea of exposing the unscripturalness of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration originated in Mr. Spurgeon's mind at Bury St. Edmunds, where he saw some things in a church which displeased him. Be that as it may, he resolved to preach on the subject, although at the time he seriously believed that the publication of such views would have a disastrous effect on the sale of the weekly sermon. When he had attacked slavery as "the sum of all villainies," the preacher had been burnt in effigy in the Southern States of the American Republic, and the fire had been stimulated with volumes of his sermons, which appear to have been withdrawn from circulation because no bookseller would have dared to sell them. It was thought that this experience, or something similar to it, was about to be repeated in England. Mr. Spurgeon told his publishers that he was about to ruin the weekly publication of the sermons; but he did not on that account flinch for a moment in carrying out his resolve of preaching the sermon on "Baptismal Regeneration," which he full well knew would be distasteful to a very large section of the Christian public. This discourse was given at the Tabernacle on Sunday morning, June 5, the text being St. Mark 16:15-16, "Go ye into all the world," etc. The preacher felt that the burden of the Lord was upon him; and that although his opposition to what he believed to be serious error might result in the loss of friends and the stirring up of enemies, he was obliged to go forward. Belief in baptismal regeneration seemed to be spreading, so that there was need of an antidote. It was shown that baptism without faith could not save; and if the Church of England taught that it did, even the morality of evangelical teachers might be questioned, when they remained in such a communion for the sake of retaining their livings. Thus, as it was worked out, the sermon was virtually a formidable attack on the evangelical clergy for holding an invidious position. The High Church party, if they believed in baptismal regeneration, were of course held to be more consistent than the others, and were on that account to be commended. In speaking as he did, it will be noticed that the preacher boldly assumed that the Prayer Book really taught the doctrine he denounced; and if so, it naturally followed that men who taught one thing and subscribed to another occupied a position which was more than anomalous. Hence, the controversy was not one on the question as to whether baptismal regeneration in itself was right or wrong; the question

was, Does the Prayer Book teach it as a Scriptural doctrine? If this could be proved to be the fact, Spurgeon was master of the field; but if, on the contrary, the Church of England favoured no such teaching, her evangelical pastors had been misrepresented and maligned in a way which they might well be excused for resenting with some warmth or even indignation. The manner in which such men regarded the determined onslaught which Spurgeon had made upon their honour was well shown by an article in The Gospel Guide, a weekly newspaper of that time:—

"A nice little country boy comes to London; he loves the Lord; he preaches (at least some of) His Gospel; his voice is of an amazing, yet' well-balanced, power; his face, and all his features, are full of affection and zeal; he preaches, he prays, he weeps; he wrestles with God and with man, and prevails. Thousands flock to hear him; thousands profess to be converted by him; all the world is talking about him; he is the wonder of the age. No chapel, no church, no hall, no tabernacle, is large enough to hold the people who crowd to hear him; he resolves to erect a Metropolitan Tabernacle of his own. He outsteps David, for when David essayed to build a house for God, and Nathan encouraged him, and all the people were ready to help him, the Lord stepped in to stop him. It was not Heaven's will that David should build the temple, therefore he did not build it; but when C. H. Spurgeon said, 'I will build a tabernacle for God,' he did it. And clergymen and laymen—yea, men of all sorts and sizes, shapes and characters—stepped forward and poured their thousands into his lap. The Tabernacle was builded, and, as far as sight and sense was concerned, its opening was grand and significant. And from the day of its opening until now it is believed by many that the glory of the Lord has filled the house; and that the once little country lad is, in a few years, become the pastor of an immense people, the preacher to an overwhelming congregation. His College lads are building chapels in all directions, and Spurgeon's name and influence is immense, beyond all calculation.

"Is it any marvel that such a man should, at length, be found turning round upon the brethren with whom he has fraternised, laboured, and prayed; and in an unguarded moment publicly censuring, condemning, and almost anathematising them? Wonder or not, he has done it; and all the unthinking masses of the community applaud this grand onslaught made upon the clergy. The doctrine of baptismal regeneration is decidedly a Popish error; but the Church of England does not hold it, nor do her good ministers preach it; and this is proved by nearly all the published replies made to Mr. Spurgeon's sermon."

Undoubtedly one of the most effective of the replies to this famous sermon was "The Evangelical Clergy Defended," by the Hon. Baptist W. Noel, who had given up a distinguished position in the Established Church to take the more humble standing of a Baptist minister. Mr. Noel accused Spurgeon of violating the fourth of the General Resolutions of the Evangelical Alliance, of which he was then a member—the resolution in which everyone promised "to avoid all rash and groundless insinuations, personal imputations, or irritating allusions." Mr. Noel then addressed these words to his brother in the faith at the Metropolitan Tabernacle:—

"When you spoke of evangelical ministers of the Church of England as unworthy of the friendship of honest men, did you remember that your words were blasting, as far as they were received, the memory of some of the most excellent men who have ever lived? Thomas Scott was eminently honest, conscientious, devout, and useful; Henry Martin, with talents of the highest order, relinquished all the objects of ordinary ambition that he might preach Christ among the heathen;

Charles Simeon bore bravely, for many years, the scorn of the ungodly at Cambridge; John Newton was full of love to God and man; few men have been so heavenly minded as Fletcher of Madeley; and John Venn, when dying, was so filled with joy at the thought of being speedily with Jesus, that for three days he could not die. All these, when on earth, belonged to that class which you denounce as unworthy of your friendship. Had you criticised the services, and said nothing of the men, you would have done more for the cause of truth. I shall not attempt to explain or to justify their views; but I may mention one obvious fact. According to the Articles which contain the recognised doctrines of the Establishment, persons are justified by faith through the call of God; those who are thus justified by faith become the sous of God by adoption; and those who are adopted attain to everlasting felicity, so that it follows, according to their doctrine, that ungodly persons, who live and die in sin, never were adopted or regenerated. To these Articles the evangelical ministers in the Establishment adhere, endeavouring to explain the Liturgy in harmony with them; while their opponents, by teaching baptismal regeneration, contradict them. Let me ask, therefore, why you accuse of 'gross and pestilential immorality' those who maintain the Articles which they have subscribed, while you compliment the honesty of those who subscribe and contradict them? When, further, you charge those brethren with dishonesty, without hearing their defence, you violate your own rule; for in one page you say, 'I shall not judge the peculiar views of other men,' and in the next page you do judge them."

Those who are old enough to remember this dispute will not need to be told that the rebuke of a man like the pastor of John Street Chapel, Bedford Row, produced immense effect on the public mind. Mr. Noel was more than respected, he was regarded by Nonconformists pretty generally as a hero in their camp, who, as the scion of an honourable house, had made such great sacrifices for conscience sake that there could be no doubt about his earnestness and sincerity. By leaving the Established Church to join the Baptists he had to some extent sacrificed a social position of commanding influence, such as even a devoted Christian man might highly value. Indeed, we can hardly doubt that he also turned his back on a prospective bishopric; for when the Earl of Shaftesbury became Lord Palmerston's "bishop-maker," Baptist Noel would probably have advanced to the episcopal bench had he been eligible.

When, therefore, such a man spoke on this unhappy controversy between Spurgeon and the clergy, he stood forth as an ex-clergyman of the very class which was so bitterly assailed. At the same time, he spoke for himself as well as for others; and the calm Christian dignity of his letter added force to words which to large numbers were already irresistible as regarded their conclusive testimony.

Though equally respectable, Mr. Bardsley, the secretary of the London Diocesan Home Mission, was of another class; but he forcibly stated the case of himself and his brother clergymen in opposition to Mr. Spurgeon's representations:—

"I ask for the reader's attention to the reasons why he should not believe the fearful charges to be true which Mr. Spurgeon brings against a large body of the Church of England. He accuses them, as we have seen, not only of shuffling and equivocation, but of perjury and lying. He argues thus: The Church of England teaches baptismal regeneration, the evangelical clergy do not believe in this doctrine, and yet for the sake of keeping their livings they swear that they do believe it. I meet this statement with a simple denial: the evangelical clergy do not, in the sense described by Mr.

Spurgeon, believe that the Church of England teaches baptismal regeneration, and therefore do 'not swear before God that they do when they do not;' and in this lies the whole fallacy of Mr. Spurgeon's statements. Is he ignorant of this fact, that the 'evangelical clergy' do not believe that the Church of England teaches the doctrine which, in the 'gentlest' manner, he describes as 'one of the most atrocious of all the lies which have dragged millions down to hell'? They do not believe that the Church teaches it, and this of itself disposes of the charge which he brings against them of being dishonest, by 'swearing before God that they do when they do not.' Mr. Spurgeon believes the Bible teaches that God has decreed from all eternity to save a definite number of Adam's posterity which can neither be increased nor diminished. The whole body of the Methodists, with but few exceptions, reject this doctrine; they not only do not believe it, but teach the very opposite; both accept the Bible as an infallible revelation from God, yet both would repel with indignation the foul charge that either party was guilty of perjury and dishonesty. The simple matter of fact is this. Mr. Spurgeon and those who hold his views on election believe that the Bible teaches that doctrine; the Methodists do not believe that the doctrine, as held by Mr. Spurgeon, has any place in the Bible. There are between thirty and forty bodies of Dissenters who accept the Bible as their rule of faith; on some question or other they all hold different opinions. Now, if they are allowed, without being charged with dishonesty, to differ as to the teaching of the Bible on these questions, why are clergymen to be branded with infamy because they differ among themselves as to the meaning of some portions of the Book of Common Prayer? People who live in glass houses should never throw stones." This is plain speaking from the standpoint of an uncompromising evangelical within the Episcopal pale. Of course, all the objectors were not of this class. Thus one incumbent, whose Arminianism must have closely resembled that of Laud himself, remarked in a letter to Mr. Spurgeon: "The fact is, infant baptism does not, and never can be made to, square with the sour doctrine of election which you are so strongly pledged to uphold." He then defends regeneration:—

"All that I can gather from your sermon is, that in your opinion regeneration means the salvation of the soul. I am bold to aver that from no part of our Service Book can you legitimately draw such a conclusion. True, the catechumen is taught to express his thankfulness to his Heavenly Father for having, through baptism, called him to 'a state of salvation;' but, and in order to show that this is a distinct thing from salvation itself, he is immediately instructed to pray unto God to give him His grace, that he 'may continue in the same all the days of his life.' It is a state or condition of salvation which can only lead to a successful issue by the use of the means of grace, and by the fulfilment of the obligations which the covenant, entered into at baptism, of necessity involves."

Concerning this question, however, What does the Church of England really teach in regard to baptismal regeneration? the authorities have seemed to give forth contradictory statements. Of this the historical Gorham case was in itself a notable example. When Dr. Phillpotts, the High Church bishop of Exeter, refused to institute Mr. Gorham into the living of Brampford-Speke, because spiritual regeneration in baptism was rejected as being contrary to the teaching of the Church, the bishop maintained that he was upholding what the Church demanded should be taught as Christian doctrine. When the case was tried in the Court of Arches, Mr. Gorham lost his case; but on the occasion of its being heard by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, the decision of the Court below was reversed, so that the appellant had to be allowed to take his living after all. The bishop instituted proceedings in three courts of law successively; and, by losing the

case in each instance, learned a lesson of a very wholesome kind. This shows in what sense Phillpotts himself understood the language of the Prayer Book. We find that when he preached, this was apparently a favourite theme; and he would go to the Homilies and the Prayer Book for proofs to show that the Church taught the doctrine of spiritual regeneration in baptism. No wonder that the evangelical clergy were greatly chagrined when Mr. Spurgeon maintained that such teachers as this were alone consistent when they subscribed to all that was contained in the Prayer Book.

One of the most remarkable contributions to this controversy appeared in The Record; and singularly enough, this was merely the reprint of an article which had appeared two years previously. In the course of a brief preface, the editor recommended the article—a critique upon Mozley's "Review of the Baptismal Controversy"—to the notice of Mr. Spurgeon himself, and offered this explanation:—

"Mr. Mozley is a well-known scholar of the Ultra-Church school. He was one of those who signed the protest against the Gorham judgment, and conscientiously believed that the literal interpretation of the baptismal service ought to exclude evangelicals from the Church; but when he came to examine the subject calmly he saw reason to change his opinions, and, with a candour which entitles him to the highest respect, he has declared that he was mistaken, and that the words of the baptismal service were not intended to 'impose the doctrine that all infants are regenerated in baptism.'"

According to The Record, the great value of the Gorham judgment consisted in its defeating the attempt to put a Popish interpretation on the Protestant Formularies. "It was also important as silencing, by the interpretation of the highest judicial authority, the unworthy taunt of insincerity which has often been thrown upon evangelical clergymen, who receive the baptismal service and the catechism in the sense understood by the fathers of our Reformation; because those words may appear to assert something different." It cannot be denied that the words may have had a somewhat different meaning in other days, that being the case with many other old English words.

Thus, the offence which the evangelical clergy held Mr. Spurgeon to have committed was the acceptance of the words of the Prayer Book in their modern sense, when the testimony of history showed that such meaning was directly opposite to what the compilers intended. Mr. Mozley carefully examined the English baptismal service and the catechism, as well as the Articles, giving some attention to the methods of interpreting "the baptismal language both of Calvinism and Lutheranism," and then he said:—

"The statement, therefore, that the Calvinistic hypothesis is inconsistent with the language of the Prayer Book, is an ill-considered statement, reflecting only a rough, offhand impression, which proper reflection would correct. It has obtained currency because it has appealed to this offhand impression; but an act of thought at once reveals its groundlessness.... The Prayer Book was submitted to the criticism of Calvinists after it was compiled; it was afterwards protected by Calvinists when it was attacked; it has been used quite naturally by thousands of pious and devout Calvinists of every generation, from the Reformation to the present day. The great battle of the sixteenth century in defence of the Prayer Book was conducted by two Calvinists—for Whitgift was the author of the Lambeth articles, and Hooker held the doctrine of the 'indefectibility of grace.'

"We have, then, in the facts appealed to in this chapter, the comment of an actual course of things upon the statement in the baptismal service; the truth being that this statement was inserted in the Prayer Book by men in intimate relation with divines of the Calvinistic school who distinctly held that only the elect were regenerate; that it was acquiesced in by the most rigid Calvinists of that period without a word of complaint; that the hypothetical interpretation of this statement was the dominant interpretation for a century after the Reformation; that the Laudian school, in its full power and highest ascendency, never thought of interfering with it; and that, lastly, an interpretation which was thus coeval with the very service itself was never legally called in question till the other day.

"The whole evidence, viewed collectively, appears to me conclusive in favour of the judgment of the Court of Appeal—viz., that our formularies do not impose the doctrine that all infants are regenerate in baptism." When the controversy reached its height, and every day during the summer some fresh contribution seemed to appear, some surprise was felt because the preacher's veteran champion, Dr. Campbell, remained silent. For weeks or months his paper had little or nothing to say on the subject beyond a passing reference; and when at length, on September 2, he commenced a series of seventeen articles, which were afterwards reprinted in a volume, the doctor did not write as a mere apologist of Mr. Spurgeon, the controversy was entered into on an independent footing. Both Churchmen and Nonconformists now urged him to publish his views. In the preface to his volume, Dr. Campbell attempted to define his position as a friend of Mr. Spurgeon, being careful to show that their relation to each other was not quite what it had been some years before, when the young preacher's friends had been far less numerous than his enemies. Apart from that, Spurgeon was no longer a sapling who needed holding up, but an oak of the forest and more than a match for all who assailed him. Dr. Campbell had, moreover, already written on the subject, and still professed to have much at heart "the correction and purification of the Liturgy of the Established Church." This led to his determination to go over the ground again. As, however, the matter in dispute was not whether baptismal regeneration was unscriptural—nearly all acknowledged that it was—but whether the evangelical clergy accepted the doctrine in their subscription to the Prayer Book, Dr. Campbell did not undertake to decide between the combatants. In the preface to the volume containing his articles, he thus referred to the controversy in general:—

"In my view, then, the statements of Mr. Spurgeon as to the general doctrine, in point of accuracy, are unimpeachable; truth has obviously, from first to last, been the sole object of his inquiry. His argument is, in my view, clear, cogent, and unanswerable. His complaints and remonstrances are, I think, well founded, and such as deserve the candid and serious consideration of those to whom they are addressed. His appeals and protests are, nevertheless, occasionally marked by an acritude of spirit, fitted to startle, scandalise, and exasperate.

"His style, too, more especially in the first discourse, is vehement and trenchant in a manner which has rarely been exceeded. His conceptions on the enormity of the evil in question are most vivid, and his convictions are in consequence exceedingly strong. The power of the discourse, however, arises less from its logical than from its rhetorical qualities. The error has been exposed and exploded in a manner the most convincing a thousand times; but never, I believe, was it exhibited to the public eye with colouring so vivid, and never was it pressed home on the clerical conscience with a force so thrilling, resistless, and terrible! But even Mr. Spurgeon's clinching logic, apart from

his devastating eloquence, would have left things very much as it found them. In that case, Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster, the publishers, would not have had to report the unparalleled issue of 350,000 copies of these discourses. Mr. Spurgeon's opponents have been so dazzled, I might almost say, concerning some of them, so infuriated by the daring drapery, as to lose sight of the subject-matter. They have merged the essentials in the circumstantials. There has, I think, been a mutual oversight. Neither party has duly estimated the position of the other. Mr. Spurgeon, in my view, has not made the allowance which equity and charity required, and which is made in the following articles, for the clergy; and the clergy have not made the allowance, the large allowance, for which we equally contend, on behalf of Mr. Spurgeon, whose training has been thoroughly scriptural, and in all points anti-Romanist. They have not, moreover, duly estimated the condition of a gentleman still far short of manhood's prime—a gentleman endowed with great powers and strong passions—holding forth in the midst of five thousand hearts beating in unison with his own, and with ten thousand admiring eyes converged on him. The case of such a man is extraordinary, unparalleled, and when placed in the balances of critical judgment and severe propriety, charity apart, it is, I contend, but just and fair to make a very large allowance for strong language—language stronger than I could have used; but, with his talents, temperament, views, and convictions, and placed in his circumstances, I might have spoken as he spake, without at all feeling that I had violated the strict rules of verity, justice, and Christian propriety."

Dr. Campbell had spoken at last; and although his views of the matter as a whole may not quite have satisfied his younger and more vehement friend, it is hard to see how the veteran journalist could have said more or less than he did in relation to both sides. He looked at the question in a calm judicial spirit; and while strongly condemning the doctrine itself, he did not see any reason for breaking off' his friendship with evangelical friends in the Church of England. On account of the extreme bitterness which it stirred up, the dispute was to be regretted; some thought Spurgeon might have exposed the unscripturalness of a Romish figment without alienating friends in the Establishment who did not believe in it any more than he did himself. Some of those friends reminded Mr. Spurgeon that they had helped him to rear the Tabernacle; and they thought that he had broken faith with them, or, at least, that continued friendship was rendered impossible. In the end, however, old friendships seem to have been renewed, and to have remained strong until death. On the other hand, there were evangelicals whose harsh language far surpassed anything Spurgeon himself had said, and, as was pointed out, violated the rules of the Evangelical Alliance. Take this example by Dr. Goode, Dean of Ripon, a voluminous writer on the subject in hand:—

"As to that young minister who is now raving against the evangelical clergy on this point, it is to be regretted that so much notice has been taken of his railings. He is to be pitied, because his entire want of acquaintance with theological literature leaves him utterly unfit for the determination of such a question, which is a question, not of mere doctrine, but of what may be called historical theology; and his charges are just a parallel to those which the Romanists would bring against himself as well as others for the interpretation of the words, 'This is My body.' But were he a wiser man than he is, he would know better what his qualifications are for passing judgment on such a point, and be willing to learn from such facts, among others, as the Gorham judgment and the cases of Mr. Maskell and Mr. Mozley, what ground there is for his charges against the evangelical clergy. Let him hold and enforce his own view of doctrine as he pleases; but when he undertakes to determine what is the exclusive meaning of the Book of Common Prayer, and brings a charge of

dishonesty against those who take a different view of that meaning from what he does, he only shows the presumptuous self-confidence with which he is prepared to pronounce judgment upon matters of which he is profoundly ignorant. To hold a controversy with him upon the subject would be to as little purpose as to attempt to hold a logically constructed argument with a child unacquainted with logical terms." At the best, Dr. Campbell did not find this controversy to be congenial to his taste; but though he did not acquit Mr. Spurgeon of using heated language, he vigorously properly resented such utterances as this of Dr. Goode.

Several deliverances on this dispute appeared in The Freeman, and among the letters were two by "A London Curate," which were written with some force. In the following passage the position of the evangelical clergy as they understood the matter themselves is very succinctly stated:—

"The real drift of Mr. Spurgeon's charge seems to me to be this, in rather quieter language—that the Church of England, by her doctrine of baptismal regeneration, teaches men to undervalue the necessity of a renewed and converted heart—the vital importance, that is, of spiritual life. This he might argue, giving even their real meaning to the phrases which I have quoted before. I shall at once endeavour to meet him by the example of the spiritual lives of the best Churchmen, by a claim for as much spiritual life amongst our 20,000 clergymen as there is amongst 20,000 ministers of any other form of religion, by an assertion that amongst the godly Church of England poor there is as much spiritual humility, as little confidence in mere privileges, as little trust in the flesh as will be found amongst any other godly men. I know that this would be only assertion, but Mr. Spurgeon's statements on these points are only assertions. If our mutual assertions are said to prove nothing, we must go back to the discussion of the standards of Church of England teaching—viz., her Liturgy and Articles; and there I am firmly convinced, as I have said before, that giving the Prayer Book that which cannot in justice be denied it—viz., the benefit of interpretation in the sense in which it was written, and not forcing upon it a sense invented after it was written—we shall find nothing about baptism saving the soul without spiritual life, any more than we shall find literally stated the benefit of 'the praying windmills of Thibet,' to which Mr. Spurgeon alludes." As an authority of that day remarked, Mr. Spurgeon's censors or critics were indeed legion. Clergymen of the Establishment of various grades, as well as Baptist ministers, and even City missionaries, assailed the preacher as one who was speaking beside the mark, or who did not very clearly understand the matter in hand. Occasionally even members of the Evangelical Alliance appeared to add to the confusion by publishing what were supposed to be their utterances in the interests of charity. While a large proportion of the combatants were opposed to Spurgeon, there was not a little disagreement among themselves. One who stood before the world as a clergyman of the Establishment sent forth "The Spurgeon Antidote." Another showed to his own satisfaction, if not to that of his readers, that what he called "the Popish error of baptismal regeneration" was not a doctrine of the Church of England. In opposition to this, another clergyman showed to a demonstration that it was in reality the teaching of the Church. One curate thought he was able to prove that Spurgeon himself taught such a doctrine; while another curate attempted in his way to impose the closure on the controversy by his brochure, "The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon Settled." There was much besides, hard hitting by angry opponents being diversified by unexpected rebukes from friends. If any industrious reader should succeed in wading through a complete set of the publications of this controversy, he will never be tempted to repeat the experiment should he survive the first entertainment. "Seriously, one is quite bewildered,"

remarked one editor, as he surveyed his table, amply furnished as it was. "To read with patient attention so much crude theology is really beyond our power." The majority of the pieces printed were not by any means contributions to our standard literature. "We have looked through each pamphlet or tract sent to us with the honest desire to find something: worth noticing," said The Freeman; but in the main there was little or nothing of interest. What really appeared was that recognised Churchmen were "chiefly angry with the matter of the attack," while others objected to the manner. The Freeman agreed with Mr. Spurgeon without so many qualifications as some others, such as Dr. Campbell, for example; but this, of course, arose from the subject being viewed from a Baptist standpoint.

Here we may take leave of a controversy which stirred up much angry feeling on both sides, and which probably did not do so much for the furtherance of truth as the combatants hoped. But even those who regarded the evangelical clergy with most affection felt that the revision of the Prayer Book was more than ever necessary. Hence, Spurgeon did not speak in vain.

Chapter 54: Work and Progress in 1864

Chapter 54.

Work and Progress in 1864

Temperance—Helensburgh—Work at the Tabernacle—A Remarkable Service—The Christian World and its Editor—The Divine Decrees—Glasgow.

For years after his coming to London Mr. Spurgeon was so little of a teetotal advocate in the conventional sense that, as has been already shown, he said something which J. B. Gough resented in language too warm to be pleasant. There seems to have been a tendency towards total abstinence in the College, however, which the President had no desire to check; and in the summer of 1864 a temperance society in connection with that institution was formed. The late Dr. Hannay attended as a deputation from the National Temperance League; and the chair was occupied by Mr. J. R. Selway, who was then scientific lecturer in the College, and who accepted the post of president of the society. To-day a large proportion of the pastors educated in the College are ardent teetotallers.

During the days now under review, many friendly messages passed between Clapham and Helensburgh, where John Anderson, the Free Church pastor, still preached, in a sense, after the manner of Baxter—"As a dying man to dying men." In the early summer Mr. Anderson made one of his flying visits to London; and having hastened back to Scotland without calling at Nightingale Lane, the following letter was sent to him on Midsummer Day:—

"Helensburgh House, "My Dear Mr. Anderson, "June 24, 1864.

"You deprived us of a great pleasure by flying home without alighting at our nest; but we felt very much comfort in the thought that your wings had grown strong, and that you were hoping to sing the old sweet song. I am very much your debtor for the kind token of remembrance you have sent me; I shall read it with great pleasure.

"The good work grows in my hands; the battle thickens; the victory is all the nearer. My sermon on baptismal regeneration has stirred up the rattlesnakes' den; but as their venomous fangs cannot reach me they may rattle as long as they please. Of course, I lose the friendship of the evangelicals; but I can bear that sooner than an ill conscience.

"The College prospers abundantly. The men are much in request, and usually succeed in the highest degree—especially in soul-winning. Passmore is out sniffing the salt sea, and we are beginning to look, like Elijah's servant, in the same direction. We cannot, however, venture into the 'land o' cakes,' for an habitation is already secured in the little village of Walton-on-the-Naze. My kindest regards I hereby present you; praying that your health may be confirmed, your ministry blest, and your heart encouraged. Mrs. Spurgeon and the boys send also their love.—Yours ever truly, "C. H. Spurgeon."

Although he made no pretensions to being a teetotaller, we find Mr. Spurgeon about this time giving a lecture on Poland on behalf of the funds of the Band of Hope Union. The pastor's deliverance on the subject of the oppressed Poles so delighted Dr. Campbell that he called the lecturer "that mighty man-of-all-work." What had been spoken in the British Senate on this subject was declared to be "but fribble and babble" in comparison. The young patriot's old friend added: "We wish Mr. Spurgeon could have found his way into the House of Commons for the occasion, and have poured himself out in the hearing of the gallery, that his grand, glorious, and philanthropic aspirations might have gone forth to the ends of the world on the wings of the British Press." This may be grandiloquent, but it is characteristic.

Dr. Marsh, for whom Mr. Spurgeon harboured a high opinion, died in August at the age of ninety years. The doctor may be regarded as the last member of the original Clapham Set; for he had been associated with Simeon of Cambridge, Henry Thornton, and William Wilberforce. The progress of the work at the Metropolitan Tabernacle during the year 1864 was in all respects encouraging and satisfactory. Mr. Spurgeon had now been ten years in London; and the way in which the small and scattered congregation at New Park Street had been revived was generally regarded as the most striking thing which had ever occurred in the annals of Nonconformity. The old chapel, capable of seating 1,200 persons, had been crowded from the outset of the pastor's career; and the great Tabernacle, into which 7,000 could be packed, had been filled on Sundays from the day of its opening. The church which removed from New Park Street in March, 1861, numbered nearly 1,200 members. At the close of 1864 this total had increased to nearly 2,900. Altogether, Mr. Spurgeon had received close upon 3,600 into membership; and out of this number 47 had become ministers of the Gospel, 7 were working as City missionaries, while 3 were Biblewomen. The aim was to make this great organisation a good example of a working church. In the general oversight of his large flock, the pastor was assisted by ten deacons and over twenty elders. The deacons, who were elected for life, had to "serve tables," or look after the temporal affairs of the church; the elders were chosen annually, and it was their business to see candidates for membership, etc. It was necessary thus early, also, to have an assistant in the pastorate, whose duty it was to attend to cases of discipline and to visit the people in their own homes. Mr. J. T. Dunn succeeded Mr. Ness in this office. Great care was taken in the matter of selecting candidates, or the roll of membership would have been a much greater one. No candidates save those who had made a favourable impression on one of the elders were seen by the pastor, and he was thus saved from work which others were as capable of doing as himself. In the course of his duties in connection with the Church and the College, the pastor came in contact with many remarkable characters. One good man, who is said to be still living, was a convert before he was even able to read. His wife was accustomed to read the Scriptures to him; and with the texts in his memory he would go out into back streets, or wherever he could draw together a congregation, and then proclaim the Gospel with a power which was altogether singular under the circumstances. In due course others were themselves converted; but there were persons who did not quite approve of a man undertaking to preach who was so illiterate. Complaints of the assumed irregularity were even made to Mr. Spurgeon, and it seemed necessary that the pastor should see the offender. "Well, brother, so you are out preaching," said Mr. Spurgeon. "I do not know much about preaching, sir," replied the other; "but bless the Lord, I must tell of His love to me, and try to bring others to love Him." "But I am told that you do not know grammar." "Grammar! What's that, sir?" asked the young Christian, with an expression of perplexity on his features which

at least showed his honesty. The conversation went on a little longer, and after further explanations had been given, Mr. Spurgeon turned to his deacons and said: "This good brother means to preach, and there is only one way to stop him that I know of, and that is to take his head off." My informant remarks that no deacon, "not even in those days," was equal to such an undertaking as that; and, being in full sympathy with them, the pastor added, "If you do not feel disposed to take his head off, the next best thing will be to put something in it." The result of the interview was that the illiterate evangelist was taken in hand; he was first of all sent to a night-school, and afterwards he was received into the College. He has now been preaching, with good results, for over thirty years.

About the same time that this happened, Mr. Spurgeon was continually meeting with adventures in the provinces, of which it is to be regretted that a more particular account was not preserved by those who accompanied him. Thus, when a visit was paid to Ogbourne St. George, near Marlborough, the service would have been held in the open air; out wintry weather came on, and other arrangements had to be made. There was a wealthy farmer in the place who had a tent erected to accommodate a thousand people, and to provide seats for them he ordered a stack of prime meadow hay to be cut into trusses as level as forms, and the perfume of which filled the tent. When this was done a heavy fall of snow came on, which covered the ground for over fourteen inches. The distance from the village to the tent was a quarter of a mile; and in order to give the people a dry path, the farmer who had put up the tent had a rick of straw cut up, and with this the road was plentifully covered, so that no one had to complain of damp. "I know I have many Primitive Methodists here," said Mr. Spurgeon; who then added, "I was converted in a Primitive Methodist chapel; but I soon got over to the other side of the hedge." It was a memorable occasion; and one who heard Mr. Spurgeon many times afterwards says that he never heard the great preacher with more pleasure or profit than when the sermon was given in that village tent at Ogbourne St. George.

Among the friends who stood by Mr. Spurgeon and advocated his cause in the days now under review, must be reckoned the late Mr. James Clarke, editor and proprietor of The Christian World. For some years the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle strongly recommended Mr. Clarke's paper; and when he felt that he could no longer give such a recommendation on account of its broad theological tendencies, Mr. Spurgeon still received his old friend's annual contribution to the College funds.

Like Mr. Spurgeon, James Clarke was an Essex man, though his early days were spent at Ipswich. When he came to London as a young man to make his way, he for a time acted as shorthand amanuensis to Dr. Campbell. The young man, who had been reared in an evangelical school as strict as that in which Mr. Spurgeon himself had been brought up, was not only in hearty sympathy with all Christian work, he was himself an active worker, who would preach, as opportunity offered, in lodging-house kitchens or in the open air. At that time Spurgeon was no doubt regarded by the young journalist as one of the best models of a Christian worker the times had produced; but while the pastor still adhered to his grandfather's teaching, Mr. Clarke embraced broader, and what he regarded as more liberal, views. At the same time, the busy journalist looked on the varied work in progress with a friendly eye; and not only gave money to it, but in his paper, in a way, advocated Spurgeon's cause. In addition to accounts from time to time of meetings and of work, helpful notices of Mr. Spurgeon's works also appeared in The Christian

World. The attitude of each toward the other was that of a man who agreed to differ with his fellow and to remain friendly. Without any compromise of principle on either side, I wrote for Mr. Clarke's paper at the time I was serving Mr. Spurgeon on The Sword and the Trowel. Each was well aware that I served the other, and I was handsomely treated by both. A man who preached a sermon every week could not expect never to utter a sentiment from which none even of his best friends dissented. On May 8 a sermon was preached at the Tabernacle on "Divine Decrees;" and one passage, which seemed to declare that every act and thought of man was pre-ordained by the Creator, was taken exception to as savouring of fatalism. One writer, who called attention to this discourse, says its doctrine was pointed out to him by a friend. "It had filled him with consternation, and he was carrying the sermon about in his pocket in order to keep it from falling into the hands of his young people." The writer proceeds:—

"Now, the first thing that occurs to one to ask on reading such a passage is, How does Mr. Spurgeon know this? Has he access to some source of information not open to other intelligent men? He cannot find it, nor anything like it, in the Bible. If he can, he can tell us where, and so place the matter beyond dispute. The truth is, the Bible is very reticent on this subject of the Divine decrees; while I believe there is not one of its writers who would not have shrunk with horror from identifying the contents of that 'hidden roll' with the black and troubled history of this bad and miserable world. But has Mr. Spurgeon seen the 'roll' himself? Or has someone else seen it and told him all that it contains? In either case it is no longer a 'hidden roll,' and it must be competent to Mr. Spurgeon, if he chooses to use the power he has acquired, to make the whole world acquainted with its contents. That would, indeed, be a new revelation, and such as would throw utterly into the shade the Book which God has given us to be our guide.

"But if Mr. Spurgeon does not know this, his assertion is very bold, and I, for one, think it is a very daring one. If 'God had written down with His wise finger every thought which man should think, every word which he should utter, and every deed which he should do,' then He had so written down all that Mr. Spurgeon was thinking, saying, and doing at that moment. Mr. Spurgeon's sermon, therefore, is nothing more than a copy taken from that 'hidden roll' and first preached to his people, and then handed to Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster for the purpose of a wider circulation. And not only so, but all the worst thoughts which men have indulged, all the vilest words they have uttered, and all the wickedest acts they have performed, are traceable to the same paternity. Let the world once come to believe that, and there is an end of conscience and duty together." In such a case as this, the preacher probably did not intend to teach all that "Delta" inferred, and it was a case in which a public man might well have offered some further explanation. In itself, as quoted, the passage looks very much like what a fatalist might have said; but Mr. Spurgeon was no fatalist, and the discourse must be read as a whole before any fair judgment can be given.

While the year 1864 was drawing to a close, all the works carried on at the Metropolitan Tabernacle showed no signs of flagging. Some thought that increased energy was apparent. The preacher had no doubt alienated a certain number of friends by the action he had taken in regard to the question of baptismal regeneration, but his popularity was not in any way diminished. The question which had been asked before again arose—Would Spurgeon found a sect after the manner of Wesley or the Countess of Huntingdon? Some supposed that this would be the natural development of his system. As one said, "He is being rapidly surrounded by a system which will

probably go on to develop itself till nothing further remains to effect this end. He is less of an Independent, be it known, than of a Presbyterian; and the probabilities are that his community will be worked up into a close, compact structure, which will render a hundred churches more efficient for good than several hundreds united by no tie." This is no doubt a correct representation of the case. If Mr. Spurgeon had not been a Baptist, he would probably have joined one of the Presbyterian communions.

One of the stations which had been among the first to be visited by Spurgeon when he was the boy-preacher of the Fens, had been Milton, in Cambridgeshire; and on the 9th of November, 1864, the memorial-stone of a new chapel was laid. For half a century the place had been visited by the Baptist local preachers, the services being carried on in an ancient barn fitted up as a chapel. At length a friend presented a site for a new sanctuary, and the stone-laying festival was a high day at Milton. New Testaments were given to all young persons who chose to apply for them; a tea-meeting was held at the White Horse Inn, and the stimulating addresses were followed by a good collection. On November 14 Mr. Spurgeon preached in a chapel situated close to Vauxhall Gardens, Mr. Hearson, one of the College students, having done some good aggressive Christian work in that district. The building was not a new one; it had been erected some years before by the Independents, and after being vacated by them it was used as an Episcopal chapel. Mr. Hearson had already collected a congregation, and the chapel being available, he and his people removed into it. On November 25 another visit was paid to Glasgow, when Mr. Spurgeon preached at Elgin Place Chapel and also at the City Hall, on account of the somewhat heavy debt on North Frederick Street Chapel, where Mr. T. W. Medhurst, the first student, was stationed. Great congregations were attracted, and a sum of £100 was collected. On December 15 the autumn session of the Pastors' College was brought to a close, and on Friday, the 16th, there was a tea for friends, after which a meeting took place in the Tabernacle. The popularity of the work at this date may be inferred from the fact that close upon two thousand persons came to tea, and about double that number attended the after-meeting.

Chapter 55: The Sword and the Trowel

Chapter 55.

"The Sword and the Trowel"

Starting a Magazine—Prospects of Success—Dr. dimming—The College—Temperance—Spurgeon and "The Prophets"—Some Reminiscences.

At this time Dr. dimming ranked as "The Times Bee-Master;" and in a work on bee-keeping he made some remarks on Spurgeon and the baptismal controversy which were not at all approved at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. "I wish that somebody would send Mr. Spurgeon a super of good honey. Three months' diet on this celestial food would induce him to give up those shockingly bitter and unchristian tirades he has been lately making against the clergy of the Church of England." In answer to this prescription issued for his benefit, Mr. Spurgeon recommended that his brother of Crown Court should give less honey and more salt in his public ministrations. If he saw the reasonableness of this, and liked to follow the advice, Dr. Cumming was promised that a brick of the best salt should be sent to him carriage paid. The first wedding that took place in the new Tabernacle was solemnised at the opening of 1865, Mr. G. D. Evans, who had been educated in the College, being married to Miss Sarah Hockett. Some two or three thousand persons assembled to witness the ceremony, and in the name of the Church the pastor presented the happy pair with a family Bible. It is to be regretted that Mr. Spurgeon's wedding addresses and prayers were not all taken down. For several years it was Spurgeon's custom to preach on the first Sabbath morning of each year from a text of Scripture selected by "an esteemed brother," who was a clergyman of the Established Church. On New Year's morning, 1865, the subject was "True Unity Promoted," the text being Eph 4:3, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The annual week of prayer, at the beginning of the year, was also observed as usual, the weekly prayer-meeting at the Metropolitan Tabernacle being crowded and pervaded by much fervour. This gathering was, according to arrangement, the central one for London, and really commenced at three o'clock in the afternoon. On successive evenings similar meetings were held in other chapels in various parts of London, these being visited by Mr. Spurgeon, who appears to have given an address at each place. Edward Leach, Mr. Spurgeon's literary assistant, thus referred to these gatherings, which appear to have been remarkable for their fervour:—

"'A little cloud... like a man's hand.' A few ministers who had set their congregations the bad example of not knowing much of one another, formed themselves into a little society. Once a month they met for conference and prayer at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, under the presidentship of C. H. Spurgeon. Expectancy should always follow prayer. A blessing was expected. First it came as a little cloud. An earnest spirit of revival then manifested itself in the central church. The flame spread. The new year approached. It was decided to open it with a special week of prayer. The first day 6,000 souls filled the Tabernacle, earnest addresses were delivered, sobbed-out petitions presented to the Throne of Grace, and the Holy Ghost descended, making saints feel intensely their miserable insignificance, and sinners their wretched condition, as unsaved and

undone.... On the Tuesday following the second great meeting, Sabbath-school teachers met at Upton Chapel, where the Rev. G. D. Evans labours so acceptably, and invoked the Divine blessing on this means of extending the Saviour's kingdom. On Wednesday evening meetings were held simultaneously at the houses of at least fifty-five members of the Tabernacle church, where earnest souls sought unitedly for the blessing of revival upon the Christian churches.... The Baptist denomination, unfortunately, has much to answer for. Its lukewarmness for years past is most incredible. Its slothful-ness, its lack of care for sinners on the one hand, and its wilful perversion of doctrine and blindness in preaching free-grace invitations on the other, have, we fear, caused it to be a byword in the land. And yet out of these dry bones God is creating, and will more abundantly create, new, young, and invigorated life. The Baptist churches of England will soon have to bear a mighty witness for God. Some of them, headed by Mr. Spurgeon, have made a valiant stand for truth against the Popish dogmas of baptismal regeneration and priestly absolution. Other antichrists have to be dethroned, and these most of all, for though they have had a severe bruising, the mortal stab has yet to be given." At the beginning of this year, a testimonial, amounting to £3,000, and supplementary to a donation of £500 previously subscribed, was presented to Dr. Campbell. As already intimated, Mr. Spurgeon subscribed liberally to this fund; and we find that he referred to the veteran journalist and his friends in genial terms.

One of the chief things to be noted in connection with the year 1865 is the issue of Mr. Spurgeon's magazine, The Sword and the Trowel, which commenced in January, and has been continued until the present time. It would appear that during some years previously there was an inclination to found such a monthly periodical; but one objection was, that it would have a tendency to injure the sale of The Baptist Magazine, the recognised monthly organ of the denomination, which had already been in existence for over half a century. When he became joint-editor of that venerable publication, Mr. Spurgeon's attention was diverted from the enterprise which had suggested itself to his mind; but now that an experiment, which had ended in failure, had been made, he was more at liberty to follow his own inclination. The constituency at the Metropolitan Tabernacle was at that time almost large enough in itself to be represented by an organ of its own; but when to this was added the large number of friends throughout the country who ranked as friends of Mr. Spurgeon, the prospect of success was encouraging. The circulation attained ranged from ten to fifteen thousand, and till the editor's death this was well maintained. Of course, the success of such a venture could have been more striking had "success," as conventionally understood, been the one aim of the projector. Mr. Spurgeon had his own notions, however, concerning what such a magazine should be, and the path marked out would not be departed from for the sake of any temporary advantage. The magazine would not be undenominational, for example, and that alone would be likely to bar its progress in many quarters. As regarded the staff, the editor depended mainly upon himself, well knowing that his own name would attract buyers in the book-market quite as readily as the most brilliant list of contributors. Thus, in the very first number, he commenced the exposition of the Psalms, which, as "The Treasury of David," in seven volumes, is no doubt his greatest literary achievement. He was helped by several competent friends who surrounded him, some who had passed through the College being of the number, while Mr.

Rogers, the Principal of that institution, assisted in the editorship. One of the early contributors was Edward Leach, who became subeditor until the end of 1871, when he resigned his position and accepted the editorship of The Freeman. On March 6, what appears to have been the first

conference of the Pastors' College was held, and this has been continued annually until the present time. It was felt that some bond of union was needed to hold together those who had been educated in the College, and consequently an Association was formed. It was proposed and agreed upon that the members of this brotherhood should believe in the doctrines of grace, in believers' baptism, and that they should be earnest in their endeavours to extend the kingdom of Christ. There appear to have been nearly 140 members present. On Wednesday, March 8, a tea and a supper were given by a friend, who continued the practice for some years; and the President appears to have been quite in his element as he described the character of the work in progress. The surroundings were of a kind to make him cheerful; for among those present were not only some of the best men who had gone forth from the College, the work promised to extend in all directions in a way which at first could not have been anticipated. Mr. Spurgeon went over the old story of how he had commenced with one student; and how the supplies from America, on which he had depended, suddenly fell off in consequence of his anti-slavery views. The President added:—

"The funds of the College got very low, and when they were at the lowest, some lady unknown sent a cheque for £200, and afterwards another for £100 was sent. The number of students is now ninety-three, and means has never yet been wanting for their support. The weekly offerings of the church began at £3, and now they are £50 or £60 per week. Money, in fact, is sent from all parts of the world. The number of students settled over churches during the past year is about thirty. A fund has been established, which now amounts to £5,000, to assist in the enlargement and rebuilding of chapels, on the principle of advances without interest, repayable by instalments extending over a series of years. The expenditure of the College is now about £3,500 a year. About sixty-two of the students of the College are now settled as pastors of churches in various parts of the country."

Ministers, such as Mr. Grange of Landport, and Mr. Medhurst of Glasgow, gave accounts of their work, which were regarded as the best possible testimony to the success of the College. The health of the Queen was drunk with loyal enthusiasm, and then followed a toast in honour of the friend who provided the supper. There were 300 guests at the tables, the pastor's father being of the number. On Tuesday, March 14, the Tabernacle was densely crowded, the attraction being "Sermons in Candles," illustrated by emblems and dissolving views. Mr. Charles Gilpin occupied the chair, the lecture being given on behalf of the Band of Hope Union. Mr. W. R. Selway, the scientific lecturer to the College, appears, as we have said, to have been an ardent total abstainer, and both among the students of the College and among the congregation generally, he did what he could to advance teetotal principles. On that evening he had the satisfaction of inaugurating a Band of Hope in connection with the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and the first members to be received were the twin sons of the pastor, who were then eight years and a-half old. The two boys stood forward, and, amid the loud applause of the congregation, Mr. Selway placed around the neck of each a Band of Hope medal. "Master Charles, in a clear voice, which was distinctly heard by nearly, if not quite, all present, thanked the audience for the kind way in which they had welcomed him into the Band of Hope, and said he hoped he should always be a teetotaller. Master Thomas said: 'My dear friends, I thank you for your kindness, and hope I shall grow up to be an honourable man, and to keep my promise.'" The chairman confessed to being deeply moved by this incident. In reply to a vote of thanks, Mr. Spurgeon said: "I am not a teetotaller myself, and it is

not likely that I ever shall be. I believe, however, that if children are brought up to abstain from alcoholic liquors they will never need them; and therefore I think it right that they should have no instruction in the use of them from their parents. I will go quite as far as that with the Band of Hope, and knowing that the society does a great deal of good, I am glad to help it as much as I possibly can." On the following evening Mr. Spurgeon was again at the Tabernacle, and presided at a meeting of evangelists, who, working in connection with the church and congregation, carried on a most genuine and far-reaching work. The present Mr. W. J. Orsman, of the London County Council, as the honorary secretary, gave an account of what was being done. Quite apart from students trained in the College, there were some fifty young men who, in various ways, voluntarily devoted their leisure hours to evangelistic service, preaching in cottages, halls, or in the open air, as opportunity offered. There were also about eighty others of both sexes who, on each Sabbath, took Spurgeon's sermons bound up as loan tracts, and left them at the houses of the poor and the working people who liked to receive them. A branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society had also been established, by which means over 1,100 copies of the Scriptures had been circulated in the course of two months. Among those who gave addresses on that occasion were Judge Payne and Gawin Kirkham, both being valued friends of the pastor. Mr. Spurgeon was always cheered by those who laboured in this disinterested manner, the work of Mr. Orsman being especially valued. On April 24 Mr. Spurgeon attended a meeting of the United Methodist Free Church at Exeter Hall, when a notice of a coming lecture on "Mind Your P's and Q's" afforded him an opportunity of indulging in some humorous remarks:—

"I am very glad to be here, but am sorry I have to speak, having already spoken twice during the evening and hurried from one meeting to another. But then one is always at home with Methodists—because they are full of warmth; and more at home still with those Methodists who are quite free; and again, with those Methodists who are not, like Mahomet's coffin, hanging half-way between heaven and earth, with regard to the State Church, and not knowing where they are. I am glad to be among you because I know you are sound in that matter, and that when that question comes to be fought out we shall find you, having been true to principle in other things, true in this; and you will not, when the time comes for the fresh Reformation, act on the plea of Erasmus, 'Are there not good people in it, and must it not be spared?' whereas from pinnacle to foot-stone it must be pulled down."

Reference was then made to the great work in which the Primitive Methodists were engaged. Mr. Spurgeon enlarged on the miracle of the loaves and fishes, showing that the lesson taught to believers in this age was that substance, talents, and all things available, must be consecrated to the work:—

"The United Methodist Free Churches must take stock. How many loaves and fishes have they? Bring them, though they may some of them be barley loaves—little fishes, though some of them may chance to be;—bring them to the Master's hand, and He will bless and break, and there will be enough for all the millions; yes, enough and to spare. The resolution recognises the claims of the ignorant, benighted, and spiritually destitute millions both at home and abroad. That is enough; if a Free Methodist recognises a claim, he says, 'I intend to pay you.' If you cannot pay just now all the claim, if you keep on recognising it at every collection and every opportunity, the debt will hold good at law, and it will still be right to recognise it. The churches at home have been blessed by having kept before them, by means of missions, the duty which they owe to Christ. I like missions

most of all for this peculiar reason of my own—they secure an issue for the higher spiritual life of their churches. There are brethren whose prayers seem as if they shake the gates of hell and open the doors of heaven—brethren who have communed with Christ till you know they have been with Him. If we have not missionary work, these people will be thorns in our sides. As the walls of Jericho are invested, so are we going round the walls of heathendom. Let us not expect so much for the present, but wait for the future, remembering that the measure of what we should do must be the claims which we recognise, rather than the results which we may expect. This is God's work, and our work under God, and we must undertake it as for death and life, with time before us fleeing, and eternity behind us hastening on. We must all take our places by prayer, by gifts, by efforts—by all means we must all be at it; but we will never bring down the walls of this Jericho except by prayer and faith. The text says something about hastening on the coming of the kingdom. I cannot quite get into that part, but I will just illuminate you a little as to my own view of the second coming of the lord if you will bear with me. This I do by graphically comparing our position to that of Prince Immanuel's troops when they fought outside the walls of Mansoul with Diabolus and his crew, ere the shrill sound of the trumpet heralded the approach of the Lord Himself. I assure you, in conclusion, that I am thrice happy to be here; let us still go on and conquer both at home and abroad, having as our motto still that of John Wesley, 'The best of all is, God is with us.'" In consequence of his leaving England early in the month of May, Mr. Spurgeon did not do much in the way of speaking at the religious anniversaries. Indeed, he was showing signs of great weariness, and may have hurried away to escape the ordeal; for notwithstanding the seeming ease with which he got through such work, it was always a heavy trial of strength to him. Before taking some weeks of needed rest, however, he preached a fine discourse on behalf of the Baptist Irish Society. A quarter of a century ago, a certain school of theologians, who also became prophets, were looking forward with great interest to the year 1866, predicting, with some confidence, that it would be "a year of wonders." On one occasion the subject of Mr. Spurgeon's sermon was Joshua and his army encompassing the walls of Jericho. The modern Jericho was believed to be Romanism; her walls were destined to come down, and when that happened, the glory of the kingdom of Christ would shine out more resplendent than ever. A friend, who had a brother labouring in Ireland, was attracted to the Tabernacle to hear this discourse, and he wrote down the impressions which were made upon his mind:—

"The divisions of Mr. Spurgeon's sermon were Work, Wait, and Win. It was well calculated to stimulate zealous souls to action; and there is no immediate necessity for finding fault with Christian people for overmuch working; there has been so little done by Protestants and so much done by Papists, and all the dark and death-like forces, that really we seem to need some stimulants to set us going. There was one point in Mr. Spurgeon's sermon I distinctly noticed. Referring to the 'signs of the times,' he said, there always had been 'signs of the times,' which remark was quite true; but the sweeping sentence was this: Mr. Spurgeon did not believe in the near approach of any remarkable crisis, for many reasons; one was, because all the prophets said we were fast approaching the end; 'but,' said he, 'all the prophets are liars;' of course, he meant those prophets who made a profit out of their prophesying. As I do not know who these prophets are, I will not say much. Dr. dimming has, doubtless, made large sums by his literary productions; but, having carefully read some of his works, I am not prepared to pronounce all his predictions false. The fact is, Dr. Cumming in England and Mr. Baxter in America are two great collectors of the testimonies and predictions of all the students of prophecy for many centuries; and it is

remarkable that multitudes of grave, gracious, and intelligent writers have all thought that ere 1875 has come solemn changes would be seen, and that 1866 did stand in their eye as a great culminating period. I am afraid of that spirit—'Where is the promise of His coming?' etc. etc. And to pronounce 'all the prophets as liars' came to me exceedingly harsh; yea, more than that, it was calculated, I feared, to influence thousands of minds, and lead them in a wrong direction."

Mr. Spurgeon continued to manifest great interest in the prosperity of the Baptist interest at Winslow; and at the beginning of May he again visited and preached two sermons in the little town in which his distinguished predecessor in the pastorate, Benjamin Keach, had laboured in the seventeenth century. About forty of the leading people dined together, and the balance-sheet of the building fund showed that the chapel—the memorial-stone of which Mr. Spurgeon had laid about a year previously—had cost £638. He not only encouraged the enterprise by his presence, he successively gave several handsome donations to the building fund.

Some few weeks after this a visit was paid to a village in Berkshire, which is still vividly remembered by Mr. Goldston, of Hastings, who was present, and who supplies a description of the scene. Mr. Goldston was then living at Caversham, near Reading, but he afterwards removed to London and became a member and an elder of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. I much regret that other friends have not preserved similar records of many other days which were equally memorable. Mr. Goldston writes:—"A few miles from Caversham is a village called Pepphard. Here, in the summer of 1865, the usual annual gathering was held, when the country churches for miles round met to make a holy-day of their annual holiday. A religious service is held in the open air, and a collection is made for the village minister. On this occasion Mr. Spurgeon had promised to preach.

"For months previously the people had talked of his coming; yet there was a doubt, as gout had already prevented his fulfilling some engagements. However, although suffering in the right foot and in great pain, the beloved servant of God was able to take the journey.

"To describe the scene on our way from Beading to Pepphard, with the increasing multitude of pedestrians, and the hundreds of vehicles from Henley, Beading, Wokingham, Bracknell, and other places, would be to say, 'it was like going to Henley Regatta.' The opportunity was limited, as there was to be but one sermon, and that in the afternoon; consequently, the privilege was a rare one for the country people, and they were determined to be there in time. But haste was impossible, for it was difficult for one conveyance to pass another in those narrow country lanes.

"Assembled in a spacious meadow, surrounded by all that is beautiful of nature's bounty, in farms, fields, flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, it was a fitting time to have the mind 'drawn up to Nature's God.' On this occasion, also, a waggon was used as a platform, and the opening prayer brought sweet calm with holy expectation.

"The preacher took for his text the words, 'Thy name is as ointment poured forth,' Sol. Song of Solomon 1:3. It was one of his happiest seasons. One said to another, referring to the preacher, 'He gets deeper down than most of us, sir.' 'Yes; he do put the spade in deep, don't he?' was the reply.

"This sermon occupied nearly an hour in its delivery, and the people (although standing all the time) gave no evidence of weariness or of inclination to leave; and it was said that the preacher's

voice could be heard at a distance of more than a mile. Twenty-five years and more have passed since that day; but there are still living in the villages of Pepphard and Caversham, also in the town of Beading, those who saw more of Christ that day than they had ever seen before." At this period visits of this kind were continually being made to country congregations, and the results, in the way of stimulating local revivals of religion, are no doubt visible even in the present day. That the preacher was wearing out faster than he supposed must now be recognised; but his temperament was such that, so long as health and strength held out, he could hardly rest save by changing his work.

Chapter56: In Switzerland and Italy

Chapter 56.

In Switzerland and Italy

Rest Needed—Among the Swiss Mountains—Venice—Italy—The Continental Sunday—The Island Church—Sacra Monte—The St. Bernard Hospice—Dr. Pritchard and Constance Kent—The Freeman.

As the spring of the year 1865 advanced, it became again evident that there would have to be another lengthened break in Mr. Spurgeon's round of toil. Although he was only thirty years old, he had already done what might have passed for the work of a lifetime: he had gathered an immense congregation, he had founded a college, while the ten volumes of his published sermons might have ranked as a respectable body of divinity. Now the preacher had to confess, however, that preaching the Word had been somewhat of a weariness or a drag—symptoms of an ailment which rest alone could cure. Accordingly, on Sunday, May 7, he told the congregation thai; he found it necessary to leave England for a season for change of scene, and to seek refreshment both for mind and body. Before the end of the week the report was circulated that the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle had gone to the Holy Land; but in point of fact Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon had started off together for a tour on the Continent. The object he had in view this time was rest above all things, so that the journey differed from other European rounds which had been undertaken, because it was not made laborious by formal visits and preaching on extraordinary occasions. The tourists passed through France into Switzerland, and made their first stop at Basle, the capital of the canton of the same name, and the richest city in Switzerland. The next stage was to Lugano, with its beautiful lake of deep transparent water and matchless amphitheatre of hills. Though a small place in comparison with Basle, the surroundings of Lugano would be more interesting; for to spend any time amid such scenery was to Spurgeon a more profitable exercise than reading books, because the thousand and one things he looked upon gave him illustrations for future use. Como, the birthplace of Pliny the Younger, was next reached, the journey thus increasing in interest at every stage. The old town, with its double walls, strong towers, and narrow crowded lanes, which passed for streets, was a contrast indeed to the surpassing beauty of the natural surroundings, or to the attractions of the shores of the justly celebrated lake. Amid the olive gardens and vineyards, the orchards and richly productive fields of the country around the base of the mountains, Mr. Spurgeon found a country after his own heart. It was possible to rest, and at the same time to gather materials for future service. As the preacher looked out upon the striking scenes which Nature presented, he called it the Work-Volume of the Creator, as distinguished from the Word-Volume which it had been the work of his life to expound. The party next went on to Venice, which was then under the Austrian yoke; but apart from that, and apart from the degraded superstition of its Romanism, it was a city in which Mr. Spurgeon saw hardly anything but beauty. The characteristics of the city rendered a sojourn in it as novel as it was delightful to one of the distinguished visitor's temperament. "We did not need to walk," he said, "for in a gondola one

might travel all day long in that wonderful city." The fact was, that a person wishing to walk could leave an hotel by one door, and step out into the solid street; by going out at another door, a canal with its gondolas offered a more delightful method of transit. In the city itself, however, the eye was entertained more than the ear. To a sturdy Calvinist, who had just come straight from Switzerland, with its stimulating memories of the Reformation, Venice was a beautiful place, but a spiritual desert. "It would be a great mercy if one could dispense with ears whilst there," said Mr. Spurgeon; "for there is an infinite number of churches, and the bells are ringing twenty-five hours out of the twenty-four. I give that as a guess as to the number of hours," he added; "they began to ring as soon as they left off. By night and by day there was nothing but a perpetual ringing of bells. Out at sea in a gondola the sound was lovely, but near it was a horrid ding-dong." All this discord, which the people associated with the worship of God, carried home its lesson to the ready mind of such an observer as Mr. Spurgeon, however. "I think it is very like some churches and some people," he remarked, "who are very beautiful in the distance, making you think how much you would like to belong to such communions; but on getting into their midst and understanding what is going on, all that was so harmonious is nothing but ding-dong."

But, notwithstanding all such drawbacks as these, the offspring of the priestcraft of Romanism, the famous city of the Adriatic was a place in which it seemed impossible to go an inch without learning something. To Mr. Spurgeon it was not only full of interest, it was the most enchanting of all the places he had visited; for a profitable holiday he seemed to think the city preferable to all others, so that anyone who even walked thither would find himself well repaid. Among the places visited was a famous charnel-house, in which were to be seen no less than two thousand skulls, as well as coffins containing the remains of former citizens, and which were variously decorated. That scene so impressed itself on the preacher's memory that, on his return to England, he spoke and wrote about it. In a week-night address at the Tabernacle an account was given of this charnel-house: "What a picture it is of many professors who are well decorated with the flowers of morality, and well garnished with a knowledge of the Gospel doctrine, but who, seeming to be living, are yet dead." The preacher prayed that such might never be the effects of his own preaching, simply making people outwardly fair to look upon; on the contrary, he prayed that all who came within his influence might really have the heavenly life.

It does not appear that very much was seen of the Italian villages, otherwise we might have heard something about the deplorable condition of the peasants, but some particular attention was given to the life of the towns. In one town where the party happened to be staying there was a funeral procession, and Mr. Spurgeon was tempted to follow in order to see how it would end. Each of the mourners carried a lighted candle, but, as it was broad daylight, the English preacher thought a candle was unnecessary so far as he was concerned. The procession went on until a certain church was reached, the coffin being then put down to be sprinkled with holy water. No sooner was this ceremony over than a number of those who had followed took off their funeral robe and stole away out of the church. When first seen there had been about a hundred following, but when at length the graveyard was reached, the whole of the mourners had disappeared, Mr. Spurgeon and his friends being the only followers. As usual, the adventure taught a useful lesson, which he brought with him to England for the benefit of others. "I thought this was wonderfully like some ministers," he said. "When they first begin their ministry, what numbers of people follow them, and how they admire and respect those pastors! But gradually they slip away, and turn the corner. May

it never be so with us." The traveller also saw enough of the Continental Sunday to make him prize more than ever his English privileges. On one of the Sabbaths he was away he much desired to have a quiet day, and it was arranged that the time should be passed in a town on the shore of a beautiful lake. One might have fished from the bedroom window of the hotel, and there was an abundance of the finny tribe to catch. Here a complete view of the Italian Sunday, as it was observed on a high occasion, was obtained. The day happened to be King Victor Emmanuel's birthday, and thus, early in the morning the popular festivities commenced by an incessant firing of guns of various sizes. After this din had been kept up for some time, those who were piously inclined went off to church, while others prepared themselves for further enjoyment. In the afternoon

The late Rev. James Spurgeon of Stambourne

Mrs. C.H. Spurgeon The late Mrs. John Spurgeon

Rev. John Spurgeon Rev. J.A. Spurgeon. L.L.D. there were divers diversions such as would be associated with a low fair in England. There were bonfires, climbing greasy poles, and such-like diversions to suit a low taste. Italy thus proved herself to be far lower down in the scale of civilisation than England. "I thought what a mercy it is that in England we have our quiet Sabbaths," said Mr. Spurgeon after he returned. "Although in London there are Sunday trading and other objectionable things, I thank God that we have not gone so far as the Italians," he added. "Wherever the Sabbath is used as a day of pleasure, there it is also a day of drudgery. Wherever they have fetes on the Sabbath, in those same places we see carpenters and bricklayers at work; trade goes on just the same throughout the seven days of the week; and the workman gets no more than the wages of six days' labour. Sabbath consecration ensures Sabbath rest; and when once the Sabbath is desecrated, it ceases to be a Sabbath altogether." With such views, Mr. Spurgeon was naturally opposed to the Sunday opening of museums and picture galleries. But there was always something fresh or novel to see in that sunny land. When Sabbath was passed, Monday happened to be a fete-day, and there was sure to be something in prospect far more interesting than the most brilliant of London pageants. On the other side of the lake was a mountain, which would repay those who undertook the passage across the water in order to visit it; and while in a boat accomplishing that voyage, the English preacher was privileged to look upon a spectacle which in itself struck him as being one of the most charming sights that had ever met his eye. There was a beautiful little island in the middle of the lake, and on that was a church, to which, on certain occasions, people from the surrounding towns and villages went to worship. These small companies, of course, put off from land in boats of various sizes, but they formed, as it were, but one procession. At the bows of the craft which led the way a crucifix was visible, and behind that there was a picture of the Virgin Mary. The scene was pre-eminently picturesque, and the chanting of the whole of those who were in the boats which followed produced an effect which was peculiarly striking. "It struck me that this was no new picture," remarked Mr. Spurgeon when speaking of this scene. "I thought of the whole Church of God coming across the sea of life to the land of the hereafter, with the Cross at the prow, gently rowing along and singing the praise of God."

One fete-day may follow closely on the heels of another in Italy; but the picturesque and suggestive of to-day may be succeeded by something far more objectionable on the morrow. This

was Mr. Spurgeon's experience: he saw what he called "an exhibition of idolatry." This was, after all, neither more nor less than an ordinary procession of priests, before whom was carried an image of the Virgin, at sight of which persons in the streets fell on their knees to worship. That was a very ordinary sight; but it was also a most saddening and depressing one. "Roman Catholics sometimes tell us that they are not idolaters, and that they do not worship these things; they had better take out the eyes of observers at once," said Mr. Spurgeon when speaking of this procession. "I saw," he added, "the people bowing down before what seemed to me nothing but a doll which only a little child would cry for, and which I could not worship even if I felt some reverence for the Virgin Mary." The ascent of Sacra Monte, "the Holy Mountain of the New Jerusalem," was described as "a very stiff pull," but the waxwork show to be seen there was of a kind never to be forgotten. As Mr. Spurgeon said:—

"The first thing we saw was the 'Birth of the Saviour;' in a square building were seen the Virgin Mary and the newborn babe, with the shepherds and angels in figures large as life. We also saw Jesus Christ represented in the Garden of Gethsemane, just like life, and exquisitely done. There were great drops of blood on the ground, the three disciples asleep, and the others in the distance. A little further on we came to the Crucifixion—a dreadful sight. There was also a tomb, in which lay the representation of Jesus Christ's body. The Resurrection was exhibited, too, and the Ascension. The whole was very remarkable, and if it were not that the people came to worship these objects, I can scarcely blame them. Though we deplore the idolatry that leads multitudes of pilgrims there, we cannot but feel that we have a very lifelike picture of the scene of our Saviour's life and death."

Some further experiences in the Alps Mr. Spurgeon also described, as follows:—

"On one mountain we came to an inn, surrounded by the most lovely scenery; and although it had been recently built, yet, on going to the bedroom window, close under me was the most splendid dunghill I ever saw. This is the general custom, but it struck me it was human nature all over. When God makes an object beautiful and lovely, we must bring something close under our nostrils which must be offensive; we must have something to fret about. I have become quite an adept in riding; I should not think anything of riding up to the top of the galleries before me. I did not carry my wife on my back, but I will not say that some other person did not do so. In ascending we were accompanied by a man whoso duty it was to dig us out of the snow, for there was a great deal to get through in some places. But going down-hill was ten thousand times worse than getting up. I started over the slippery shingle, when my feet went under me, and down I came, and in order to hold on I stuck my fingers right into the earth. I thought I would crawl back again to the top, but, supposing the other side of the mountain would be as bad, I did not do so. I saw a mule drift more than a quarter of a mile. My heart was in my mouth, and I expected to follow the mule. I wished I was at home in the Tabernacle. Cowardly people ought not to go on such journeys. In some places it was necessary to tie the mules together, so dangerous was the road. I thought it was a good picture: whenever the road got bad, it was good for Christian people to unite together, so that when one slipped the others should help him up." In travelling among the Alps, it was found that the snow variously affected people's eyes. As a rule, those who lived high up the mountain were superior to such as were located in the valleys; they were superior in intellect as well as in physical strength. The party reached the St. Bernard Hospice, which was found to be at the time of this visit deeply embedded in snow up to the second floor. That hospital, capable of entertaining six

hundred guests, was certainly one of the most extraordinary houses of entertainment in the world, rich and poor being alike welcome, and no donation being expected from the latter. It was a wonderful place, which had its weird sights while it afforded hospitable shelter. Nothing was wanting to make even Protestant visitors happy, for there were pianos on which the accompaniment to their hymns might be played. But any who slept there would think of the corpses in the Morgue, for there were there the remains of some who had perished centuries before, preserved from corruption by the atmosphere.

Mr. Spurgeon was refreshed and even wonderfully benefited by this tour. In addressing his people on his return, he spoke in the characteristic manner of a man who was in love with his work, and who was encouraged by his people's bearing towards him:—

"I have heard that it is worth while for a man and his wife to fall out for the pleasure of coming round again; but I had my suspicions as to the correctness of that remark. Still, I really think it is worth while to go away for the pleasure of coming back again. I thank you ten thousand times for the kind expressions I have received from one and all. I feel that my absence has been of very great service to myself; and how far serviceable it may be to you, you must form your own judgment. You have looked in my face pretty well. I am not complaining, but am rather thankful, and I think you will have observed a material difference. I cannot help thinking that I am ten years younger in feeling; but I hope not ten years sillier—there is no need for that. I feel ten years more elastic in body, and I hope ten years fuller of life, spirit, life and soul for the preaching of the Word." The fact was, that, prior to setting out on this eight weeks' holiday, the ominous symptoms which are produced by overwork had begun to show themselves. Preaching had become a task and a drag rather than a pleasure; the work seemed to have lost some of its freshness, although to observers in the pews there did not appear to be any falling off of power, nor of good effects following. As regarded the" supplies," all had not been satisfied, while the funds for the support of the institutions had fallen off. This was in some respects a disappointment, although the money began again to flow in immediately on the pastor's return. As regarded those who had occupied the pulpit in his absence, he said: "I had been hoping that I should receive some such intimation as that given by an old lady to Dr. Leifchild. She said, 'There, now, you are a good man; you are not like some preachers, who, when they go away, get dull sticks to fill their pulpits; whenever you go away, you always get a better preacher than yourself.'" On the whole, all things had gone on well, however; and one who had preached most acceptably was a young man from the College, that fact yielding peculiar satisfaction all round. The time occupied by the Continental tour represented the vacation of the College, so that during that same eight weeks Principal Rogers had visited several of the College men who were stationed in pastorates. As Mr. Spurgeon himself explained: "Mr. Rogers has been travelling episcopally through the diocese of England, ordaining the young men, or something of that kind, visiting five or six places where their students had settled, stirring up the Church, and holding confirmations—confirming the young men in the faith." At this time Mr. Rogers was about sixty-six years of age, and he was so popular among his former students that he was often engaged to preach on special occasions. While going from place to place during the summer of 1865, he was greatly encouraged at the signs of progress which he witnessed. The College was now recognised as the chief work of the Church, and it already numbered about a thousand subscribers. The cases of Dr. Pritchard, the notorious poisoner, and Constance Kent were now attracting notice. The former had poisoned his wife and mother-in-law. Constance Kent,

who was twenty years old, had confessed that she murdered her brother, aged four, on June 29, 1860. Dr. Pritchard was hanged, but Miss Kent was sentenced to penal servitude for life. After serving twenty years, she was liberated on ticket-of-leave on July 18, 1885. In the course of his sermon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on July 23, Mr. Spurgeon said:—

"It was deserving of note in regard to Pritchard that he pleaded Not Guilty before the judge, and that he then endeavoured to throw the whole blame of the offence with which he was charged on the unfortunate woman, Mary M'Leod, whom he had led astray from the paths of virtue. It seemed that the convict would have been glad if he himself could have escaped by mating her suffer in his stead. This conduct reminded one of Adam throwing the blame on Eve, and of Eve throwing it upon the serpent. Then, Dr. Pritchard made no confession whatever until after the case against him had been proved. In fact, he pleaded innocency, and only pleaded guilty when he must have been stark mad to do otherwise—namely, after his conviction and sentence of death was passed upon him. He then confessed after a sort and after a fashion, something like as sinners usually confessed—when the confession was wrung and squeezed out of them. In Dr. Pritchard's case it was very partial at first; villain as he was, he would only confess to one part of his crime: that he poisoned his wife, not his mother-in-law. This, too, was what sinners usually did, confessing part, but not all their offences. When he made his last confession, supposing the last to be true and complete (and of this we could not bo quite sure), there were no words of extenuation in it, but a sort of madness, and the influence of strong drink, were made to bear the blame. All this was done not through ignorance, but in the teeth of an excellent education, and in the teeth, also, of a knowledge that he was doing evil. Had it been done by a person of a low order of intellect, who might throw the blame on the nation for his want of culture, there might possibly be some excuse; but he was a man who, he supposed, had listened to thousands of sermons, read the Bible, knew well the difference between right and wrong, and yet who had sinned grievously, and made no confession until he made a lying one, and then made a second confession with as much coolness as when he was denying the whole of his crimp with a lie in his right hand."

Reference was then made to Constance Kent, whose crime was creating immense sensation throughout the country:—

"In the other case—that of Constance Kent—no doubt an atrocious sin and a very great crime had been committed. She appeared in court under her own confession. Her life was not in danger when she made that confession. She surrendered voluntarily to justice, and when asked whether she pleaded Guilty or Not Guilty, she unhesitatingly replied Guilty. Several persons had asked her to plead Not Guilty in the hope that through some flaw in the evidence she might be acquitted upon her trial, but she said Guilty, and though an offer was made to her to retract that plea, she exhibited no signs of wavering, and again said Guilty. This was the sinner's true and only plea. Then, she was anxious to free all others from blame. If her counsel spoke, it was to assure the judge that, upon her honour, she alone was guilty, and that no father, sister, brother, or friend was implicated in the crime. Her language was that of the Psalmist, 'Against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.' She needed no witness to come and convict her. No one saw the deed committed; it was done in secret. Collateral evidence there might have been to prove her guilt, and she might have been sentenced to death if she retracted her plea. But she confessed all. I think it must have been a solemn moment when the judge said to her, 'You are charged with having feloniously and maliciously killed and murdered your brother.' Yes, she was Guilty. This

was her reply. She did not object to those words. 'Guilty of malice?' 'Yes.' 'Of malice aforethought?' 'Yes.' 'Of murder?' 'Yes.' Not a word of extenuation; she took it as the judge put it. She had not, nor had her counsel for her, a single word to say by way of apology. Her counsel might have said she was very young, being young that she was easily led away by evil passions, and that the murder was committed long ago, when she was younger still. But no. It was her own confession, and nothing of the kind was said. The judge might think all this if he pleased. There was nothing said by her or for her upon the subject. The confession came so thoroughly and truly that not a word was put in to render that calm stream of confession muddy or impure. When asked whether she could give any reason why sentence of death should not be passed upon her, nothing why the solemn and dreadful sentence that she should be hanged by the neck until she was dead should not be carried into effect, she was silent. It was no wonder the judge wept; he could not help it. She did not speak the confession in the spirit of bravado, saying, 'Yes, I did it, and I will do it again.' She seemed to know what guilt was. She felt that she could not make any atonement to society for the offence she committed except by confessing, and accordingly she confessed as one who felt within the guilt she felt without. Sin, in the sight of God, could not be taken away by mere confession, but law, in the case of man, might remove the penalty in consequence of it. Dr. Pritchard had asked for the prayers of the public on his behalf, and those prayers would not be withheld, although one could not help feeling a loathing for his denial of his guilt. But in the case of Constance Kent, if it were put to a show of hands in England to-morrow whether mercy should be extended to her, I feel confident that the verdict would be, 'Let the penitent sinner live. A great and dreadful crime she committed, which must blight and blast her life; but she has confessed, and let her be spared—spared, not on the ground of justice, but this is a case in which, if the sovereignty of mercy is to be exercised at all, it should be now exercised,' "

It was about this time that, through lack of adequate support, the denominational weekly newspaper, The Freeman, was taken in hand by a limited liability company. From the first Mr. Spurgeon had been somewhat disappointed with the paper, because he considered its theology to be too broad. In one of his letters to the American Watchman and Reflector some time before, he had remarked, "I must beg that neither you nor your readers will regard any newspaper as the organ of the English baptists. We have no organ which represents the Calvinistic Baptist Churches of England." The change of management which was soon afterwards effected resulted in a change of tone, which Mr. Spurgeon heartily approved. Under some responsible advisers, Mr. Edward Leach now became acting editor; but the high price of fourpence a copy naturally hindered the paper from becoming popular in the widest sense. It might possibly have been an advantage if the plan, adopted some years later, of issuing the paper at a penny had been adopted then; but that was opposed by friends who thought that the Baptist denomination in England was too small to allow of a representative penny paper being able to hold its own.

Chapter 57: The London Baptist Association

Chapter 57.

The London Baptist Association

Archibald G. Brown and his Work—Work of the College—Baptist Leaders—Baptist Union—Persecution in Saxony—The New London Association—Dr. Parker—New Chapels.

Among those who were trained in the Pastors' College were several who were destined to turn out first-class men, and whose service has proved itself to be of the most far-reaching kind. Foremost among the successful is Archibald G. Brown, "my curate," as the President would call him, and whose work at the East-End of London Mr. Spurgeon reckoned to be only second to his own. Mr. Brown, senior, was for years a deacon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle; the family ranked high among commercial circles in the City, while the family connections included Dr. Geikie, author of "The Life and Words of Christ," and Sir Archibald Geikie, the geologist. Young Archibald was intended for a mercantile life; but after being converted under the preaching of the present Sir Arthur Blackwood, he found his way into the Pastors' College to become one of the most popular of the preachers ever sent forth from that institution. A month after he was received into the College Mr. Brown was sent to preach at Bromley, his first congregation consisting of twenty persons, who assembled at the White Hart Assembly Room. The memorial-stone of the present chapel was laid by Mr. Spurgeon on July 4, 1864, when the outlook from small beginnings had become most promising. Early in 1867, Mr Brown removed to his larger sphere in the East-End of the metropolis, where, in due course, Mr. Spurgeon had the happiness of opening the East London Tabernacle, in which a full congregation has ever since assembled. Mr. Spurgeon and Mr. Brown were ardent friends to the last; they were agreed on most points; they heartily co-operated in Christian work; and when the Chief died, the sorrowing survivor assured me that life and service could never more be to him what they had been. The aggressive work of the Pastors' College at this time was well illustrated also by the erection of the chapel at Drummond Road, Bermondsey, the memorial-stone of which was laid by Mr. Spurgeon on August 4, 1865. Planned to accommodate 600 persons, the sanctuary cost £1,500, two-thirds of which was subscribed by Mr. Spurgeon and his people. A preaching station with a Sunday-school already existed; but as Bermondsey had added over 2,000 souls to its population during the three previous years, this additional place of worship was felt to be a necessity. "My object in having the chapel built in this neighbourhood is a purely disinterested one," said Mr. Spurgeon. "I and my congregation would be as happy in our own Tabernacle, so far as we personally are concerned, if this chapel had never been contemplated; but when I look around and consider the spiritual destitution, I feel constrained to strive to supply the need by every means in my power. It has been said that working men would not listen to the Gospel, but I believe that is a libel on them, and I hope to see this chapel full of them, for I am sure they are attached to the Bible, and value their souls as much as any other class." Later in the day, after tea at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, the pastor congratulated the people on the commencement of this work, he thanked them for their co-operation, and added,

that he hoped to have their assistance in supplying the needs of other destitute localities in a similar manner. At this time the Baptist denomination in Great Britain and Ireland had about 2,400 churches and 250,000 members, but the general condition as regarded working and leadership was put down as pre-eminently unsatisfactory. There seemed to be no lack of able men, but there were none apparently who cared to take the part of leaders. This led to a want of united action, while at the same time the Missionary Society was curtailing its operations in India through want of funds. "There are voices in our midst which would ring through the land, but which are silent except to their own congregations," said The Freeman. "There are men whom we should all gladly follow, but they carry no standard, and utter no call. Almost the only exception to this statement is Mr. Spurgeon." The question then arose, Could not Spurgeon do something in the way of taking the lead, and thus benefit the denomination at large? The Freeman seemed to think it was hardly his own fault that he did not do so:—

"By his wondrous popularity and wondrous power—aided, as we believe, by much of the Divine Grace—Mr. Spurgeon has obtained a following not only in London, but throughout the land. His voice is heard by thousands every Sunday; his written words are read by hundreds of thousands every week. But, through the peculiarity of his position, Mr. Spurgeon has hitherto stood much alone. He is the head of a denomination within a denomination. He takes little part in the concerns of the Baptist body as such. We believe this is not Mr. Spurgeon's own desire. If we are not mistaken, he has expressed, again and again, the desire to unite more heartily with his brethren. Why should he not do so? Is there anything that keeps him apart from the Baptist body in spite of himself? Truly, he has much to do already; but there is no man who could do more to rouse the body as a whole to action, no man who would be welcomed more cordially by the denomination generally as a counsellor and a brother beloved. If The Freeman could do anything to bring Mr. Spurgeon and the Baptist body generally in cordial and loving union and co-operation, the day on which such union was effected would be to its conductors one of the proudest of their lives." The autumnal meetings of the Baptist Union, which in 1865 were held at Bradford, appear to have served a good purpose by leading both pastors and people to see that there ought to be more unity for concerted action. Just at that time much sympathy was felt for Baptists on the Continent, who were suffering from persecution; and at the Bradford meetings the question was discussed of how assistance could best be rendered. It was stated that "Since the year 1861, when the church was formed in Saxony, their brethren had been exposed to a series of bitter and unrelenting persecutions and hostility from the Lutheran clergy, so that their assemblies had been again and again dispersed, their pastor had been arrested, treated like a felon, and spoiled of his personal property, and he had to meet brethren in the Lord for the purpose of consultation in the dead of the night, and in the depths of the forests of Saxony." In the discussion various opinions were expressed, and with some there seemed to be a disposition to leave all action to the Evangelical Alliance. Mr. Spurgeon strongly advocated a petition direct from the Union to the King of Saxony, that being, in his opinion, far preferable to any remonstrance to Lutheran pastors. "If snubbed by the King of Saxony, at least they would be snubbed by a king, and that was better than being snubbed by a parcel of Lutherans." It was in connection with these gatherings that Mr. Spurgeon preached at St. George's Hall, Bradford, on Thursday evening, October 12. The discourse was founded on Psa 102:16, "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory." We find that on this occasion the hall was not only "most densely crowded," but that "the crush for admittance was tremendous."

What may be called the reorganisation of the London Baptist Association belongs to the fall of 1865, and Mr. Spurgeon took a leading share in the business, which yielded a more than usual amount of satisfaction to a large number of people. "There are but few amongst us who will not remember the old Association of Baptist Churches in the Metropolis," said the denominational organ; "an association which for many years did some good, until at last, through sheer inanition, it died out; killed, because at length it ceased to find anything to do. During the years which have intervened since then, the process of isolation has been working steadily and disastrously amongst us, until at length the Baptists in London have seemed to become utterly powerless for any concerted action, and, what is worse still, for any mutual sympathy." An endeavour was made to put an end to this state of things by forming what was virtually a new association, and a circular, inviting the co-operation of all who could lend their aid, was sent forth by Mr. Spurgeon and some other ministers. It was arranged that three meetings should be held at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The first meeting was for ministers only, who would discuss the articles of association; the second gathering would include both pastors and deacons, who would together further discuss the resolutions of the first meeting. This was to be followed by a great meeting for prayer "in the spirit of the union formed."

Eighty pastors attended the preliminary meeting, and Mr. Spurgeon presided at the devotional service which preceded the business. An excellent spirit of true catholicity prevailed. As The Freeman said: "The brethren assembled represented well-nigh every shade of opinion amongst us, although, if any party predominated, we should say it was that of our strict communion brethren. Still, it was most apparent that the ruling wish of all present was to give as little place as possible to differences of opinion, and rather to find out the common basis on which they could practically agree."

It was felt that practically the past had been characterised by disunion, and the time seemed to have arrived for something better. Mr. Lewis, pastor of Westbourne Grove Chapel, sketched out the programme of the new Association, the first thing had in view being the cultivation of brotherly love. By way of advancing the cause of Christ in and about London, one chapel in each year was to be erected. The members, ministers, and delegates were to assemble quarterly, the first gathering in each year being regarded as the annual meeting. A church of less than 250 members was to send one delegate; if there were over that number two delegates were sent, and larger churches were allowed one representative for every 250 members. The President was to be elected annually, and the expenses were to be collected in small subscriptions. The Freeman thought that all things were about as promising as they could be. "We are thankful, too, that the basis of this new Association is so broad," it was added. "It does not rest on the technicalities of a creed, but simply on the wide basis of evangelical sentiment." No one worked more heartily in the new movement than Mr. Spurgeon, whose addresses at the meetings were always characterised by the fervour of a man who was thoroughly in earnest. The visit which Mr. Spurgeon paid to Newcastle on November 7, was to the church and congregation which then assembled in the Town Hall under the pastorate of Mr. Wildon Carr, who in after years was closely identified with the work at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. A chapel for Mr. Carr's congregation was in course of erection, that being the second chapel he had been instrumental in erecting in Newcastle in the course of four years. The people first met at an old chapel in New Court; a handsome new sanctuary was then provided on Rye Hill, and on retiring from this pastorate, Mr. Carr was followed

by a large number of the congregation, who met in the Town Hall until another new meeting-place was provided in Marlborough Crescent. Mr. Spurgeon not only preached on behalf of the cause, he gave £400 to the building fund. On two successive Friday evenings in November Dr. Joseph Parker, who then held a pastorate at Manchester, gave two lectures at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Mr. Spurgeon occupying the chair on each occasion. The first was on "Nonconformity in Relation to the Book of Common Prayer;" and this was followed by "Reasons for a Nonconformist Aggressive Policy." These lectures created some sensation in Manchester, and similar interest appears to have been excited in different parts of this country, and also in Scotland. On the evening of the second lecture the Tabernacle was crowded, and Lord Ebury was one of the audience.

Some reference has already been made to prophecies uttered about this time by self-constituted seers concerning wonders which were to happen in earth and heaven during the year 1866. Some credulous persons appear to have given out that the end of the world would actually occur in the year named, for certain tracts, in which such opinions were given, were said to have been written by the pastor of the Tabernacle. Someone sent these productions to Mr. Spurgeon, and asked if he had written them. At a meeting in the chapel answer was given to this question:—

"You will hear of me in Bedlam when you ever hear such rubbish as that, from me. The Lord may come in 1866, and I shall be glad to see Him; but I do not believe He will, and the reason why I do not believe He will is, because all these twopenny-half-penny false prophets say He will. If they said that He would not come, I should begin to think He would; but, inasmuch as they are all crying out as one man that He will come in 1866 or 1867, I am inclined to think He will not arrive at any such time. It seems to me that there are a great many prophecies which must be fulfilled before the coming of Christ, which will not be fulfilled within the next twelve months; and I prefer to stand in the position of a man who knows neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of man cometh, looking always for His appearing, but never interfering with those dates and figures which seem to me to be only proper amusement for young ladies who have nothing else to do, and who take to that instead of reading novels, and for certain divines who have exhausted their stock of knowledge about sound doctrine, and therefore try to gain a little ephemeral popularity by shuffling texts of Scripture, as the Norwood gipsies shuffled cards in days gone by." On November 28 Mr. Spurgeon laid the memorial-stone of a chapel at Redhill, and gave £100 to the building fund, an additional £100 being promised when the work was somewhat more advanced. A few days later we find that immense congregations were addressed at Woolwich, the collection being divided between the Pastors' College and a local Dorcas Society. The annual tea in connection with the College was held at the Tabernacle on the evening of December 20, an excellent repast being provided by the ladies of the congregation. The accounts of work done, and of the funds which still came in for the support of the work, were still encouraging. Thirty students had been sent forth into pastorates during the year, and when such men as Messrs. Cuff and Spurrier stood up to speak enthusiasm was, of course, re-enkindled. Mr. Spurgeon entertained the audience with an account of William Knibb and his work, and Dr. Underbill followed with an address on the condition of Jamaica. This was thought to be one of the most encouraging anniversaries which had ever been held in connection with the College.

During three days in Christmas week, 1865, a great bazaar was held at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, the proceeds being devoted to the building of new chapels in and around London. The

bazaar opened on December 26, on which day 1,700 persons visited the rooms. The receipts of the two first days amounted to between eight and nine hundred pounds. In one account we read that, "Mrs. Spurgeon's stall, as might have been expected, was a source of great attraction, and that lady drove what may be called 'a roaring trade,' and the amount placed against her name as cash received is consequently much higher than that of the other amateur shopkeepers." The students of the College also had a stall all to themselves, but notwithstanding their natural and acquired advantages, they were outrivalled by some others. The visitors to the stalls all had a letter by Mr. Spurgeon placed in their hands, in which he showed the solicitude with which he viewed the spiritual destitution of London, e.g.:—

"Impressed with the necessities of our ever-growing city, I have used my utmost exertions to increase the number of our Baptist churches, and, as a result, solid and flourishing churches have been founded in Wandsworth, Stepney, Bromley, Redhill, and Baling, while the small place in Paradise Place, Chelsea, has become a noble house of prayer; and in Bermondsey a chapel is nearly completed for the use of a congregation now in connection with the church in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and worshipping in a small room. From the success already achieved, I am encouraged to attempt yet greater things, and to seek the erection, during the year 1866, of several new buildings. My faithful friends, to whose generous co-operation, under the blessing of God, all is due, intend to hold a bazaar. As the object is one which concerns all our Baptist brethren, and, indeed, all Christians, we make a very earnest appeal for aid, and confidently look for it. We have no personal end to serve; we have no motive but the glory of God. London needs the Gospel; its thousands perish for lack of knowledge; the teachers of error are leaving no stone unturned; Puseyism is compassing sea and land—why should we sit still? Other churches are doing their best but the Baptists are hardly lifting a hand. Better days are dawning. Let us now arise and build. On the south side of the water we have the nucleus of three churches all needing buildings, and promising success if these can be erected. On the northern side, Buckhurst Hill, Kingsland, Clapton, Barking, and Bow, and several other districts, crave our aid. Why should not all be assisted? They shall be, if the Lord's people will aid us." In these earlier years of work at the Tabernacle ministry, a young preacher occasionally came to the front of whom one and another would say that he was destined to become a second Spurgeon. Thus, in the days of his early popularity as a preacher, the present Dr. Grattan Guinness was spoken of as "a bright particular star," and he was also described as "bidding fair to rival the renowned Mr. Spurgeon as another modern Whitefield." The comparison with Mr. Spurgeon was not a happy one; for the characteristics of the Irish preacher showed that he had little in common with the Essex lad, who had risen to eminence by his naturalness of manner and devotion to the cause in general. Then, when the late Brownlow North turned aside from the world of sport and of fashion, in which he had lived until middle age, to preach the Gospel with an attractive power which, called forth general admiration, he was called the Northern Spurgeon. There was never any real similarity between such preachers and the pastor of Southwark, fond as people were of drawing comparisons. No one was more pleased than Spurgeon himself when another arose to preach the Word with power; but none knew better than he did himself that, as a preacher, he virtually stood alone through having no successful rivals. The year 1865 ended more cheerily than some others; for though Lincoln had fallen a martyr to the cause, freedom was advancing both in the Old and the New World. In April, Richard Cobden and John Cassell had also both passed away, their deaths leaving a blank which could not be filled. Mr. Spurgeon always regarded with admiration the work of the

great publisher, whose influence lives after him.

Chapter 58: Mrs. Bartlett's Bible Class

Chapter 58.

Mrs. Bartlett's Bible-Class The Origin of a Great Class—Presentation to the Editor of The Christian World—Mr. E. H. Bartlett's Reminiscences—Spurgeon and the City Missionaries.

One of the largest Bible-classes ever collected was gathered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle; and the conductor, Lavinia Strickland Bartlett, was ranked by the pastor among his chief helpers. This lady was a widow, whose husband had died of cholera; and having commenced Christian work when quite a young girl, she went forward until her success in teaching a class of young women—first at New Park Street, and afterwards at the Metropolitan Tabernacle—drew forth many an expression of surprise and admiration. On a certain Sunday afternoon in the year 1859 Mrs. Bartlett consented to take a senior class which had only three in attendance; but after persevering for a month, notwithstanding that she suffered from an affection of the heart, Mrs. Bartlett had the happiness of seeing the numbers increase to fourteen; and when the Tabernacle was opened in March, 1861, the total had increased to fifty. Her first meeting in the new chapel was in the upper gallery, before it was finished; but eventually, after one room and then another had proved too small to accommodate those who came, the lecture-hall was occupied, the class gradually increasing until over 700 would frequently be present. By the end of 1865 something like 600 persons had joined the church who came from this class.

Those who were thus willing to accept Mrs. Bartlett as their teacher were not all young women; the majority might be young, but many were as elderly as the leader, or even older. By her daily example as regards dress and other matters, this devoted woman sought to teach her following more effectively than by mere precept. The cases of reformation of character which took place were some of them very striking, and the converts came from various ranks in life. In course of time the claims of this class required that the undivided attention of its leader should be devoted to it; for not only were there week-night meetings on Tuesdays and Fridays, but inquirers were allowed to see Mrs. Bartlett personally at her own residence at any time; and it was on this account that Mr. Spurgeon was wont to speak of the place as "the house of mercy." Collections were also made among the members on behalf of the Pastors' College, and from time to time considerable sums were collected in this way. On one occasion, in company with Mr. Spurgeon and other friends, the late Mr. James Clarke was present, and he wrote out a graphic little sketch of what he saw and heard:—

"Many have probably heard of 'Mrs. Bartlett's class' in connection with the Tabernacle, but certainly nobody who has not actually witnessed its magnitude will possess any true idea of what it really is. That it is a large class of young women conducted by Mrs. Bartlett would be the natural inference, but who would imagine the class to consist of seven hundred members, meeting frequently for loving conference with its devoted President? Every half-year, it seems, Mrs. Bartlett is in the habit of inviting Mr. Spurgeon and a number of friends to meet her class, to hear something of the progress made, and to receive a report of the amount subscribed by the class

towards the support of the Pastors' College. It was our privilege to be present, for the first time, at such a meeting on Wednesday evening. The visitors were scarcely less numerous than the members of the class, and made up the company to at least fourteen hundred persons. Mr. Spurgeon, having taken the chair, delivered an animated opening address, and mentioned the remarkable fact that no less than fifty of the young women attending Mrs. Bartlett's instructions had joined the Church, upon a public profession of their faith in Christ, during the past year. What reason had they all to be thankful for so abundant a blessing resting upon the earnest and self-sacrificing labours of their devoted sister! And this was, happily, not at all an exceptional state of things, for conversions had ever attended Mrs. Bartlett's loving ministrations. Since the formation of the class, now some years ago, the goodly number of five hundred of its members had avowed themselves on the Lord's side. Several hours having been devoted to speeches on set themes, of practical religion, by gentlemen leaving the College, upon invitation to pastoral work in the provinces and in Australia, Mrs. Bartlett herself spoke at some length, and with intense feeling, to the female portion of the audience, exhorting them to listen to the voice of wisdom, and to walk in the ways of holiness all their days, looking forward to hallowed joys here and to a blessed immortality hereafter. Mr. Bartlett stated, on behalf of his mother, that the sum contributed by the class during the past six months towards the funds of the Pastors' College was one hundred and three pounds, which he handed over to Mr. Spurgeon amidst the general applause of the audience. Mr. Spurgeon warmly acknowledged the gift, and expressed his thorough conviction that the causa of Christ could not be more surely advanced than by bringing out and preparing young men for the ministry of the Gospel; for let an earnest minister be placed in any position, and there would immediately spring up all those other means and appliances adapted for the instruction and elevation of the people. The sending forth of evangelists from that College had already led, again and again, to the necessity of erecting new places of worship. This fresh work was indeed growing upon their hands, and demanding fresh efforts to accomplish it."

It was on this occasion that the President of the College specially honoured Mr. James Clarke, as editor of The Christian World, by presenting to him, by way of a testimonial, the ten volumes of The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, handsomely bound. Mr. Clarke had collected from the readers of the paper a sum of £160 for the Institution; and Mr. Spurgeon felt sure that many readers would be angry that so much money had been given to such an arch heretic as himself. Amid the cheers of the people, the volumes were presented as an acknowledgment from the congregation of the practical interest Mr. Clarke had shown in the progress of the College. The editor accepted the books with sincere pleasure, and said he was always glad of an opportunity of co-operating with Mr. Spurgeon in his many laborious and valuable efforts. "Any earnest man may well feel proud of lending a helping hand to Mr. Spurgeon in his college and chapel-building efforts, whether agreeing with him in all his opinions and ways of doing things or not," added the journalist. "There is this peculiarity between myself and Mr. Spurgeon which makes me feel in some sort as standing on the same platform with the renowned pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle: Mr. Spurgeon preaches habitually to by far the largest congregation in England; and I have myself the pleasure of conducting a weekly journal possessing a circulation greater than all the other religious papers of the metropolis combined, of whatever price. I am quite sure that many of my readers are warm friends of Mr. Spurgeon, and believe that at any time when they are informed that his College funds are low, or that special donations are needed for other purposes connected with the evangelistic work of the Tabernacle, they will be prepared to give liberally according to their

means." From this it will be seen that in the year 1865 there was not only a strong bond of sympathy uniting the Southwark pastor and the Fleet Street editor, but that Mr. Clarke had full confidence in the College as an evangelistic institution. He favoured none of the prejudices or objections against it which arose in certain quarters; and, as already shown, he continued to be one of its liberal supporters, when his theology had become much broader than that of Mr. Spurgeon. Some maintained that there were colleges enough; that the setting up of a new one would only create jealousy; and that, consequently, if the pastor of the Tabernacle desired to educate men for the ministry it would be far better to send them to colleges already existing. It was no doubt an innovation; the promoters felt it to be so, but they insisted that it was a special effort to meet a pressing want of the age.

What was greatly objected to was the notion that an effort was being made merely to Spurgeonise the Christian church. It was represented in America that Spurgeon was more and more extending his influence, and that a body of preachers imbued with his own spirit, and copying with "ludicrous fidelity" their Chief's manner and mode of speech, were going forth in all directions. "More and more is Spurgeon separating himself from the general organisation of the religious world, and even of the Baptist denomination, and concentrating his work upon his immense church, his college, and the churches throughout the kingdom that have taken his pupils for pastors," said one New York journal. "If this goes on for another twenty years," it was added, "Spurgeonism will be a vast organic and wondrously vitalised body; and, should circumstances warrant, this body may, as many intelligent Baptist ministers think probable, assume the name of its founder." It was thus assumed that the pastor of the Tabernacle would copy the example of Wesley in founding a sect; but, in point of fact, his action at the date in question was showing directly opposite tendencies. He protested against such misrepresentations. The word "Spurgeonism" was utterly distasteful to him, and in connection with the subject he was wont to say, "Let my name perish, but let Christ's name last for ever!" The heartiness with which he had entered into the business of forming the London Baptist Association showed that he was in full sympathy with existing agencies, and had no desire to form a fresh community.

Having given details respecting the remarkable work of Mrs. Bartlett, it may be added here that a son of that devoted woman was among the converts of Mr. Spurgeon's ministry in London, and being still a member of the church at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, he continued to the last to be associated with his pastor in Christian service. Mr. E. H. Bartlett has written and published a biography of his mother, to which Mr. Spurgeon wrote an introduction in 1877; and he sends to me the following account of work in which he has been engaged during the long period of thirty-seven years:—"I was brought to the Lord through the instrumentality of C. H. Spurgeon, in 1855, at Exeter Hall, during the enlargement of New Park Street Chapel, was baptised on the first Sabbath of February, 1856, and have retained my membership to the present day. Soon afterwards I was elected to the Secretaryship of the Sunday Schools, Great Guildford Street, Southwark, and remained until the church and congregation removed from New Park Street to the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The Mission Hall was given up, and many of the teachers took possession of the schoolroom at New Park Street. Soon afterwards I was called to the superintendence of the school, and continued so till the chapel and schools were sold. From there the teachers and some of the scholars went to a schoolroom in Short Street, Brandon Street, Walworth, as a temporary place during the building of the schoolrooms in Station Road, Walworth, which are attached to the

Metropolitan Tabernacle Almshouses. In 1875 I took up my late mother's work, which I still carry on. A special Sunday evening service for the young (which is still carried on by Mr. George Cook) was established. Besides this, there was established a Loan Tract Society (which is still in a flourishing condition); and to this was added a Maternal Society for poor women on the districts. For some years a Police Mission was maintained by the youths of the Special Service, who visited every week the police-stations of the South of London with the late pastor's sermons and other religious periodicals. A Coffee-house Mission was also carried on by the young women, who visited the coffee-houses monthly and left a copy of The Sword and the Trowel for the use of customers. Many were greatly blessed by this means, and led to come under the sound of the Gospel at the Tabernacle. When the Stock-well Orphanage was opened for the reception of children there was commenced a Special Sabbath Morning Service, which is still carried on."

All of these operations are traced back as an outcome, direct or indirect, of Mr. Spurgeon's early ministry. The details are given here as coming from one who is old enough to remember the Essex lad as he was at the outset of his London career, and who remained associated with him in Christian work till the last. From first to last of their acquaintance with Mr. Spurgeon his troops of friends have been struck with his keen interest in all kinds of Christian work, especially among lowly people in London and great, populous towns. His interest in what is called "Ragged London" was stimulated in the days of his youth by reading some of Dickens's vivid descriptions, and that interest became strengthened in later years. Thus, the large number of articles published in The Sword and the Trowel, on Low London, will testify to the editor's deep interest in the work of the City missionaries, and of all who are endeavouring to raise the humble classes from squalor and degradation. His sympathy with the agents of the City Mission in their arduous service was all the greater, probably, because he realised to the full that he himself lacked those qualifications which alone will enable a man to do such work successfully in face of difficulties and obstacles which might well discourage even a Greatheart.

More than once Mr. Spurgeon addressed the assembled band of City missionaries; and on one of these occasions, after cordially thanking the men for their service in the name of the Church at large, he added, "Little can we tell what London would have been without you. If there has been a great moral change pass over it—and I am sure there has—it is owing, doubtless, to the ministry, but equally as much to your untiring labours from house to house. I can scarcely dare to draw a picture of what London would have been if it had not been for the City Mission. I am quite sure that, had it not been for this instrumentality, our ministry would have been utterly powerless, in the darker parts at least of those thickly populated lanes and alleys, where the voice of the ministry cannot be heard." In speaking to the men on earnestness in their work, he could find no better exemplar of an industrious evangelist than Richard Baxter, who himself visited every house in Kidderminster. "There was not a child in the parish whom he had not catechised; there was not a backslider whom he had not warned; there was not a reprobate whom he had not addressed with solemn awe." Thus the whole parish knew that Baxter was not only a preacher, but a pastor in the fullest sense. What was possible in Kidderminster in the seventeenth century, however, was altogether impracticable in London in the nineteenth. "I say honestly, from my inmost soul, I do not conceive myself to be guilty of any dereliction of duty in the fact that I do take only one part of Baxter's work," said Mr. Spurgeon. "It is utterly impossible that I should take the other." If he preached as an evangelist up and down the country, and in such a service taxed his powers to the

utmost, that was enough; the pastoral work in London had necessarily to be done by City missionaries, and Richard Baxter was held up to them as a pattern—a man who was on fire in his zeal for God, and who would have been nothing had it not been for his earnestness. That earnestness Mr. Spurgeon recommended to the men as the only proper excuse for invading an Englishman's house; but while thus giving good advice he was willing to accept it himself. "I say that my yearly income is robbery to the Church unless I serve it with my whole soul. And so is yours: if you do not put your whole soul into your work you have eaten bread for nought, you have taken money for services which you have not rendered. The Church does not support you and me that we may be images to look at, but that we may be servants to labour."

Like all great men of his class, Spurgeon was a shrewd reader of human nature; so that even while speaking to a large body of men, such as the City missionaries, he not only realised that they were fellow-workers with himself, but that they were confronted with the same kind of difficulties all round. They had to strive against habit; for even good habits might possibly become antagonistic to zeal, and the preacher was able to illustrate this from his own experience:—"I frequently catch myself, when reading the Scriptures for my own private devotion, looking at the verses to see what sort of texts they will make; and I must confess that, while in private prayer, pleading my own case before God, I find a very strong influence, which would carry me off at a tangent, to pray as a minister rather than as a man." This danger was not peculiar to a class: it was common to all Christian workers. Much as this great man hated what he called "ministerialism," he confessed that he sometimes found its spirit entering into him:—"Unless we look very carefully to ourselves, we get like a machine wound up, and we are something like the toys which sometimes our children have, which only need a certain quantity of sand at the top and they run on until they run down." At times Spurgeon seemed to speak as though there were no honours associated with Christian work but such as those which all workers in common were entitled to share. At all events, the City missionaries occupied a place of honour in the vanguard of the Church militant; and therefore there was reason for enthusiasm in discharging their duties. There was also some excuse for one speaking in glowing terms while advising or exhorting them; and once, when addressing the entire body at the mission-house, he as nearly imitated the style of Robert Hall as ever he did in his younger days, e.g.:—

"I charge you, by the names of those saints of God who have suffered in Christ's holy cause, by all the men and women who in devotedness have given up their whole substance and their whole time to Christ, be ye worthy of this glorious cause. Runners, open your eyes, and look at the glorious assembly that surrounds you. See ye not the cloud of witnesses? Play the man, if ever ye were men—play the man before such spectators. When such spirits look on, who will not run? 'Lay aside every weight, and run with patience the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith.' If at the old Olympic and Isthmian games men thought they must strain every nerve and muscle, because Greece looked on, what shall we say to you, when the world looks on, and the Church looks on, and Hell looks on, and Heaven looks on? By all these, the spectators of your warfare, fight—fight lawfully, and win the crown, through the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ."

Chapter 59: Work at the Tabernacle

Chapter 59.

Work at the Tabernacle

Baptist Colleges—London Association—College Conference—Students and Books—The Baptist Union—Evangelists.

According to the custom which he had observed for many years, Mr. Spurgeon preached on the first Sunday morning of 1866 from a text selected for him by a clergyman of the Established Church who lived in the suburbs. The subject was "Unity in Christ," the text itself being the words of John 17:20-21, "Neither pray I for these alone," etc. The discourse was able and helpful, and struck an excellent note at the threshold of a year which had been anticipated by self-constituted prophets as certain to be a year of supernatural wonders. There were those, as we have seen, who professed to expect that the Lord himself would come in 1866. As the organ of the evangelical Presbyterians, The British and Foreign Evangelical Review at this time gave a survey of Mr. Spurgeon's work, viewing him "as a man, as a preacher, as a divine, and as a Baptist." The Presbyterians and the Particular Baptists being then in hearty sympathy as regarded their theological beliefs, Spurgeon's teaching was generally commended; but when the writer came to view the great preacher as a Baptist his attributes were not so pleasing. In regard to the Baptismal Regeneration Controversy, the Review sided with the evangelical clergy, and declared against Mr. Spurgeon in no half-hearted manner. "We are compelled to endorse the excellent letter by Mr. Baptist Noel, and to say that the charge thus brought by Mr. Spurgeon against the evangelical clergy of the Church of England is as indefensible as it is injurious and uncharitable. In one point of view," it was added, "we might even characterise it as partaking of ingratitude; for nothing admits of being more clearly demonstrated than that to this unhappy dogma of baptismal regeneration, as held by many in the English Establishment, the communion to which Mr. Spurgeon belongs owes much of its success in England." That is to say, people were driven from a church, which they believed taught a semi-Romish doctrine, to seek a home among a body whose methods and teaching emphatically protested against it. The great success which had been achieved by the Pastors' College at the time now under review can only be fully realised by comparing the receipts with those of other similar institutions. Thus the denominational paper gave the following in a leading article:—

"Baptists are not unmindful of the necessity of a collegiate training for their ministers, nor is the amount contributed to college funds indicative of any lack of interest in the work. Bristol rejoices in an income of £1,663 11s. 3d.; Rawdon reports its receipts at £1,412 2s. 6d.; Regent's Park possesses an income of £2,047; Chilwell receives yearly about £740; while the Pastors' College, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, has an annual income almost equal to the combined receipts of Bristol, Rawdon, and Regent's Park, expending, and therefore, so long as under the management of Mr. Spurgeon, receiving £5,000. In the Principality, the college at Pontypool reports its income at £951 15s. 7d.; Haverfordwest at £853 19s. 41/2d.; North Wales at £460 5s. 9d.; making the total

for Wales upwards of £2,226. Scotland, several of whose ministers have been educated at one or other of the national universities or in England, has but one college, whose income last year was £250. The Baptists of Great Britain have nine colleges, which are educating 264 young men, with a yearly income of £13,379. It is significant and suggestive that one college receives nearly a third of these students, and more than a third of these receipts. Evidently Mr. Spurgeon and his friends are more earnest and liberal in the work of providing collegiate training for the ministry than are the major part of our pastors and ministers." To those who had merely been familiar with the work of the older colleges, it was a matter to excite amazement when ninety-three students could be received into one institution, the income of which not only sufficed to support them and their tutors, but actually left over something for chapel-building besides. Nor could it be said that those who went out from the College were not successful, for the settlements of students which were constantly being chronicled showed otherwise. Thus, early in 1866, Peniel Tabernacle, Chalk Farm, a large and beautiful chapel, was erected through the efforts of Mr. Swann; and accounts of the successes of former students came about the same time from Dunfermline, Aldeburgh, and Bedford. The annual meeting of the church at the Tabernacle was always a great occasion with the members, so that it was only an average gathering when 1,500 sat down to tea on the evening of January 24. The current expenses of 1865, including some repairs and alterations, etc., amounted to £3,333. In addition, a sum of over £700 was dispensed to the poor of the congregation alone, while a number of smaller sums had been voted to missions both at home and abroad. The treasurer who made the statement was then the venerable "Father" Olney, who in the early days of the Tabernacle was a very familiar figure among the deacons on the preacher's platform. During the year 1865 no less than 438 persons were baptised, and the total membership now stood at 3,258. A series of revival meetings were held during the month of February, and a powerful impression appears to have been made, especially among the younger portion of the congregation. The first meeting of the newly-formed London Baptist Association was held on February 7, at Bloomsbury Chapel. The Association at this time represented sixty-four churches. Mr. Spurgeon, who showed the greatest possible interest in the new brotherhood, gave a stirring address. The outlook at this time was thought to be of the most promising kind. The second conference of the College opened on Monday, March 12. On the following morning the members assembled at Upton Chapel, Lambeth Road, when the President gave the annual address from the chair. In the evening, about four hundred friends, who were subscribers to the Institution, assembled at the Tabernacle, being specially invited to tea and supper. The account for the year, as related by Mr. Spurgeon, was thought to be a marvellous story. About £4,400 had been expended in the twelve months, of which close upon £1,600 had been subscribed by the contributors to the weekly offering at the Tabernacle. Referring to the income in general, he said that it had all come in spontaneously, and it was not intended ever to seek to have a roll of subscribers on whom dependence would be placed.

"Believing it to be God's work, they looked prayerfully and with confidence to Him to send the means necessary for its maintenance and prosecution, assured that when these failed the time would have come for giving it up. The funds had at times been very low, but never wholly exhausted. The amounts received had been spent in the most economical manner possible: chiefly upon the students' board, and in the purchase of books for their use. Mr. Spurgeon reminded the meeting that there were charges in connection with this College not incurred by any other. It sometimes happened, for example, that students had to be clothed as well as fed and

educated; while, beyond the limits of the College proper, large evening classes were conducted, into which any Christian young man in business might enter and receive a good education free of all cost, except, perhaps, in the matter of elementary books. From these classes many of the College students had been obtained. Proceeding to specify the settlements of students during the year, Mr. Spurgeon mentioned the names of no less than a score of young men who had gone forth, either to gather new congregations or to revive old and almost defunct Churches, and who had met with success that in several cases seemed perfectly marvellous, and in nearly all exceedingly gratifying. It was pointed out, moreover, that the most rigid discipline is exercised in respect of the students, and that men who discover unfitness for the ministry, in respect either of their talents or characters, are dismissed. Mr. Spurgeon deeply regretted to say that some who had turned out badly were sent to him with the strongest recommendations, and that others whose aspirations for the ministry were discouraged and repressed by their pastors and the Churches to which they belonged, had proved themselves to be divinely called to the work. He begged that ministers and gentlemen would never recommend to him any young man about whose character and qualifications they had the least doubt, or unless they knew him thoroughly. To do otherwise was to commit a grievous wrong, and that in many ways. Testimonials ought to be sacred things, and not signed, as they often were, on mere hearsay evidence.. Regarding the Chapel-Building Fund started two years ago, to which £5,000 was to be paid in during five years, to be lent out without interest, £2,500 had been received, and the whole of it lent; and this was not more than half the sum that could be so employed with excellent effect, if it; could be obtained." The students were encouraged to purchase books by having them supplied at a cheap rate; while settled pastors who needed assistance in chapel-building were assisted in their enterprise by having money lent to them free of interest. An endeavour was also made to teach the men the value of life insurance; and as editor and proprietor of The Sword and the Trowel, Mr. Spurgeon offered to give the profits of the magazine to a fund for reducing the premiums. It was a very animated meeting, although the absence, through illness, of Sir S. M. Peto, who was to have presided, was a disappointment. "In the course of the supper a gentleman offered to give £100 to the funds of the College, on condition that £1,000 were subscribed during the evening. Lists were sent round, and by half-past ten o'clock it was announced that £750 had been contributed, without reckoning the conditional £100. Numerous further sums were speedily promised, and no less than £907 were obtained before the proceedings closed at eleven o'clock."

Mrs. Bartlett's service had now gone on for seven years; the work was increasingly valued by the pastor, and we find it characterised as "one of the most remarkable classes of modern growth." In Mr. Spurgeon's eye the class was in itself a large congregation, which needed the undivided attention of its teacher. The members were accustomed to contribute to the funds of the College, and on April 13 they met together and presented the President with £100. We find it remarked, in connection with this meeting, that "the service, which is conducted by this remarkable lady with only casual assistance, consists of singing, a prayer, and an address, sometimes founded on a passage from Scripture, and as often from an incident which has occurred during the week, and which has been impressed on the mind of the teacher. The addresses are simple in character, and are delivered with considerable eloquent earnestness." As the members of the class had furnished a stall at the bazaar, the £100 now presented did not represent the whole of their gift; so that, while speaking of the spirit of self-consecration manifested by the class, Mr. Spurgeon expressed surprise at the largeness of the amount. Their work was one of love and devotedness, and he

blessed God for all that had been accomplished through Mrs. Bartlett. A short printed account of the work of the College was distributed among the company, in which it was stated that the results of the College work had not been paraded before the subscribers, much less before the world; their desire was to avoid boasting and vain-glory, and simply to give the facts in order that God might be glorified, and that the subscribers to the work might be encouraged. "Our plan in London," said Mr. Spurgeon, "has been to do little where we could not do much; to open many rooms, and to start many small communities, in the hope that some of them would live to become self-supporting churches.... Our building fund is of the greatest possible assistance to our good work. We have been much cheered by our success in London, and hope to sow yet more largely in that fruitful field." The College had already supplied nineteen pastors to the London district alone; and in that area eight new churches had been formed which had had chapels built or secured. Ten other churches had been started which needed chapels, while preaching was carried on at seven stations at which it was expected churches would be formed. In addition, several old or decaying churches had been revived. Altogether there were at this time about eighty men from the College who were preaching the Gospel in Great Britain and Ireland, and nearly all of whom were ordained pastors. The Spring Session of the Baptist Union opened at Upton Chapel, Lambeth Road, Mr. Aldis, of Reading, being Moderator. It was noticed that the attendance at such gatherings was much smaller in London than was ever the case in a provincial town. There were only ten spectators in the gallery, whereas at centres such as Bradford or Birmingham, the spectators crowded the space allotted to them. The Chairman's address was on "The True Nature of Dissent." A party of students from the Pastors' College acted as waiters, to whom a vote of thanks was given. To this Mr. Spurgeon himself replied, when the opportunity was also taken of saying something in reply to what a minister present had said concerning students for the ministry. "It is always a great pleasure to differ from Mr. Landels, as well as to agree with him," said Mr. Spurgeon, amid much laughter. "The 'muffs' are the very men who will preach," he added, "and if you do not educate them they will be worse than ever. I find what a friend has remarked—that you get about one good preacher out of every eight students; and I believe that nothing can change that proportion." At the afternoon meeting in the Metropolitan Tabernacle there was a discussion on the education of ministers' children, a scheme having been propounded which would provide a school, the supporters to have votes after the manner of some other charities. This voting system was strongly condemned by many present. Mr. Spurgeon advised that no scheme should be entered upon which could not be carried out; let them remember the advice of Mrs. Glass in regard to the cooking of a hare—first catch it. After referring to the fact that he had himself at one time been the unhappy victim of such a school, Mr. Spurgeon went on to say that he abominated the voting system because it involved a great and useless expenditure of money. "For example," he added, "I have recently received as many as fifty letters at once for the few votes I have in connection with the Orphan School at Haverstock Hill. Of course, I do not answer them, and thus four shillings and twopence is spent upon me alone quite fruitlessly." In the year 1S65 the Baptist Home Mission and the Baptist Irish Society, which for half a century had been separate institutions, were united. On the occasion of the first anniversary (April 26, 1866), at Bloomsbury Chapel, Mr. Spurgeon attended and gave his views on "Home Evangelisation the Work of the Churches." That was in any case a congenial theme, for to such a speaker the extension and maintenance of Gospel work was so far the work of the Churches that societies were to be looked upon as nothing more than a makeshift, until the time should come when the Church would

properly understand her proper work. Mr. Spurgeon went on to say:—

"Jesus Christ recognises but one pillar of the truth—namely, the Church of the living God; and the Church is not only the house which He has built, but He also supplies builders for the house. I hope that the societies will flourish, and that God will bless them, but I hope they will grow until they are not wanted, which will be a consummation devoutly to be wished. The day will come when even as a denomination we shall cease to be, because when everybody sees right on the subject of believers' baptism, there will be no need of any distinction. No doubt the way in which societies originate is this: the Churches settle down into the idea, first and chiefly, that the main end of a Church is not to glorify God, but to enjoy itself for ever; they think that 'celestial fruits on earthly ground' will grow without faith and hope; some of them count it to be the end of a Church to maintain a minister, though they do but little of that. The keeping up of the old form of doctrine, the maintenance of the five or of the fifty points, and the contending, not earnestly, but savagely, for the faith, is the first, last, middle, of everything in Church existence. It was a grand thing when Fuller felt that if the Church would not do its work, the work must be undertaken apart from Church organisation, and it is a noble thing that if the Churches will not do their home mission-work there should be a society to take it under its care; but I take it that they will all ultimately come to this—that the Churches, as Churches, will do all the work by the employment of their own missionaries. I believe that this is the tendency of the age, as well as a right and proper principle to act upon. To teach people that it is their duty to work, and that, therefore, the societies are not to do it, would bo dangerous, because it would be pulling down without building up, and would be radicalism without any pinch of the salt of conservatism, which is necessary in all good things, lest they should run to seed, and become bad in the very process of growth. It is only natural that one of the first wishes of a Christian should be to spread abroad in the world those precious truths which only by the grace of God have been made vital to him, and in this respect he is a true revealer of secrets. Even if he were charged by the highest authority to keep silent he would scarcely be able to do it, and I question whether it is not an instinct of the newborn nature to tell the good news to others. Thus, one of the first works of the Church would be that of home evangelisation. Much is said about not allowing small Churches to be formed where they would not be self-supporting, but the attempt to suppress such modes of action would be more injurious than their permission; and if we attempt always to gather up our strength, and to centralise it too much, we might perform an act of spiritual suicide in our attempt to make ourselves strong and healthy. The more we leave everything to the guidance of God's Spirit, we will have to rejoice more in the wonder-working of the Great Head of the Church. We cannot expect to spread much if we go on at the same rate as we have been going. It is not nice to find fault with ourselves, but we do not do all that we should do. We want to grow faster."

It was shown that there were many towns in the country in which there was no Baptist Church, and thus persons of Baptist principles joined other communions. If such were to come out, there would be no difficulty in the matter of forming new interests; but in the meantime, it would be well if persons who were able to do it undertook evangelistic work in a place and then removed to another place. What was wanted, however, was action on the part of the Churches:—

"If the Churches did more in the work of home evangelisation it would be a cure for many ills. Puller said that his Church was in a very sad state, and that there was a deal of quarrelling till someone proposed that they should send a missionary to the heathen, and then they had no time

to quarrel. If the Churches have objects before them to work for, there is not much likelihood that the mighty energy which the Baptists possess will spend itself in internal conflicts, but in the service of God. This work will also be a means of spiritual edification. There is no making a thorough soldier unless he sees some real service, and there is no hope of making advanced Christians without setting them to some earnest Christian work. The growth which comes only from meditation will be the growth of the conservatory, but if we work hard as well as pray, we shall grow so that the wintry frost will not be able to bite our root, nor touch our leaf."

Mr. Spurgeon went on to say that he trusted the mission would he carried on in faith, especially in Ireland, where Christianity might seem to be in even a worse state than in England. Was not Ireland really the rampart "which, if taken, might lead to the taking of the whole length of the wall?" He urged them to prayer, to call down the divine aid, and then advised the employment of a number of earnest evangelists. It was maintained that there were many who, though unable to preach in a refined style, yet understood how to get the ear of the people. "If I were a wealthy man," added Mr. Spurgeon, "it would seem to me to be one of the grandest things I could do to find a man who was really fitted for the work of an evangelist, and to give him a yearly salary—£100, or whatever I could afford—to go round from place to place preaching the Gospel; and if judicious persons could be selected for this, they would do great service to the cause of Christ." By way of illustrating what might be done by earnestness and perseverance, something was mentioned which had happened at the interesting little Buckinghamshire town of Winslow, which had been so intimately associated with the work of Benjamin Keach. A young man at Winslow had gathered a congregation in two years, and had actually sent to the Pastors' College for a pastor to settle in the sphere he had made. Just at that time Colportage had been revived in England as a new enterprise in connection with the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and this was recommended, although the notion then hazarded that the colporteur might become a self-supporting agent was afterwards found to be a mistaken one. The practice of Sunday-school teachers meeting their classes on week-nights was also recommended, while it was thought, too, that catechetical classes might serve a useful purpose. Though they were not in love with class-meetings as held among the Wesleyans, they still seemed to need something of a similar kind. The idea of employing evangelists as suggested was thought to be a good one, and the Hon. Baptist Noel, who was present, suggested that the experiment should be made.

Chapter 60: The Revival of Colportage

Chapter 60.

The Revival of Colportage

Need of the Work—Character of the Men—The Work in Scotland—Mr. W. Corden Jones's Reminiscences—Lord Shaftesbury—Luther's Inkpot.

In connection with the work at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, the year 1866 was remarkable for being the period in which the service of the colporteur as an itinerant bookseller was revived in England. When he fully realised the importance of such an effort, Mr. Spurgeon wondered that it had not been revived before; and when a number of men were actually placed in their districts, he was surprised that greater interest was not shown in the work by the Christian public. The colporteur was so far from being a new character on the scenes that he was merely a copy of the agent who in the days of the Reformation carried about, with other wares, the evangelical publications which, by enlightening their readers, helped on the great movement. Colportage was then, in some measure, a service of danger; but now, to Mr. Spurgeon and his friends, it promised to supply a missing link in the work of rural evangelisation. A few persons saw what great possibilities were within reach, and were correspondingly enthusiastic in their advocacy of the enterprise; but the association at first made only slow progress. Colporteur and colportage were words which had a strange sound in English ears, and they were not readily understood. It was also soon found to be a mistake to suppose that such work could be self-supporting. On the average, every colporteur employed represents an outlay of £40 a year, which has to be made up by subscriptions. The men whom Mr. Spurgeon sought to bring together for this service were usually of the better working-class standard, although I have known a man with a college degree to be in the ranks. Besides being of good Christian character, each man needed to be sufficiently strong in a physical sense to bear the strain of carrying a heavy pack from village to village. Then, in addition to his bookselling, the colporteur was expected to be an all-round friend of the common people to the extent of his ability. As a rule, each man gave full satisfaction to his employers in this respect. The books were sold, the cottagers were visited, the sick received attention, and at many Sunday and week-night services the colporteur was the minister. The work was entirely undenominational, in strict accordance with the interpretation Mr. Spurgeon put upon that term. It is true that there is a so-called undenominationalism which will hardly allow the agents employed to call their souls their own; at all events, they are denied that liberty of free speech which is, or ought to be, every Englishman's birthright. With Mr. Spurgeon it was quite otherwise. Men of all evangelical denominations were welcomed into the Colportage Society, and each man was expected to be outspoken and to do the best he could for his own body. The Wesleyan worked as such, and so also did the Baptist, the Churchman, or the Congregationalist. What more effective method could have been devised for promoting brotherly love?

Colportage had really been commenced in Scotland about ten years previously, and in 1866 the Northern society had about 150 colporteurs at work. The experiment in Scotland was at once a

great success, and by way of showing what could be effected in one rural district the Committee said:—

"About seven years ago a colporteur was started in an agricultural district in the South of Scotland, with instructions to visit only the villages, hamlets, and separate dwellings, and to leave unvisited a populous town within it. When he began his labours he found that the people read little except newspapers and frivolous or pernicious publications, and that they had so little interest in literature, or desire for it, that it was often with difficulty they were persuaded even to look at the publications which he carried with him. But it was not long till a favourable change took place. Cheap and attractive periodicals found their way gradually into many families, the number of subscribers increased from year to year, till they have reached the vast amount given below: a result which bears the highest testimony to the power and value of the aggressive principle adopted by this and other agents of the society." The sale of magazines and numbers soon averaged 1,600 monthly in this parish alone; and it was therefore added:—

"Who can adequately estimate the amount of wholesome influence which these publications must be exercising from month to month over the minds and hearts of this people? And there is every reason to believe that, with few exceptions, the subscribers would have been without them still had they not been carried into their dwellings.

"This, however, is only a small portion of the literature sold by the colporteur. A growing interest in religious books has been awakened throughout the district, and of these the annual sale is now very large, including between three and four hundred Bibles and Testaments.

"And let it be remembered that the society's agents are no mere book-hawkers, but pious men, who know and love the truth, who commend it by their lips as well as by the publications sold by them, and who feel it to be their privilege, and make it their endeavour, to introduce the Gospel message into all the families in their districts. They distribute tracts, read and pray with the sick, aged, and dying, hold prayer-meetings, and are most valuable auxiliaries to ministers, missionaries, and all who are seeking to extend the Redeemer's kingdom."

Even in Ireland the work proved so successful that in one year the colporteurs sold 64,136 Bibles and books and 367,752 periodicals. It was, no doubt, through noticing these results achieved in the more remote parts of the United Kingdom that Mr. Spurgeon was prompted to take action, and to found an association in connection with the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

Mr. W. Corden Jones, who in his early days was associated with Spurgeon's old friend, Richard Knill, of Chester, supplies the following particulars about this agency:—"I send you a few particulars concerning my personal connection with the Colportage Association and the late beloved President.

"After several years of evangelistic service I was admitted to the Pastors' College as a student, and formed one of the comparatively small band who, in its earlier years, first linked hands in the formation of the Pastors' College Association. Well do I remember him saying on that occasion, as we looked upon his manly, vigorous form: 'Some of you will remain until you see the hairs on this head turn grey, and will perhaps say, as you see me toddling along, "There goes old Spurgeon."' Would that his honoured figure had been spared to toddle among us for many a year to come!

"Mr. Spurgeon baptised me in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Never shall I forget, while standing on the steps of the baptistery, his solemn exhortation to be a faithful preacher of the Gospel of Christ.

"During one of those inconvenient intervals in the pastorate to which so many ministers are liable, I was invited by the Committee of the Metropolitan Tabernacle Colportage Association to the secretariat. Of course, before accepting the office I first saw Mr. Spurgeon. He received me very kindly, and said, 'Jones, I should prefer to see you continue fully engaged in the work of the ministry; but try the colportage, and if you do not like it I will find you a church.' Accordingly I entered upon the work January 1, 1873, and have thus for over twenty years continued in it, preaching on Sundays as opportunity offered.

"When I entered the Association it was in its infancy, only ten colporteurs being employed, and these supported with great difficulty. Although a novice in the technicalities of colportage, I had received the advantages of a thorough business training. I also fully realised the great need for the work, knowing full well the immense quantity of trashy, impure, and infidel literature circulated with baneful effect throughout the land. To counteract this by taking to the people good, sound, moral and Gospel books and periodicals, presented for sale by Christian men, I saw to be a grand home missionary enterprise. Accordingly, I devoted myself to the work in hand, and sought to make it known as widely as possible.

"For a time Mr. Spurgeon seemed to feel the society a burden to him, and would say, 'It is one child too many for me; I wish someone would take it off my hands.' However, I was not discouraged; the number of colporteurs increased from year to year until now nearly one hundred are employed. This greatly cheered the President, and when a well-known gentleman offered to take the Association off his hands, Mr. Spurgeon said, 'No, you go your way and we will continue ours; there is room enough for both.' And so it has proved.

"The Association has been eminently successful in spreading the Word of God and good literature, visiting the afflicted and aged, and conducting Gospel services in the open air, cottage meetings, etc. During the year 1891 the value of the sales reached £11,255 0s. 6d., and from the beginning £153,784 3s. 6d., many millions of publications being thus scattered broadcast as good seed. The President rarely interposed in any details of the work, but if any special need arose as to funds (which was not infrequent), he would say to me, 'You go on with the work, I'll find the money.' This he did nobly to the end, besides contributing generously from his own purse. On the occasion of his jubilee, when a large sum was presented to him, earnest representations were made to induce him to appropriate the whole to his own use. In replying, he told the friends that he wished to divide it among his various institutions, and said, 'I wish to give £200 to the Colportage Association,' which he did.

"Mr. Spurgeon was much pleased with the extent and value of the work, and said repeatedly from the platform of the Tabernacle that it was second to none of his institutions in value and utility.

"Alas! in the zenith of its prosperity he was taken to his rest and reward; but the work and the workers remain. Surely, apart from the immense amount of good accomplished and the intrinsic merit of the work being done throughout the country, no stronger appeal than the memory of the beloved founder can be made to friends to contribute the necessary funds to maintain and extend the Colportage Association. At least £1,000 a year is required, besides the sums contributed by

districts, to retain the present staff of colporteurs. The total expenditure annually is about £7,000." On the whole, the Colportage Association has probably succeeded in a greater degree than the founders could have anticipated at the outset; for there are now about ninety men in as many districts in England and Wales. Bibles and wholesome books and periodicals, of the value of about £11,000 a year, are distributed, and people are gradually awaking to perceive the value of the work. As the late Lord Shaftesbury said ten years ago, "The records of the system in many parts of the Continent, in various districts of England and Ireland, but especially in Scotland, prove that we have long passed the period of trial and experiment, and that we have entered on a career of certain and great success." The aim of the Colportage Association was not only to enlighten the people by giving them what was elevating: a great deal needed to be done in the way of counteraction. As the great philanthropist just referred to added: "The infidel and immoral agencies of all kinds would, but for movements like these, have the field all to themselves; and few, except those who have been forced into an investigation of what is said, done, and written by the circulators of impure and seductive literature, can form an estimate of the number and variety of their efforts, and of the zeal and subtlety in which they are conceived and executed."

Probably Lord Shaftesbury knew more about the havoc caused by impure literature than Mr. Spurgeon, but no leader could have more highly valued a band of humble agents, who were proud to own him as their Chief, than the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle valued his colporteurs. Again and again, on the occasion of the annual meeting in May, have I sat near the pastor to take notice of the eager interest with which he followed the unadorned stories of service told by the men fresh from their country spheres. They spoke in an uneducated way, but their anecdotes of adventures, which could never have happened to men not in earnest, were always greatly relished, not only by Mr. Spurgeon himself, but by the entire audience. It was on one of these occasions that the services of the late Dr. Samuel Manning, of the Religious Tract Society, were enlisted, when the doctor referred to the mark on the wall in one of the rooms of the Wartburg, said to have been made by Luther when he threw his inkpot at the head of the devil. "There is nothing so likely to make the devil flee as a good, well-administered pot of printers' ink," said Dr. Manning. "Depend upon it, it is more powerful to exorcise the devil than all the holy water that ever has been sprinkled by priests from the beginning of the great apostasy to the present time. This is precisely what this Colportage Society is doing all day long, and every day all the year round—throwing pots of printers' ink, which has been put upon paper, at the person of the arch-enemy."

Chapter 61: Church and State

Chapter 61.

Church and State The Liberation Society—Spurgeon on the State Church—Misrepresentations—Visit to Scotland—The Sabbath Question—Spurgeon at the Free Church General Assembly—Address on Home Evangelisation.

On Wednesday evening, May 2, the Liberation Society held its annual meeting at Hanover Square Rooms, and Mr. Spurgeon was among the speakers. Those chiefly interested in such a meeting seemed to be in good spirits, for the principles of religious freedom appeared to be making progress. Although church-rates were not yet finally abolished, and would hold on until July, 1868, the principle of abolition had been once more reaffirmed by the House of Commons after an appeal to the constituencies. Thus it was thought that the cause represented by the Liberation Society should be advocated with increased earnestness, and it was a resolution worded to that effect which Mr. Spurgeon moved. On rising he was greeted with loud cheers, and he was apparently in one of his happiest moods while discoursing on the characteristics of a political Dissenter:—

"There is an old proverb that if you give a dog a bad name they will hang him; but this does not hold true as to men unless they are of the doggish stamp. All sorts of bad names have been given to those in connection with the work of this society, and they are called by the terrible name of 'political Dissenters.' It used to be bad enough to be a Dissenter, but now certain of them are picked out as being troublesome, radical, noisy boys, who must be at once put down because they are 'political Dissenters;' and there are even some of their own brethren who are mightily afraid of the title, and creep like snails into their shells when it is applied to them. A political Dissenter, according to some people, must be something very horrible; but I have been looking round the meeting, and I see that it is composed of some of our most earnest deacons and evangelical ministers, and I am persuaded that they are as spiritually minded a body of men, and as active in the spread of the Gospel, as any that could be brought together. I intend spending a few moments in expostulating with those of my brethren who think that it is wicked thus to agitate, and especially to teach, anything political. Some of these are superfine, hot-pressed, spiritual minded people. I myself was met by a man of this sort when I was returning from going to vote at the last election, who told me that he wondered how I could interfere in politics, because I was not a citizen of this world, but was a stranger and an alien. I replied that this was true of my spiritual nature, but not of the carnal nature. The man went on arguing the matter, but such people are perfectly absurd and inconsistent; for if they were attacked in the streets they would cry for the police, which they have no right to do according to their own dogma. If their property was in danger they would employ a solicitor to take the case into court, but the judge might very justly tell them, as they are not citizens, they have no rights. I hold it to be a dishonest thing to join a community and enjoy its privileges without discharging its duties; and insomuch as in this country we do, happily, enjoy very great privileges as citizens, we are bound, as honest men, to discharge the duties which devolve

upon us as citizens. I hold that in this, as in some other respects, we are very much like sailors on board a ship, where each one is bound to do his duty. What is the State but a goodly ship?—and we are borne across the billows of life in it, and surely, whenever a crisis comes, we ought to take our fair share of the work." The speaker then had a word with those who maintained that engaging in the business of the world would act as a damper to their spiritual-mindedness. If, however, they were so spiritually minded that they could not take any part in abolishing what was oppressive and erroneous, they ought to be consistent throughout, and not to claim any assistance from the State in the way of protection. Mr. Spurgeon proceeded:—

"Another class of people are those terrible conservative brethren who have sung to us as their lullaby those famous words, 'As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, Amen.' These people are all for peace, and would do anything for a quiet life. They are very amiable, but their amiability is only gilded weakness. It is said of some that they are 'as easy as an old shoe,' and if they are so, they are worth no more than old shoes. But this wish to lead a quiet life savours of a very base kind of selfishness. If they had a principle which they would uphold, and about which they would not be silent, they might make up their minds that between here and heaven there is stormy weather for them, and that they will have to sail among many rocks, and have to feel their keel grating upon the quicksands. How is it possible to do anything for light without coming into collision with darkness, or to do anything for truth without being antagonistic to error? Though some may think it to be a very pleasant grace to be very quiet, there are other virtues in a Christian soldier besides a retiring disposition. I very much question whether a court-martial would think it a good excuse if a man were so extremely modest as to consider himself unworthy of the attention of the gunners on the opposite side. We are sometimes told that Jesus Christ would never have interfered in this question. I am not so sure about that; but I never could believe in the Jesus Christ of some people, for the Christ in whom they believe is simply full of affectionateness and gentleness, whereas I believe that there never was a more splendid specimen of manhood, even in its sternness, than the Saviour; and the very lips which declared that He would not break a bruised reed uttered the most terrible anathemas upon the Pharisees, who formed the State Church in that day. These people themselves seem to lack manly vigour, but this should not be; and I would that they were rather like Job's war-horse, smelling the battle from afar."

Mr. Spurgeon went on to show that many Dissenters did not heartily join in the work of the Liberation Society for want of thought. The government was in the hands of the people, however, and if the principles of the Constitution were not carried out, the people were responsible. Unless they protested, they were all really responsible for church-rates, for Maynooth, for Dissenters being excluded from the universities, and for State Church persecution. It was then asked:—

"Is there anyone here who would like to be accountable for the action of the Established Church in relation to the burial of unbaptised infants? A singular instance of this has just occurred. A poor woman in the country had three children at a birth, and, as they were likely to die, the curate was sent for to baptise them. The curate was busy, and did not go, and during the night two of the children died. Next morning the curate baptised the child left alive, which soon after died, and the mother asked if all three might be buried in one coffin. The curate consented, but the evangelical rector heard of it, and would not allow the service to be read over the two who had died during the night! The three children were put into one coffin, and when they got to the church the two were taken out and left on the belfry stairs while the service was read over the other; some dirt was

thrown in, which was afterwards removed, and the two other children placed in the coffin. Could there be an atrocity so fearful? Yet these men were only acting in accordance with the regulations of the Church of England, and every one of you present will have a share of the responsibility of such an enormity if you do not fearlessly enter your protest against it. I take it to be the duty of a Christian man either to join this society, or in some other form to advocate its principles, not only on the considerations which I have already ventured to offer, as to escaping from responsibility of sin, but from the very highest principles of our religion. I look upon the society as a most potent and impressive declaration against persecution. They stand up boldly and declare their hearts and consciences are God's, and God's alone, and that none on earth shall interfere with them or control them. I look upon the society, too, as lifting up a very bold testimony in the face of all men for the spirituality of religion. The day has gone by for controlling religion by the rack and the stake, but the same spirit still remains, and men are foolish enough to imagine that they would legislate for spiritual things by Acts of Parliament, whereas the spirit of true religion is too divine, too mysterious to come tinder the domination of man."

Such were the principles by which, according to Mr. Spurgeon, Nonconformists would have to sink or swim. Amid hearty cheers, he finished up by urging all to increased diligence in the common cause, expressing the belief that in the end victory would be with truth and right. This speech attracted much attention, and in some quarters was misquoted; for the popular preacher was made to say that he wished the Church of England was worse than she was, in order that she might the more speedily come to an end. On being questioned by a correspondent in regard to this matter, however, Mr. Spurgeon wrote in reply:—"I entirely repudiate the language imputed to me; but it probably suggested itself from a misunderstanding. In view of the Tractarianism which the so-called Church of England fosters, and the general mischief which the State Church works, I am sorry that so many good men continue to give it the sanction of their presence; and I wish they were all gone from her, that the evils might become too glaring to be borne with any longer. I have no hostility towards Evangelical Churchmen, but the reverse; and it is for their real benefit that I wish to see that unhallowed union of Puseyism and Evangelism, which goes by the name of the Church of England, entirely abolished. A Free Episcopal Church might then win for itself the esteem of all believers."

Late in the spring of 1866 Mr. Spurgeon again visited Scotland, and being in Edinburgh during the sitting of the Free Church Assembly, he attended some of the meetings. He probably listened with interest to Dr. Candlish's great speech on the Union question; and he also heard the arguments for and against the Glasgow morning newspaper compositor who had appealed to the Assembly against a sentence of excommunication for Sunday labour pronounced by the local Presbytery. A large part of the people of Edinburgh is always greatly interested in these annual reunions of the Free Church; but to judge of the interest he excited by the eagerness there was to hear him, Spurgeon eclipsed the General Assembly, while at that Assembly itself he was, to the majority, the principal figure. When it was known that the great London preacher would occupy the pulpit of his old friend, Dr. Candlish, at Free St. George's, on the afternoon of Sunday, May 27, the demand for tickets was enormous, and a vast crowd assembled, which could not be held in check; for many who had no tickets climbed over the iron railings, and so entered the building. In the evening, when Mr. Spurgeon preached in Dr. Thomson's United Presbyterian Church, the scene was, if possible, even more animated; for one door, which barred the encroaching crowd, was broken

down. As regarded the Sunday labour case, in which Mr. Spurgeon manifested great interest, The Freeman thought that "the appellant, who argued his own case very ably, had clearly the best of it." The undaunted compositor maintained that Free Church ministers who read the newspapers on Mondays were really the employers of the printers, and as such were answerable for the Sunday evening work. Moreover, those who employed servants for purposes even less necessary than newspapers, could not throw a stone at a compositor. The man even dared to affirm that there were Free Church ministers who on Sunday prepared their sermons for The Daily Review—a Sabbatarian paper, the action of which did not agree with its avowed principles. More than this, he was able triumphantly to flourish in the face of the august assembly The Daily Review of that morning, which contained a full report of Mr. Spurgeon's address in Dr. Candlish's own church of the day before—an achievement of Sunday labour on the part of reporters and compositors. In common with those who had excommunicated him, the compositor acknowledged the necessity of keeping the Fourth Commandment. The Freeman thought that "if he had insisted that in keeping, according to Jewish hours, from Saturday evening to Sunday evening, he was nearer the exact observance than they, we do not see what their answer would be; for Paul at Troas appears to have begun the Sunday at evening and sailed the next morning." The compositor was thought to be a right-minded man, and it was held by many that Dr. Candlish and the General Assembly would have acted more wisely if they had been guided by the Apostle Paul's ecclesiastical law—"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

If Mr. Spurgeon did not take this view of the case it was because he sat in the Assembly Hall during the trial and was in possession of all the particulars. After he had listened to both sides he had a presentiment that the matter would be misrepresented. The Assembly did not seek out the case, and would have been glad not to be troubled with it. Further, it was not a case of working merely a few hours on Sunday evening; the man worked a great part of the Sunday, and at type-setting which could easily have been done on Saturday, which day he preferred for his weekly holiday, however. If any error had been made, Mr. Spurgeon thought it to have been on the side of leniency. The entire General Assembly anticipated with extraordinary interest the address on Home Missions which, according to arrangement, Mr. Spurgeon was to give on the evening of Tuesday, May 29. The bare mention of this had drawn forth a hearty cheer, and several speeches were shortened in. order to give the great preacher ample time in which to work out his subject. He began by conveying the Christian salutation of his own people to the Free Church of Scotland, and then continued:—

"The significant circumstance is that I am here as a Baptist. You have seen the shepherd gather the sheep from the hills—gather them into one flock, just when the storm was coming on. Here, I think, the Shepherd of Israel is gathering us together, for doubtless a storm is lowering. We may hear His voice calling, 'Come ye closer together, and confess yourselves to be one flock, for the time of tempest is near.' The Captain seems to say, 'Close your ranks, my soldiers: let every man draw nearer to bis brother man;' and if some of you do not belong to the same regiment, still let all strive as brethren to get closer together, and nearer yet to the common standard. I can remember, some years ago, when I was in Scotland, in coming hither we came to a certain water which divided the two countries. We passed it so rapidly that it scarce made any difference at all. I hope that our different views upon baptism may be no more formidable a barrier to communion. I have gone from Scotland to England in former years, and when we passed the boundary my luggage

was a little rudely shaken before I entered England. My countrymen were afraid of my taking with me a more fiery spirit than I should be allowed to carry. I have never had my bags shaken in coming this way; you were not afraid of my bringing among you the water in which I take delight. I can go back, and hope, without being overhauled for it, to take with me some of your strong spirit. I need not explain that I do not mean whiskey, but some of your stern, strong spirit of orthodoxy and firmness which I think infinitely better." In the course of an ample address, Mr. Spurgeon showed what was the object of home mission work. All classes were to be sought; no place was to be left unoccupied. The so-called hopeless class were singularly hopeful; and reclaimed sinners, in the hand of God, made the best agents for the reclamation of others. It was then shown that, to be successful, great movements have to begin with the common people:—

"I believe I am historically right in saying that wherever the Reformation was carried on only, or mainly, by the nobility, it did not succeed. You hear much of Anne of Bohemia, but you do not hear of the peasant people of that country largely taking part in the work of the Reformation; and where is the Gospel in Bohemia now? The Spanish nobles also took the most active part in the work in Spain, and though there were noble martyrs among them, the lower class did not take part in the work; and where is it now? But in the Reformation in Scotland, under John Knox, it was not only the lords of the congregation, but some of the peasants were the first to draw their blood to sign the covenant, and the work then begun stands now. You have in the midst of you still John Knox's house, and the house, though not now in an aristocratic neighbourhood, would not be on that account, I daresay, objectionable to honest old John. He would be as glad to preach the Gospel to the dwellers there as to those in your new town. The spiritual interests of those on that side of the town would be as dear to him as the spiritual interests of those in the highest circles in the land." The Assembly was warned of the insidious encroachments of Romanism, to resist which the churches south of the Tweed needed to be up in arms, but it was not apprehended that there was much danger of the Pope gaining any ascendancy in Scotland. "When I walked through the ruins of your abbeys, I fancied the nests had been so effectually pulled down that the birds could not come back again," said Mr. Spurgeon; "and if they be built again, if you do not pull them down in a literal sense, you will down with them in a sense far from metaphorical, even though it be spiritual." There was still danger, however, in latitudinarian laxity. The most effective of home missionaries were the pastors of churches; the working of the whole agency depended very much upon the pulpit. The Edinburgh Castle noonday time-gun then supplied a telling illustration:—

"I was sitting over there yesterday, when this house seemed to shake with a terrible sound. I soon perceived what it was when all the brethren pulled out their watches to see if they corresponded to the hour-gun. Now, I thought to myself this is how I should like to preach; I would like to startle all my hearers into seeing whether they are right in the matters which concern their souls. But how can I do that? The electric wire brings down the force by which the gun is fired. The sun gives the time of day, and soon you get it flashing along the wire. Union to the everlasting Sun of Righteousness will enable us to deliver ourselves with a force more startling, and our hearers will soon learn not only where we are, but where they are themselves. How necessary is it that we should be right, for how many hundreds set, not their watches, but their lives, by what we have told them on Sunday. And, in addition to being right, how necessary is it that we should speak with force, so that those who do not want to hear may be made— A word was said on the most effective way of putting things in the pulpit. On the preceding day reference had been made in the

Assembly to hot dinners on Sundays, but while such might be "very terrible things," they were by no means so mischievous as "cold divinity on Sundays."

"Always let us have the doctrines of grace served up thoroughly hot and warm. There are sleepy people in our congregations. That is sometimes their own fault, for they go to sleep before we begin to preach. There is an old story of a minister who recommended an old lady to use Snuff in church, and she suggested to him that it would be better to put the snuff into the sermon. I would recommend a little snuff in the sermons—a lively and warm way of presenting the truth before the hearer's mind. Sermons should be as much as possible simple in style. You would not have a man say that 'Deity is my pastor, I shall not be afflicted with deprivation;' but, 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.' You don't like the Psalms put into any shape so well as your good old rugged metre. Though there may be prettier ways of putting the Gospel, the plain, old rugged way will take the ear, and be the readiest way to the heart."

Earnestness and hard work were insisted upon. And then came the importance of the prayer-meeting. "Go into a cotton-mill; see all its departments in operation; walk along the rooms; wander out by that door, and in the outside you may see an ugly shed, with a black-looking machine, making black smoke that is spoiling the blue sky. In that engine-house is the motive power." References were made to the Sunday-school, to female agency—the wonderful work of Mrs. Bartlett being mentioned—and to the work of adults in the church. In connection with the latter were given some personal reminiscences:—

"Somebody asked me how I got my congregation. I never got it at all. I did not think it my business to do so, but only to preach the Gospel. Why, my congregation got my congregation. I had eighty, or scarcely a hundred, when I preached first. The next time I had two hundred: everyone who had heard me was saying to his neighbour, 'You must go and hear this young man.' Next meeting we had four hundred, and in six weeks eight hundred. That was the way in which my people got my congregation. Now my people are admitted by tickets. That does very well; a member can give his ticket to another person and say, 'I will stand in the aisle,' or 'I will get in with the crowd.' Some persons, you know, will not go if they can get in easily, but they will go if you tell them that they cannot get in without a ticket. That is the way in which congregations ought to bring a congregation about a minister. A minister preaches all the better if he has a large congregation. It was once said by a gentleman that the forming of a congregation was like the beating up of game, the minister being the sportsman. 'But,' he said, 'there are some of our ministers that can't shoot.' But I really think I could shoot a partridge if I fired into the middle of a covey, and I might not do so if there were only one or two."

It was insisted that the Church needed to be aggressive. "O, that word Church!" he wished that there was another word for it, for in England it simply meant "a heap of bricks and a spire;" but that could hardly have been the kind of church which fell on Paul's neck. It was in connection with giving to the cause that Mr. Spurgeon then told a story in his most effective manner:—

"A certain merchant had been waited upon during the day by someone for a subscription for a society. He replied, as some merchants do, 'I cannot., for I have so many calls.' At night, when he got home, and his wife and family had retired to rest, he drew a chair in front of the fire and sat down, and as he sat looking into the fire he thought thus:—I refused that good man a subscription to-day. I have refused subscriptions before, and told the people I had so many calls. There was a

time when I gave more than I do now. The reason was because I built this new house. The other house was very good; still, my wife thought it was not quite the thing. We went to the new house, had to get new furniture, and then got into a new circle. The girls want more for dress, and the boys want more. My expenses have risen, and I am afraid I am entrenching upon what I have been giving to the cause of God. He is then supposed to fall asleep—whether he did so or not I am not here to say—but as he sat by the fire in came a stranger, a singularly mild and majestic-looking man. He came up to the merchant, and said to him, presenting a paper, 'I am come asking a subscription for foreign missions.' He asked it very tenderly, and the merchant, with a good deal of hesitancy, said, 'Really, you must excuse me; I cannot, I have so many calls.' The stranger looked very sad. There was no anger in his face, but there seemed great grief. He took out another paper, and said, 'You do not give anything to foreign missions; will you give something towards home evangelisation? There are many heathens at home.' The merchant again said, 'I can't afford it; besides, I think there is more said about home heathenism than is necessary.' 'Well,' said the stranger, who seemed to look more sad than ever, 'there is the Bible Society; will you give something to it?' He was a little vexed, and said, 'I really do not like to be pressed in this way; I can't give.' The stranger looked sadder than ever; but in a moment seemed to change, and there stood before the merchant one like unto the Son of man. And he said to him: 'Five years ago your little child lay sick, near unto death. You went upstairs into your chamber; your heart was bowed down with bitterness, and you prayed that that dear one might live, your soul being bound up in the life of that child. Who raised your darling to life and spared her to your house?' The merchant covered his face with his hands. 'Ten years ago,' said the same soft, tender voice, 'you lay upon what seemed to be your dying bed. Your affairs were then in a bad state, and if you died you left your children penniless. You turned your face to the wall, and prayed that you might be spared until, at least, you might leave your children something. Who heard your bitter cry, and raised you up?' The merchant was more confused than ever. 'Fifteen years ago, in a certain chamber, you knelt, a broken-hearted sinner, with a weight of sin on your conscience and soul. Filled with bitterness, you cried for mercy. Who came to you and said, "I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities," and opened His heart to wash you from your iniquities?' There was no reply, except a sob. 'If thou wilt never ask anything of me again I will never ask anything of thee. Thou shalt not be troubled with my many calls if I am not troubled with thine.' The merchant fell on his face before the stranger—'My God, my Lord, forgive me, and take all that I have.' And lo! it was a dream—but not a dream, for his life was changed thereby."

Chapter 62: Work and Progress in 1866

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Work and Progress in 1866

Foreign Missionaries—State of London—The Cholera—Final Closing of New Park Street Chapel—A Street Adventure—Baptist Union at Liverpool—Spurgeon at New College—Sermon on Ritualism.

Mr. Spurgeon appears to have learned some things in Scotland which he was able to turn to good use; and at a meeting of the Metropolitan Tabernacle Chapel Building and College Reserve Fund, on Wednesday, June 13, 1866, he gave the people some account of the visit to the North. He seems to have been struck with the systematic way in which the Free Church organised its various enterprises, and with the mode in which printed reports were presented to the presbyteries. There did not appear to be any prospect of the Baptists ever working in union in a similar manner, however, although some of the methods of the Scotch might with profit be adopted by the congregation. It was recommended that committees should be formed—one to promote the circulation of pure literature, one to see after the Sunday-school and to arrange for the establishment of a day-school, and one for benevolent purposes. There should also be one for foreign missions, and another to look after political privileges and present petitions to Parliament, as necessity might arise. The continued interest which the people at the Metropolitan Tabernacle manifested in the work of foreign missionaries was shown by a meeting which was held on Monday, July 30, when farewell was taken of certain missionaries who were about to proceed to India. Mr. Spurgeon said that they wanted to see the heroic age of missions come back; they wanted some examples of self-sacrifice such as should stir up the hearts of the people:—

"Some have spoken of the astonishing labours of such men as Francis Xavier, and of the Jesuits of China, whose zeal was truly apostolic. I think that if something rare were done—something so rash as to astonish people, as in the case of, poor rash Carey—that a greater blessing might accompany our missionary work. There is a feeling growing up in many churches—I only say what others have stated—that there is less preaching by missionaries than in former times. Translations, writing tracts, and teaching knowledge are, I consider, subordinate things to preaching the Gospel. The pulpit is, I consider, the great Thermopylæ of Christendom, and, as I am accustomed to say to the students of the College, 'If you cannot preach, you can do nothing.' I venture to say that because missionaries are apt to forget it." The year 1866 is still remembered as a time of panic and of cholera. The insanitary condition of the more crowded quarters of London encouraged the spread of the plague when it once appeared, and what that condition was may be inferred from what the pastor of Commercial Road Chapel said of his surroundings:—

"In this often ignored and overlooked district of the teeming multitudinous world of London there are thick jungles of immorality and heathenism uncleared and almost unvisited, where are always more deadly foes than fever or cholera, plague or pestilence, which kill the body and leave no

more that they can do. I myself know well a locality where 10,000 or more inhabitants are huddled together in filthy narrow streets, and where for years, amid the lowest forms of vice and the greatest profanity and Sabbath desecration, only a solitary and heroic missionary has been found toiling and labouring for the good of the people." On Sunday, August 12, special attention was drawn to the cholera visitation in a sermon founded on Amo 3:3-6. The preacher did not think that every such affliction was a judgment sent by God on the nation; and he did not believe in judgments coming on particular persons except in extraordinary cases. Individuals were rewarded or punished in the next state; but as there would then be no nations, nations, as such, were punished in the present world. The national sin of drunkenness was enlarged upon:—

"Alas! alas! this drunken city may well expect that God should visit it. The debauchery of the streets is a pestilence which is enough to cause God's health-giving providence to refuse to walk with us. I think that the constant neglect of the worship of God is a sin of which London is peculiarly and pre-eminently guilty. In some of our country towns and villages the accommodation in places of worship is even larger than the population, and I know places in England where there is scarcely a soul to be found at home at the hour of public worship—certainly not more than absolutely necessary to nurse the sick, care for the infants, and protect the doors—for the whole population turn out to attend the place of worship. But in London the habitual forsakers of public worship are probably in a large majority. It must be so, because we know that, even if they wished to go, the provision of seat room is most lamentably short of what they would require, and yet, short as it is, there is not half so much want of churches and chapels in London as there is of inclination to go to either the one or the other. The masses of our people regard not God, care not for the Lord Jesus, and have no thought about eternal things. This is a Christian city, we sometimes say, but where shall be found more thorough heathens than we may find here? In Canton, Calcutta, or even Timbuctoo, the people have at least a form of worship and a reverence for some idea of a God, but here tens of thousands make no pretence of religious worship. I protest unto you all that whereas you think Christianity to be well known in our streets and lanes, you only think so because you have not penetrated into their depths, for thick darkness covers the people. There are discoveries yet to be made in this city that may make the hearts of Christendom melt for shame that we should have permitted such God-dishonouring ignorance, that in the very blaze of the sun, as we think our country to be, there should be black spots where Christian light has never penetrated. One design of the cholera seems to be to wake up the indifferent population—to make them remember that there is a God, to render them susceptible to the influences of the Gospel, to drive them to the house of prayer, to influence their minds to receive the Word, and, moreover, to startle Christians into energy and earnestness, that they may work while it is called to-day. Already I have been told by Christian brethren labouring in the east of London that there is a greater willingness to listen to Gospel truth, and that if there be a religious service it is more acceptable to the people now than it was, for which I thank God as an indication that affliction is answering its purpose. There is, perhaps, no part of London more destitute of the means of grace, and of the desire to use the means, than that particular district where the plague has fallen; and if the Lord shall but make those teeming thousands anxious to hear the Gospel of Jesus, and teach them to trust in Him, then the design will be answered."

Towards the end of the summer of this year, the congregation which had been accustomed to meet in New Park Street Chapel finally took leave of the building, which they had learned to love

on account of its hallowed associations, and despite its uncanny surroundings. During the preceding eighteen months Mr. George Kew had conducted the services, and on leaving the place he was presented with a handsome family Bible. As the old sanctuary now, as it were, disappears from the scenes, we may ourselves take account of what is called Dr. Rippon's Prophetic Prayer, which that veteran offered up towards the close of his long pastorate. The doctor is said to have asked the Lord that it would please Him "to anoint and to commission a young minister, who peradventure is not yet born, to be witness for the Gospel, and a leader of God's flock, and whose successful career shall throw the great annals of the past into the shade." The congregation which had overflowed in the time of Mr. Spurgeon's pastorate had again dwindled to a very small company. The sale of the property gave the funds needed for the establishment of a day-school, while the almshouses were rebuilt on a more eligible site.

It was also at this time that the public heard for the first time of the proposal to found an Orphanage in connection with the Metropolitan Tabernacle, the report now gaining currency that a lady had promised Mr. Spurgeon £20,000 with which to found an Orphanage.

Among other things that were given to the world in 1866 was a report concerning a "Miss Spurgeon," who was supposed to exist, and which at least served to prove that fiction is sometimes stranger than truth. Thus The New York Home Journal said:—"Miss Spurgeon, the daughter of the popular preacher, accompanied Queen Emma to this country. Miss Spurgeon is on her way to the Sandwich Islands, in the hope of being able to instruct the natives in the doctrines of Christianity. She is twenty-four years of age, has a fine intellectual face, and very prepossessing manners." At this time the reputed father of this imaginary young lady was himself only thirty-two years old. The great preacher would occasionally meet with adventures in the streets which would be more or less diverting, according to circumstances. I never knew of his ever travelling by omnibus, and in his later years he was not accustomed to walk about the streets; he would employ either his own brougham or a cab. In the earlier years of his service he walked about, however, and this is a relation of one of his adventures as told by himself:—"I remember, in the streets of London, a man took off his hat and bowed to me—'The Rev. Mr. Spurgeon; a great humbug.' I took off my hat, too, and said, 'I am obliged to you, sir, that I am great at anything.' We passed on, parting very amicably. I have not had the pleasure of meeting him since, but I felt highly flattered that day." Commenting on this interchange of civilities, a weekly journal, which always looked at Spurgeon through the green spectacles of the narrowest Anglican prejudice, said, "The story is a good one, and does credit to the discrimination of both parties. The gentleman who politely characterised Mr. Spurgeon in this way certainly did not hate him; and the kind way in which Mr. Spurgeon accepted the compliment showed his character and his appreciation of notoriety. Any notice was better than no notice at all; any pre-eminence, even as a pretender, was grateful; and notoriety, even that of censure, is acceptable." A paragraph which appeared in the newspapers at the end of August, 1866, had the effect of making the young pastor appear extremely peculiar in the eyes of a large number of people:—"Mr. Spurgeon has just notified, on smart pink paper, to a member of his flock, that he discourages as much as possible the practice of returning thanks after childbirth by any of his congregation, since, in most cases, it is an absurd superstitious practice." The Baptist Union autumnal meetings took place at Liverpool during the second week of October, Mr. J. Aldis, of Reading, being in the chair. The proceedings in general were probably of more than average interest. The denomination appeared to be making progress,

for it was stated that one-fourth of the Baptist chapels of England had been erected during the preceding twenty years. Congratulations were given and received in regard to the generosity of the churches during the cotton famine; might they now band together to ward off a still worse famine—that of "The Bread of Life?" A paper was read by Mr. James Benham, then treasurer of the Baptist Building Fund, on "The Deacon's Office in Relation to Church Finance." A discussion followed. Then the scene suddenly changes:—

"Whispers are numerous, and speedily a loud burst of applause is heard. It greets a brother whom all love to see and delight to honour, and there he stands—the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon. He speaks of elders as well as deacons in the Tabernacle church, and from grateful experience recommends sister churches to have them too. Many business men are not needed in a church, but elders are. Let them be employed; the result will justify the step. A pastor's support is no gratuity. 'The labourer is worthy,' not of 'what Providence sends,' or 'what can be raised,' but 'worthy of his hire,' and the Master enjoined this because He knew that certain influences in churches rendered the injunction necessary. We ought to rise to that munificence which only entire consecration to Christ can secure. An inefficient deacon is to be remonstrated with, and if he go away offended we lose only a bad man; if he remain and improve, we keep a good one."

It was on this occasion that Mr. Spurgeon made the confession that he had once received the offer of a partnership in a mercantile firm with £3,000, on which he might have made himself comfortable and retired, had he been so disposed. On Wednesday, the 17th, he attended the Welsh meeting at Myrtle Street Chapel, preferring that to the conversazione held at the Philharmonic Hall at the same time. Several of the addresses at Myrtle Street Chapel were in Welsh, a dialect which the London preacher never attempted to learn, though he always affected to believe that it must have been the language of Paradise. He had a liking for the Welsh people, however, and was gratified by finding that the volume of his sermons then recently translated was meeting with a ready sale. In addressing the Welsh friends on this occasion, something was said about what is called Welsh fire in preaching, and then followed some remarks which must have gone home to the hearts of many of those present:—

"I always desire to mingle with the preaching of the Word as much of fire as is characteristic of Welshmen and is consistent with its being fire from off God's altar. Englishmen have been very apt to lie back on the laurels of William Knibb and men of that class among them, and some of my Welsh friends are always talking about their Christmas Evans. That is all well enough, but every minister ought to seek to emulate the heroes of the past. It is a good thing to think of the men who went before us, in order that our courage may be strengthened and our pulse quickened; but to rest there would be the saddest thing that could occur to the Church. Our honour before God must depend on the exertions of to-day—nay, our very existence much longer might depend on our making advances on the foe. Ministers must make up their mind that they will preach better. If they preach the best they know they must learn more, and if they have attained unto some degree of success, they must forget what they have attained unto and press on for something yet beyond; for if the kingdom of Christ is to be spread, very much depends upon the ministers being quickened in all respects in the work of the ministry. The Welsh churches furnish a considerable proportion of members to the English churches through the constant progress of immigration. May I ask you, with the deepest affection and respect, to see as much as ever you can to the discipline of the Church? We do not complain of our churches as they might exist, but we have to complain

that sometimes Welshmen in London are very different from Welshmen among the hills; that, although they may be very useful members of their own churches, they do succumb very terribly to the temptations of London. Whether or not this indicates that there must be some of them unconverted, or whether they are simply backsliders, I leave to my brethren to judge. But we must be very scrupulous about our membership."

Lotteries, or "gambling for the glory of God," as Mr. Spurgeon described it, appears to have been comparatively common at that time; and, while he strongly condemned the practice, he mentioned having had two tickets sent to him, which were then sent to the Home Secretary. Some references were made to the spread of Romish practices in the Established Church; and it was then shown how the mere patronage of royal and great personages was not enough to advance a great reformation:—

"How well the Reformation went on under Martin Luther until kings came in to help it! The king's hand is said to cure the scrofula or king's evil; I believe it gives it. As soon as ever the kings touched the Reformation, the Reformation ceased. It never went further; it could not, it was impossible. There was another Reformation in the days of Oliver Cromwell, but that Reformation was very much achieved by carnal weapons. I deplore the fact that men who loved God so well ever took sword and pistol in hand at all. The next Reformation must be by the clear, sheer force of the Holy Ghost's power, earnest prayer, and the faithful preaching of the Word of God. Though I think we must use all political means as citizens, yet as Christians this is our chief means, and we may rest assured that the old battering-ram of the Gospel, which shakes the walls of heathenism, though it is hoary with age, and makes them come tottering down in one colossal ruin, will shake the walls of Antichrist, and make them come down too. It is a part of patriotism to denounce that which will lead us back to Popery. It is a part of our Christianity, not only to preach truth, but denounce error. I urge you, by your love of souls, to spread abroad the Gospel; by your love of "Christ to spread that Gospel lovingly; by your hatred of everything which touches the crown jewels of Christ, which sets up any king but Jesus in the Church, which brings out any law but the Bible, and which would teach us to trust in anything but the precious blood, to rely on anything but the finished work of the Saviour; by your hatred of these to be instant in season and out of season; to let your testimony be bold, clear, strong, united, consistent, honest, and true."

After the pastor's return from Liverpool his earnestness in the work to which he had set his hand seemed to become more manifest than ever. His sermon to the Union, preached to an immense audience, in the Philharmonic Hall, had been founded on Eph 5:14, "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." The discourse seems to have been like a call to renewed diligence and consecration. When he again settled down in London Mr. Spurgeon read Dr. Manning's pastoral letter, asking for daily prayers for the Pope, and that suggested the institution of daily prayer-meetings at the Tabernacle to ask for a special blessing upon the Church at large in its varied operations. The morning meetings were at seven o'clock, and those of the evening at seven, or half an hour later. The fifth of November was also set apart by the London Baptist Association as a day of fasting and prayer, that being thought to be more profitable than bonfires and fireworks.

Having done so much in the department of ministerial education, Mr. Spurgeon was naturally regarded with much interest by the tutors and students of other colleges. At this time Dr. Halley

was principal of New College, and for years that veteran writer, preacher, and teacher had asked the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle to pay him and his students a visit. Not until the evening of Friday, October 26, however, was Mr. Spurgeon able to accept the invitation. Dr. Halley presided at tea, and a meeting was afterwards held in the library, a battalion of young men from Regent's Park College being also present. Mr. Spurgeon, having offered prayer, was cordially welcomed, and he then proceeded to give an address on "The Power of the Pulpit":—

"By the pulpit I do not, of coarse, mean the large, wooden box in which many men are shut up; though, in passing, I may say a word or two about this as a hindrance to the efficiency of preaching. It has been said that pulpits are scriptural, and that Ezra had a pulpit. But a reference to the passage shows that the pulpit held fourteen people. The Saviour did not preach from a pulpit; Raffaelle, in bis cartoon of 'Paul at Athens,' has not represented the Apostle as addressing the people from a pulpit. It is one of the greatest proofs of the inspiration of the Bible that it has survived the introduction of pulpits. When a man is in earnest his whole body speaks, and he ought not to be concealed from his congregation. The main business of a minister is his pulpit. The visitation of the sick, private visitation among his people, organisation of useful and benevolent institutions, platform speaking, occasional contributions to magazines and reviews—these are all good and important; but the work of the pulpit is more important than any of them. The pulpit is the Thermopylæ of Christendom. It has not done everything; it is not intended to do everything; but it has done a great deal. Look at its history. It over-rode philosophy and bigotry, which is almost as strong as philosophy. Against these Paul had nothing but preaching as an instrument. It overthrew idolatry and the colossal system of the Church of Rome. Much was done for the Reformation by the writings of Erasmus, by caricatures, by translations, but the lever by which was lifted the monstrous stone covering the sepulchre of spiritual life was the preaching of Luther. The pulpit did much to overthrow Stuart tyranny; Cromwell's Ironsides could not have done without a sermon. Great were the effects of the preaching of Whitefield and Wesley last century; and nowadays, with all its defects, men cannot do without the pulpit. Preachers are worth all that their congregations give them, and worth a great deal more. If any young man present is conscious of having received more than he ought for his occasional ministrations, let him stand forward and say so. If there is such a one he is a rara avis, or rather a goose. In all ages preaching has been the great instrument of conversion. Then as to edifying: it is true that some men have the gift of dispersion largely developed, and their power of thinning a congregation is wonderful; but, after all, the pulpit is a great instructing power."

It was then shown that, even in the matter of purely secular education, a good deal was done by preaching; and the pulpit did much also in the way of encouraging and directing beneficent action, as was proved by the collections for good objects which were made by congregations. Thus, in some measure, the pulpit affected the entire well-being of the country. Wherein, then, consisted the power of the pulpit?—

"The preacher mast be a man. He must have force of character, and personal life above suspicion. There is much, also, in his manner: how powerful are the tears which sometimes testify to the power of the subject over the preacher! and more powerful still are those dry tears which tell of inward agony. But the main force of the pulpit is in the matter; a preacher must not talk book. Men first thought of communicating by talking to one another. Speaking came before writing. As to the choice of matter, I can speak from a point of experience. For twelve years most of my sermons

have been reported and printed, and yet in my search for something now, I pace up and down my study, embarrassed with the abundance of topics, and not knowing which to choose. If John B. Gough were to take Exeter Hall, and twice a week speak on teetotalism, or Mr. Bright do a similar thing with reference to politics, I will undertake to say that at the end of twelve months they would have to turn to something else. Their subject would have lost its interest. It is not so with the preacher. He goes back into the council chambers of Jehovah and far into eternity; up to the Triune God and down to the degradation of the soul in sin. Then as to the doctrine: correctness is of more importance than most men think. A man may go over a great many big stones, but one little one in his shoe will trouble him. So we may know a thousand heresies, but if we get one into our creed, it will bother us. Doctrine is the food of thought and the mainstay of practice." The chief element of pulpit power, of course, consisted in the promised presence of the Holy Spirit. Mr. Spurgeon then passed on to show how the pulpit might be overturned, or have its power for good destroyed:—

"It may be done by putting empty-headed men in the pulpit, men who have nothing to say, and say it; or frothy, feathery men, men who introduce a joke in the pulpit for joking's sake, and who, not being particularly conscious of any other mission in the world, make themselves generally agreeable and think that sufficient. Iron men, too, are dangerous in the pulpit—men who in preaching the wrath of God do it without a tear, men who will discuss and wrangle, clear-headed, but cold and hard, like a snowy night with the moon shining. Then there are idle men. Idle students are bad enough; but idle ministers—what shall I say of them? There are also what I call men of putty—men who are influenced by everybody, and have no opinions except those of the last person they met. There are starched brethren—men wrapped in dignity, who come from the pulpit, and walk down the aisle, their minds absorbed by heavenly contemplation. Finally, there are weathercock brethren—men whose religious opinions veer with the prevailing doctrinal current in their neighbourhood—men who in their time have boxed the spiritual compass, and said that every point is the North Pole. Of course, I speak of these as curiosities; probably no one present has ever met with them."

Some of the qualifications for pulpit efficiency were then mentioned—unflinching faithfulness to themselves and to others, a growing spirituality, hard work and holy boldness, all being supplemented by much prayer and love of souls. Then came the conclusion of the address, which had lasted for two hours:—

"Above all, it is imperative to see to our weapons and their efficient handling. We have to fight against Ritualism and against Rome. We must preach the truth of Christ. It was not to listen to moral essays and rules of ordinary conduct that, in the old persecuting days, brave men and women assembled at dead of night under the walls of Antwerp. It was not to inculcate simply domestic and social duties that Cameron and Renwick preached on the hill-sides of Scotland while the Claverhouses with their dragoons were hunting them from place to place. Let us be worthy of our sires, and do better even than they did in the cause of truth and God."

Many men who are now settled in the ministry, but who were present on this memorable occasion, have probably carried with them into the world the words of the great preacher—his wise counsels drawn from actual experience, and his earnest exhortations to faithfulness which were the outcome of his glowing enthusiasm for the Gospel cause. It was on such great occasions that

Spurgeon was carried away, as it were, by his subject; and it was not until he reached home that he realised how much the effort had taken out of him. On Sunday morning, October 28, a very different theme engaged the preacher's attention at the Metropolitan Tabernacle; for he then spoke on Ritualism and its work in the Established Church. The text was Isa 59:19, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." It was remarked that no language could well exaggerate the sad condition of things in the Church of England, and Mr. Spurgeon then went on to say:—

"It was not now from without, but from within, that the greatest danger manifested itself. High Church! What was it? Bastard Popery. Broad Church! What was that? Dishonest infidelity—not honest enough to come out at once and say it did not believe in Scripture, but dishonest enough to take pay for that which it did not believe. Both those parties were making a great noise, so much so that some Evangelical friends were being somewhat cast down, and asking what was to be done. He saw no help likely to arise from any quarter except this one—that the Holy Spirit would now interpose and show His strength; and there were signs that the Holy Spirit was coming. He did not want the bishops to interfere with the Ritualists, because what service had the bishops ever rendered to the Church, or what benefit would they ever render to it? Neither did he want. Parliament to interfere with them. He wanted the Holy Ghost to lift up the standard against them. He thought ho could perceive that there was a general spirit of prayer coming over the Churches that were faithful to Christ. He had appointed the 5th of November as a day for fasting and prayer at the Tabernacle, and the friends at Birmingham, without any dictation on his part, had appointed the same day for a like purpose. The brethren, then, were creeping together and preparing for the conflict which was impending, and he was happy to say that among them minor points were being given up. They must stand together shoulder to shoulder in this day of trial. He was happy to say, too, that there was coming back to the Protestant churches a greater love of the old truths than there was before, that some of the ministers were getting sick of their philosophical speculations and geological views, and were giving more of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to their flocks. They were beginning to see that wherever the old standard was borne to the breeze it would bring victory. Let them press to that standard everywhere, and let every man do his duty now in the Church, and be found faithfully at his post. And let them never despair, let them not even fear for the result, but let them be of good courage, for God was with them; and, if only they acted very courageously and very earnestly, they might rely upon it that the Spirit of the Lord would lift up the standard." At the time when these words were spoken there appears to have been some extra commotion in the ecclesiastical world in regard to the practices of the Ritualists. The Church Congress had just been held at York, and while The Pall Mall Gazette, in commenting on "A Catalogue of the Ritualistic Show" in the northern city, remarked that it might be "accepted as a pocket edition of the Directorium Anglicanum," The Times thought it was time that "some decided measures should be taken to repress such pernicious extravagances." In a letter to the leading journal, the then well-known writer, "S. G. O.," warmly reprimanded the bishops who had taken part in the meetings at York for not protesting against "the Tussaud exhibition of ecclesiastical millinery."

Monday, November 5, appears to have been a day set apart for special prayer. At the meeting at the Tabernacle in the evening prayer was asked on behalf of Mr. Gillet, who had been met with in Oxfordshire; and having now passed through the College curriculum, had accepted the offer of an

Indian gentleman who was desirous of assisting a young man with a view to missionary service.

Chapter 63: Spurgeon and the Friends

Chapter 63.

Spurgeon and the Friends A Week-night Address—George Fox and his Work—The Friends' Testimony—A Stirring Appeal—Visit to Paris—Golden Lane Mission.

There can be no doubt that Mr. Spurgeon had much in common with the Quakers; for he never forgot his ancestor Job, who, as an early member of the Society, suffered for conscience sake in Chelmsford gaol during one of the severe winters of the seventeenth century. The young pastor was therefore interested in the Society of Friends; and he felt some regret that the members were not maintaining the prestige of their ancestors in the Puritan age, by doing all that they might do for the world in the department of Christian work. Some reference to this was made in a private letter, and the writer expressed a desire of "addressing the members of the Society of Friends on the necessity of maintaining, in these perilous times, those spiritual principles which Were brought out so clearly by George Fox." An opportunity of carrying out this wish occurred on Tuesday, November 6, when Mr. Spurgeon arranged to speak at the Institute in Bishopsgate Street. There was a very crowded meeting, and Mr. Charles Gilpin, M.P., occupied the chair. Among those present were Lord Houghton, Mr. W. E. Forster, M.P., and a number of the leading members of the Quaker denomination. There was "silent prayer" after the manner of a Quaker meeting, and then the chairman said he hoped that Mr. Spurgeon had found that, whatever else they might have been, George Fox and his followers were God-fearing men, who hated covetousness. Thus, if it was found that the living generation had fallen from the standard of the fathers, what was said should be accepted as coming from a friend, while all should be turned to profit.

Though it may have appeared otherwise to certain observers, Mr. Spurgeon no doubt felt quite at home with his remarkable audience. He confessed that the desire to speak to them had pressed heavily upon his mind; but his idea had been not to deliver an ordinary lecture, but to speak for a few minutes. "I look upon the Society of Friends as a picked body, who are the representatives of spiritual religion," he said; "who have suffered long for it, whose history in times past is highly honourable to them, who still love the spirituality of godliness, and who are not to be bewitched by the formalism of the age. But I think," it was added, "their testimony just now is hardly made enough of; though clear as a bell, it ought to be loud as a clarion; and I have thought that if it so pleased God you would permit me to say a few earnest words to you, so that some amongst you, especially some young men, might be stirred up to lift up their voice like a trumpet, to cry aloud and spare not, and to tell this age of its sins and iniquities."

Instead of being allowed to speak in this manner, as he had proposed to himself, Mr. Spurgeon had received another programme: he had been requested to speak to a company of Quakers on the Life and Work of George Fox. That struck the preacher as being a most extraordinary proposition, for as Quakers they ought to know much more about their founder than a lecturer could tell them. If that was not the case it ought to be, for the life of George Fox was well worthy of being studied. "His journal is a rich mine of ingots of gold, which one may go on finding from month

to month."

Some of the chief events in the life of the seventeenth-century veteran were then mentioned, and then those present, as "brethren and sisters in Christ," were asked if they did not think that the age required their services in a peculiar manner. The age, indeed, needed the testimony of all Christians, but it seemed most urgently to need that of the Friends. "If you wish to be at all like George Fox, was there ever a period since his day in which the existence of the Quaker was more necessary than now?" asked the pastor. "I think not," he added; and then went on to show that the Quakers occupied special vantage-ground in fighting with Ritualism, and with the covert popery which seemed to be coming back to England:—

"The advocates of Ritualism cannot turn to the Quakers and say, 'Physician, heal thyself,' unless, as some wicked people say, they got to be as Ritualistic without a form as others were with one. But, as far as I can judge, you are clear of this sin, and therefore are the very persons constantly and vehemently to speak against it. Is there not need that you should do this? Is it not a most dreadful sign of the times that the public taste seems running that way? The taste in dress and in decoration is florid, and this to some extent accounts for the taste for florid religion; but over and above that, the principles of priestcraft are being intruded. One has not to complain so much of gaudy dresses, and crucifixes, and incense, as of the doctrine that a man is to confess his sin to one of his fellows, who by some mystic operation has received power to forgive sins. Is it not shocking that in what is called the enlightened nineteenth century men should be found to believe this; and that it is being spread at so great a rate by men who evidently have great power and skill, and who are good servants of Satan and serve him well? Should not all Christians bear their testimony against this? 'Yes,' you say; and so you do quietly in your meetings." That was so far well, but something more was needed; and the Quakers exercised unusual influence, although they were only a small community. It could not be denied that they had indelibly impressed themselves on the political history of their country, some bearing names which would ever be held in honour. Certain Quakers were becoming famous in antiquarian and literary matters, but it was hoped that such things would never be their chief glory. "I hope you will never drivel into politicians, or scholars, or antiquarians," said Mr. Spurgeon with an emphasis his audience were well able to understand; and then he showed that that would be the case if they ever came down from being Christians for the sake of lower things. Possessing the great influence they did, as well as great wealth, and a number of meeting-houses, was all to be unused? It was true, indeed, that all had been utilised in a thousand excellent ways; for Quakers had been foremost as philanthropists, and freed slaves would always remember them in their prayers. "But I claim for Christ, for truth, and for the Spirit of God, this power which has been given you," said Spurgeon. "There are many honoured men among you who can preach the Word and testify to the truth, but should there not be many more such?" he went on to ask. "Would there not be many more if the Spirit of God visited you; and would not the time then come which was prophesied by Joel, when your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, when your old men shall see visions, and your young men shall dream dreams? Ought you not hopefully to desire this?" The audience was then asked to lend their aid to those who were fighting against Ritualism and idolatry. The Society of Friends was a small body, but its very smallness might even become an advantage. There were times when God would not use a multitude; He said, "The people be too many for me;" but if the Quakers were as the men who lapped, they might yet become instrumental in defeating the host of

Midian. If there were some things to be given up, let them go, so long as they kept true to vital points. This earnest address was concluded very nearly as follows:—

"If George Fox was here he might not endorse all that I have said, but I believe that he would, as I do, exhort you now, if ever, to testify for the Spirit's work; to testify for the spirituality of godliness, to witness against idolatry, to cry aloud and spare not, to lift up a standard against the incoming of the foe, which is coming in like a flood. If Popery comes back, will you bear the blame of it? But you must do so if you do not now speak out; and you, indeed, will be highly culpable if you do not now join with others who know what spiritual religion means. I do think that it would be a great calamity if the Society of Friends ceased to exist—at any rate, till the great principles of which I have been speaking are proclaimed by the whole Church. The principle of the spirituality of worship needs to be testified continually, to be iterated and reiterated, and to be dinned into people's ears over and over and over again; and even then it will be useless unless the Holy Spirit impresses it on your hearts. I do beg you to hear this testimony. I do not know in what way you can do it, it is not for me to prescribe for you; but I do pray that God will bless you, and multiply you, and make you a great power upon the face of the earth. I and others will then rejoice with you; wherein wo think you err we shall sorrow; but wherein we know you are right we shall rejoice. I can say sincerely that if God should multiply you greatly I know that there are thousands of the Lord's people who would be thankful for it, knowing that that increase would indicate an increase in England of spiritual religion."

Although Mr. Spurgeon was supposed on this occasion to give the lecture on George Fox which had already been given in various places, the address was largely made up of a stirring appeal to the Friends to bear a stronger testimony for religion in the world. There were 1,200 persons present, a large proportion of whom occupied spheres of commanding influence. The opportunity to give this address had been earnestly desired by Mr. Spurgeon; and now the time had come. It may have been apparent to some that the preacher was not quite the man he had been ten years before. While moving and delighting that distinguished audience, he was all the time suffering great pain. He felt a strong desire to offer prayer, but the chairman appears to have thought that silent devotion alone was consistent with the principles of the Society. Concerning this, Jonathan Grubb wrote as follows to The Friend:—

"It was my privilege to attend C. H. Spurgeon's lecture on George Fox at Devonshire House on the 6th inst. It is almost superfluous for me to say how cordially I united with his powerful, truthful, and loving appeal to our society. Indeed, his address altogether seemed to be an embodiment of what has been my own concern for years past, and which I have endeavoured, with far less ability, to impress upon my fellow-professors in religion.

"I cannot but view the whole thing as a message of mercy from the Almighty, and I am sure it will add greatly to our responsibility, as well as to our condemnation, if much fruit does not follow this renewed evidence of divine regard.

"I could really say in my heart, while listening to the earnest, simple pleading of this dear servant of Christ, 'It is the truth, the very truth, and nothing but the truth,' so entirely did my feelings and my judgment go with it all.

"One thing caused me sorrow, however. I do not think our views and our practice on the subjects of prayer and of worship were correctly represented on this deeply interesting occasion.

"No doubt there was a jealousy in some minds lest these views should in any way be compromised, and I apprehend that these honest, though groundless, fears were the cause of their being, to a certain extent, misrepresented.

"Our worthy chairman told us, at the beginning and at the end, that it was to be a silent approach to the throne of grace. Now, if I know anything of Quaker principles, we have no more right to enforce silence than to enforce a vocal offering. Either way, I believe the work of the Spirit upon or in the heart should be left unfettered.

"I am sure the spirit of prayer was over the meeting at the beginning, and still more evident was the spirit of thanksgiving at the end; and I believe there was a call from the Lord for vocal utterance, which was prevented by human interference.

"Surely we might have safely trusted our dear brother, the lecturer, to follow his own convictions of duty in this matter; and I know that if he had not felt called upon to address the Almighty there were other lips that would have been opened had liberty been granted; and I think such an end to such a meeting would have been altogether in accordance with Gospel order and with our own belief on the subject of divine worship.

"In conclusion, I venture to express a hope that should we be favoured with another visit from one who is clearly prepared to appreciate and to approve our leading views of Gospel truth, he may be left at liberty to do his Master's work in his own way. a condition to which he is fairly entitled, and which we claim for ourselves when similarly circumstanced."

Chapter 71

VOLUME FOUR

Chapter 72

The Stockwell Orphanage Fete 1892

The Stockwell Orphanage Fête 1892

Chapter 64: The Title of "Rev"

Chapter 64.

The Title Of "Rev"

Women's Work—College Meeting—First Mention of the Orphanage—Special Services—London Costers.

On November 30 about nine hundred persons, who were for the most part young women, assembled in the Tabernacle lecture-hall, in order to celebrate the birthday of Mrs. Bartlett, whose Bible-class had now grown to such extraordinary proportions that the majority of those present were members of it. A handsome gold watch and chain were presented to the leader of the class, while on the other hand a sum of £100 was presented on behalf of the members to the College funds. The room was prettily decorated, and after tea the pastor spoke a few earnest words to the assembly.

It was shown that the work of Christian women in the Church was by no means an unimportant one, and it was a happy thing that there were hundreds of women in the Church at the Tabernacle who were earnestly engaged in fulfilling such duties as God would have them do:—

"I consider," added Mr. Spurgeon, "that every woman should show the light of truth by her holy example, so that others seeing her holiness and piety may be attracted to the Saviour. There are many cases among the members of this Church in which souls have been brought to the Saviour by the influence of godly women. By their holy conversation they may do much good in the Church and the world, and by their patient endurance of obloquy and ridicule they attest the reality of their religion. I believe it is impossible for you to know the amount of ridicule which the Christian women of the Church have sometimes to bear; and it is a noble sight to see them bear it in meekness and godly fear. Women, too, have that great responsibility of bringing up families in the fear of the Lord, a work which devolves more upon the mothers than upon the fathers. Sometimes Christian women are taken from their ordinary level to work for God in a most extraordinary manner, and such is the case with Mrs. Bartlett I think that many of you, though not able to do what our honoured sister has done, could aspire to do much more than at present you do for Christ." A tea and public meeting on behalf of the College drew together a very large assembly on Tuesday evening, December 18. To this date 106 men, educated in the institution, had settled in pastorates, ten who were pastors were still students, five were itinerant evangelists, and five had died. A sum of £70 had been received from South Africa for a man to be sent out, and on one being asked for from Port Natal five had volunteered to go there. In twelve months the settled pastors had baptised 1,235 persons. "The young men of the College are mostly labouring in districts where a new-comer is wanted; and it is noteworthy that I am frequently entrusted with sums of money to be spent in erecting new chapels for the students," remarked Mr. Spurgeon. "During the time the College has existed," he added, "I do not recollect any case in which I have not had money in hand when it was wanted; of course, there have been delays, but no difficulties. I have frequently lain

awake at night thinking of the many schemes I have in hand for the glory of God, but I always feel grateful that not one of them is flagging in interest." The President's continued enthusiasm for this work was shown by the glow of satisfaction which came over his countenance when he mentioned striking facts. One such fact was that a pastor "on the rock of St. Helena" had received fifty-eight persons into membership; another was that a girl under twelve years of age had collected £20 towards the funds.

It was at this meeting that one of the first public announcements was made relative to the Stockwell Orphanage. Mr. Spurgeon told his friends that between two and three acres of land had been purchased in the Clapham Road on which building would be commenced, and it was proposed to adopt the family system and not keep the children "huddled together as in the workhouses." The greater part of the money given by the founder would be kept as an endowment, and they would have nothing to do with the voting system. It was believed that the members of the congregation would make the clothes for the children to wear, and it was hoped that philanthropic tailors and cloth-dealers would supply the materials. "Working men might help by giving a portion of time to the work of erecting the buildings," said Mr. Spurgeon, "and thus all will have an opportunity to help forward the good work to which we have set our hands." The evening finished with the lecture on "Sermons in Candles," which was then exceedingly popular.

Mr. Spurgeon appears to have preached at the Tabernacle for the last time in 1866 on Sunday, December 23, the subject in the morning being a seasonable one. It was, "God Incarnate the end of fear," and the text was St. Luk 2:10, "And the angel said unto them, Fear not."

Feeling the need of rest and change, the pastor spent the last Sunday of the year in Paris; and he did what few besides himself would have thought of doing—he left London and crossed the Channel on Christmas Day. He was in good spirits, however, and enjoyed the passage; and on reaching the French capital the surroundings were in all respects congenial; for, with its many museums and other educational attractions, Paris was regarded as being the best place in the world for wearied mortals who wished to combine rest with instructive recreation. On this occasion the Sabbath seemed to be better kept than had been the case during previous visits. The Baptist congregation, which assembled in a room at the back of the Church of St. Roch, was duly sought out; but both there and elsewhere it was plainly seen that all things were under a despotism. The annual meeting of the newly-formed London Baptist Association was held at the Tabernacle in the middle of January, 1867, when the report was of a most encouraging kind, particular mention being made of the handsome reception which had been accorded to the pastors and delegates by Mr. Spurgeon and his people.

Some time before the date at which we have now arrived, Mr. Spurgeon gave up the title of Rev., and he appears to have done so with the approval of a large number of friends. One eminent minister remarked, "I do wish our young men would do what they can to substitute Pastor for Rev."

Mr. Spurgeon continued to show unabated interest in Sunday-school effort; and a special prayer-meeting, to which all teachers were invited, was held at the Tabernacle on January 28. It was a time of trial so far as the working classes were concerned. The cholera of the preceding summer had made gaps in their ranks; the opening of the new year brought severe weather; and when the cold moderated the distress appears to have continued. There was also much distress among ministers of country churches, which was common to all kinds of weather; and on behalf of

such sufferers Mr. Spurgeon was moved at this time to write an urgent appeal.

Several interesting preaching excursions were made early in the year. Bunyan Chapel, Bedford, was visited, and collections were made at the services on behalf of the new rooms which had then been recently erected. Deptford was also visited, on Wednesday, January 30. Two services were held in the lecture-hall, and the original intention had been to make collections for the building fund of a new chapel; but as so much distress prevailed, Mr. Spurgeon suggested that the money given should go to the relief fund, while he would himself give to the building fund as much as was collected. A few days later the preacher was at Luton, with a view of assisting the congregation of the ancient Baptist church in that town. About a year previously these people had been afflicted by a singular disaster. A more commodious meeting-house was in course of erection beside the old one, and the former was not only blown down during a tempest, but the walls fell upon the old chapel, both being thus reduced to a heap of ruins in an instant. The special services at the Tabernacle in February, 1866, had proved so successful that they were repeated in 1867. They commenced on the 8th of the month. One day was devoted to fasting and prayer; and on the evening of another day seven hundred young people sat down to tea with the pastor and deacons. At a prayer-meeting on the 18th of the month the Tabernacle was crowded in every part. On Tuesday, March 12, a very memorable visit was paid to Golden Lane, where Mr. Spurgeon's young convert, Mr. W. J. Orsman, had been labouring for some years among the costers. The service was held in the Evangelists' Tabernacle, and the admission tickets were distributed on the preceding Sunday morning among the stall and barrow-keepers of Whitecross Street. The fame of the preacher and of his wonderful voice went before him, so that while some were indifferent the main part were desirous of being present. A contemporary account says:—

"A costermonger's living depends so much upon his lungs, that he understands their value and soon becomes a connoisseur in voices. It need hardly be added that after the service the eulogies on the preacher's gift of lungs were very emphatic. Mr. Spurgeon, although suffering from illness, which prevented his preaching at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on Sunday night, was thoroughly at home, and his sermon was a model of simplicity and pointedness. In the prayer the responses were frequent and at one time loud, while the many tearful eyes told of the deep impression which his earnest appeals had made. The sermon, which was based on St. John's Gospel, John 4:15, was listened to with the greatest attention, and the homely hits were much enjoyed. Mr. Spurgeon obtained their sympathies in his opening prayer by referring to the aches and pains of body which so many suffered, and the poverty which existed among the poor; and from that moment to the conclusion of the service their eyes seemed riveted on the speaker. After Mr. Spurgeon had left, over two hundred persons remained for prayer, and for an hour and a quarter earnest supplications were offered. Some begged that the brethren would pray specially for them, others who had never made supplications in their lives before, expressed their wants in their deep sighs and quiet responses. The impression, indeed, was very great, and the seed thus sown will, without doubt, spring up after many days." The interest which Mr. Spurgeon continued to feel in this mission was very great, and by some associated with it at the present day he is still remembered. In the course of more than a quarter of a century the work has grown until at the present time—the headquarters being now in Hoxton—the mission is one of the most valuable in London.

Chapter 65: Services at the Agricultural Hall

Chapter 65.

Services At The Agricultural Hall

Third Conference of the College—Closing of the Tabernacle—Services in the Agricultural Hall—A. Striking Service.

The third Conference of the Pastors' College was held during the latter part of March. On Tuesday, the 19th of the month, a large company of ministers and students assembled at Upton Chapel, Lambeth Road, when Mr. Spurgeon, as president, gave an address on Enthusiasm. He said he believed enthusiasm to be the great want of the age; and it was then shown with great force in what sense enthusiasm in all ages enabled men to excel in various departments of service. The speaker continued:—

"It was tills spirit that nerved the mediæval artists in executing those grand and lasting works of art which had made their names famous. It is an intense devotion to science and discovery that enables medical men and explorers to die for the sake of giving the world more knowledge. The same enthusiasm that has modelled stone as if it were clay, that forces the earth to yield up her hidden secrets, and has induced men to lay down their lives for the sake of discovery, is required by us all. I am sometimes tempted to think that the Christian Church is what Dr. Watts has described it to be—viz., 'majestically slow.' She once seemed to tread on the mountain tops; but now she systematically keeps in the valleys and loves the sequestered shades, leaving the jutting crags for the most imprudent young men. Yet I would venture to ask, Where does the Holy Ghost dwell, and in what form does His influence develop itself? There is only one safe answer to this question, and that would be with the incarnation of enthusiasm, if I may use such an expression. All Church history—by whom written it does not signify—shows that the Holy Ghost is in the Church working with power whenever there is enthusiasm among its members. It is indeed cause and effect—the Holy Ghost producing enthusiasm. My notion of what an apostle is, is that he is a man of fire. After the Apostolic age, and during the next two or three centuries, the way in which the Church put out the fires of Diocletian was by fire. Their own fire encountered the world's fire, and overcame it. Christianity then was an intolerable nuisance, but now it is a thing accounted to be most respectable. Consistency largely prevailed; in nine cases out of ten Christians made themselves beggars for conscience sake. It was an age of enthusiasm, when the world was in earnest, and as earnestly burnt Christians as they were in earnest about teaching their persecutors. During the dark ages, the most prominent and useful men were the enthusiastic men. The few preachers of those days were all daring, forcible men, who felt they had a call, and followed it with little light and much ignorance. Then we come to the Reformation days, when Luther and Calvin, though in different ways, manifested extraordinary enthusiasm. This enthusiasm caught everywhere, and all Christians had it in some measure, even to the travelling pedlars who surreptitiously circulated the Word of God. Whitefield and Wesley were moved by the same spirit; the former, indeed, is described as a lion. Both attended enthusiastic meetings; men

and women would meet for prayer and praise at such places as the Tabernacle, Moorfields, at five o'clock in the morning. I think that people then must hare loved their religion to get up in time for a five-o'clock morning service."

Energy was pronounced to be the first, if not the last, thing wanted in Christian oratory, while action was "about the twentieth thing wanted." It was then shown wherein lay the power of enthusiasm. Did it not lie very much in themselves? He would ever wish to have his soul on fire for his Master, just as much as a passionate man had the flames of hell within him when he was in a bad temper. Enthusiasm dignified a minister's work, and the work itself was of a dignified character. They were fellow-labourers with God, labouring for souls. Without enthusiasm their work would be dead and dull, but with it everything was worth doing, and was well done. He believed that enthusiasm would remove many difficulties which lie in a minister's pathway. It was deplorable that so many ministers in the denomination were so badly paid; but until the wrong was rectified, they could only bear with it through enthusiasm in their work. Preaching the Gospel without enthusiasm would make people indifferent to religion, if not atheists. They could have no conversions without enthusiasm. He might say that enthusiasm had all sorts of virtues, and for himself, he could see no weakness in it. With it one talent would equal ten, and with ten they might equal one hundred. By fire he meant the fire which flashes out of a man, and he would say, let the world call them fanatics, say they were mad, they would tell the world to prove it. In the evening the annual supper was given, Mr. Samuel Morley being in the chair, and a sum of £1,100 was collected. Dr. Allon was among the speakers. Mr. Morley leaned towards those who desired the union of the Baptist and Pædobaptist denominations. This was not Mr. Spurgeon's view, however. "I hope we shall never see the day when there will cease to be Baptists and Independents," he remarked. "I hold that though we are bound to love our mothers-in-law, we are not bound to live with them. We do not love one another one whit the less because we can carry out our conscientious convictions as we please. Certainly I do think," it was added, "that in some villages and towns some Baptist churches may be a superfluity; and I think the same may be the case with some Independent churches." The Conference continued during the three following days. In the course of a striking account of his work among the street-trading classes, Mr. W. J. Orsman declared that there was awful truth in the remark of one at the supper to the effect that London was the most heathenish part of the United Kingdom.

During the week which followed this Conference, Dr. Campbell, the veteran journalist and friend of Spurgeon, passed away in the seventy-third year of his age. This was probably quite unexpected, for three months previously, when he had retired from active service, he seemed to be free from all infirmities of age. I am not quite sure that the friendship between the young pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle and the autocrat of Bolt Court was quite so cordial after the Baptismal Regeneration controversy as it had been before. Be that as it may, Dr. Campbell well served his generation, and, as one said of him, "he could heartily shake hands after a quarrel." In the early spring of 1867 the Metropolitan Tabernacle had been in use during six years, and it was found that the building would need to be closed for a month in order to complete the cleaning and renovation, as well as some repairs which were now necessary. When the question arose, Where shall the people assemble in the meantime? it was felt that Exeter Hall would be too small for such a congregation. At last, it was resolved to hire the Agricultural Hall at Islington, a building of such dimensions that a congregation three times as large as that at the Metropolitan Tabernacle could

assemble within its walls. Without being asked, the present Dr. Newman Hall offered the use of Surrey Chapel for the week-night services, an accommodation which was gladly accepted. On account of its being several miles distant from the Tabernacle, the Agricultural Hall was inconveniently situated for Mr. Spurgeon's congregation, and although large numbers, no doubt, attended, very many would not undertake such a journey on Sunday mornings. The arrangements were for one service only on each Sunday, as it was not advisable for the preacher to undergo the strain of addressing between twenty and thirty thousand persons more than once on one day.

Mr. Spurgeon did not need to take his congregation with him in order to fill 15,000 sittings, as well as the standing room, however; for when the news spread through North London that the great preacher was coming, it was generally hailed with surprise and satisfaction. There were many who had never heard Mr. Spurgeon preach, being prevented by the distance from attending at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Then, the boldness and the novelty of attempting to hold services in such a building struck people with astonishment. "Even those who knew the capabilities of Mr. Spurgeon's wonderful voice more than feared for the result of the step he had taken; while others, remembering how signally the speakers at the Reform demonstrations held in the building had failed to make more than a few hundred persons hear, naturally predicted that the result would be a failure," remarked The Freeman. There would be found to be a great difference between speaking in the chapel at Newington and such a structure as the Islington Hall; for quite apart from its vast size, the acoustic properties of the latter were not good. To those who were more perfectly acquainted with the preacher's power of voice, however, the prospect was not disturbing. The great building was 384 feet long and 217 feet wide, but the throng enclosed in such a space would be no greater than the crowds which Mr. Spurgeon had often addressed in the open air. There was an eager demand for the ordinary tickets of admission for the five Sundays at a shilling each; and, in addition to ticket-holders, there was a crowd of five or six thousand persons on the morning of the first service.

Taken as a whole, the spectacle was as novel as anything of the sort ever seen in London. There does not appear to have been a hitch of any kind. As one who was present writes: "The arrangements made for preserving order and for the easy accommodation were perfect. The members of the Church who made themselves useful on this occasion performed their work most satisfactorily. Considering the temptation, which is seldom resisted at such remarkable gatherings, of giving commands after the perfunctory style of a parish beadle, the method adopted was well carried out. There was no fuss, no peremptory commands... and visitors seemed thoroughly to understand each other; and, so far as we could see, there was no collision between the public and the authorities." So little fear was there of any disorder that only four or five policemen were present. We find it added that "three parts of the area and of the side seats were filled before ten minutes to eleven, at which time there was a buzz of excitement and a crowd of persons came running in, helter-skelter, all anxious, of course, to secure the best seats. As the clock struck eleven, most of those present were quietly seated, and waiting for the entrance of the preacher." Some of the more distant seats were unoccupied; but, notwithstanding, numbers were standing in the aisles, preferring the inconvenience to the risk of being out of hearing. The organ was not used, but a body of singers occupied an orchestra in the centre of the building. When the preacher ascended the platform, accompanied by his deacon, "Father" Olney, the buzz of conversation was at once hushed, men removed their hats from their heads, and umbrellas, that many had opened

to keep off the sun-rays which came through the glass roof, were closed. The opening prayer was heard throughout the building, and time was well kept in the singing. The Freeman thus described the first part of the service:—

"The 103rd psalm was read, and suitable evangelical comments were made. The question so shrilly uttered, 'Are you ready? let this question echo in every heart,' seemed to echo through the building, and we were informed that the sounds, though not intelligible, were heard outside the building. The prayer which followed the reading of the lesson was peculiarly fervent and solemn, and at the time Mr. Spurgeon was earnestly pleading for a blessing upon the neighbouring ministers, most of them were engaged in praying that strength might be given him who was addressing so mighty a concourse close by. 'Bless this locality,' prayed Mr. Spurgeon; 'let Islington rejoice in the Lord; grant that as the voice of Jonah shook the city of Nineveh, so the voice of these Thy ministers may shake the North of London.' The responses to this supplication were almost universal; and an under-current of the deepest feeling seemed to pass through the building when Mr. Spurgeon prayed, 'Now, my God and Father, Thou hast helped me to preach to great masses of the people these many years, and though I have had many and cruel enemies, and though the devil has roared full often, yet Thou hast enabled us to open many places where the Word had never before been preached, and many souls have been saved—oh, now do some great work in this hall. From this hall as a centre, let the true fire go forth to all England, and let Thy ministers catch the heavenly flame. Oh God, send a great universal revival of true religion in this country.' Again the responses were loud, and many sobbed." The sermon, which lasted for fifty minutes, was founded on the parable of the two sons, St. Mat 21:28-31. This discourse, like the others which were given at the Agricultural Hall, was specially addressed to the unconverted. He said that the scene he looked upon reminded him of the assemblies which, in days happily gone by, crowded the amphitheatres of Old Rome:—

"Ranged on all sides were multitudes with eager eyes and cruel hearts. In such a gathering there was no difficulty in separating the precious from the vile. There in the centre was seated the solitary disciple of Christ who was about to die when the lion should be let loose; while all around the amphitheatre or the mighty colosseum was a great crowd who were gazing down like heathens, and proving to a demonstration that they were such, by looking at the Christian martyr shedding his blood for the gratification of the populace. He (the preacher) could not attempt to separate the two classes that morning; it were a task that angels could not perform now, although they must do it some day. Let them make the division among themselves in their own consciences, let their own honesty make the mark, and each man ask this morning, 'Am I on the Lord's side?' 'Divide, divide,' they say in the House of Legislature. Let them also say the same in the house of prayer that day. Yet if they could thus divide, and if those on one side could say, 'We have made a covenant with God by sacrifice,' and those on the other side were enemies to God, it would still be necessary to make a further division among the last class. For all sinners were not alike—they were not all in the same moral condition. He would therefore divide them into two distinct classes. First, those who were avowedly disobedient to God; and, secondly, those who were deceptively submissive to Him. The first class said, to use the words of the text, 'I will not.' They had spoken what was in their minds right out; for actions were louder than words. They continually said, by their neglect of the Sabbath, their neglect of prayer, and of the house of God, by never reading the Bible, and their whole course of conduct, 'I will not.' They did not give an

assent to the doctrines of God's word. They said they would not believe anything which they did not understand, although there were ten thousand things which they could not understand, but which if they did not believe they would be great fools."

Reference was made to a conference of working men, which had recently been held, and at which some of the speakers had quarrelled with the doctrines usually preached by Gospel ministers, as if such doctrines could be altered "to suit each objector's taste." If preachers were to yield to such nonsense as that they would only be despised for doing so by working men themselves.

"He confessed, however, that he liked them for their honesty in saying 'I will not,' but he must candidly tell them that they had got to be a little too fond of their honesty, and began to look down upon the professors of religion, and to say, 'I make no pretence to religion.' He hoped they would ever continue to despise and hate hypocrisy, and laugh at hypocrites. He had tried to do so himself. But if they began to make themselves proud of their honesty, he would let them down a little. If a man said, 'I don't profess to speak the truth,' it did him no credit, for he only boasted of being a liar. If he said, 'I don't profess to steal,' what was there to be proud of in not being a thief? So when a man said, 'I make no profession of religion,' it was not much to be proud of to declare that he did not fear, and love, and obey his Maker—that he did not treat his God as reason and revelation alike demanded. Still, if they said, 'I won't,' he thought they might be induced to go a little further, for they read in the text, 'Afterwards he repented and went.' Perhaps this man did not know the pleasantness of duty until he tried it; and many who said, 'I won't,' probably did it from ignorance of what religion was. Nine people out of ten did not seem to know what true, vital religion meant."

Some reference was then made to the other character who said, "I go, sir," and went not. He represented a more numerous class—those who were Gospel-hardened. The Gospel was adapted to all, and the same truths that were preached to the working classes were preached to the upper classes. The effort of speaking to so vast a congregation so far tired the preacher's voice, that towards the close he seemed to flag a little; but he soon recovered, having a rest during the remainder of the day, though services were conducted by others in the lecture-hall beneath the Tabernacle. On the following Sunday, March 31, the crowd was so great that thousands had to turn away from the doors, being unable to gain admission. The sermon, which lasted over an hour, and was founded on Jer 31:18, was distinctly heard in every part of the great building. On Sunday, April 14, it was believed that about 25,000 persons were present; and, as was to be expected, the neighbouring congregations were much thinner than usual. The hall was of course densely crowded on the occasion of the last service, which took place on April 21. Nearly all the seats were occupied by ticket-holders; and when the doors were opened the waiting crowd ran in and at once occupied all the standing room. Mr. Spurgeon gave notice that he had a desire to correspond with any who felt a desire to extend the work of the Baptist denomination in London; for he saw no way of relieving the spiritual destitution of the metropolis but for each denomination to do its utmost to meet its own needs. The sermon was very anecdotal, in that respect being just of the kind to prove of interest to a vast mixed audience. It was founded on Num 23:10, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." The opening had reference to death and the last reckoning:—

"Carlyle, in his 'History of the French Revolution,' tells us of a Duke of Orleans who did not believe in death. He must, I think, have been somewhat insane. He believed, or pretended to believe, that men did not die; so that when his secretary said in his presence, 'The late King of Spain,' he angrily demanded what he meant by it. The obsequious attendant replied, 'It is the title which some King of Spain has taken.' I do not suppose that I am addressing any such lunatics. There is no man here who does not expect that inevitable hour. A certain King of France believed in death, but he forbade that it should ever be mentioned in his presence. The king was like the ostrich, which, it is said, when pursued and unable to escape, hides its head in the sand, foolishly fancying that it is secure from its enemy because it does not see it. I trust that I do not speak to men so foolish as that—men who wish to shut their eyes to the day of death and to the future career of their souls and bodies. We have heard of a man who went into a tavern and ordered this and that—he feasted sumptuously; but when the host came with the bill he said that he had quite forgotten it, and that he had not thought of the reckoning, and that he had not a farthing with which to pay. Alas! my hearers, are you living like that in the inn of life? Do you forget the reckoning? Do you go from cup to cup, from merriment to merriment, from feast to feast, as though you were prepared for the last reckoning day? Be assured that it will come. We must die. There is no discharge from it. We must pass through the iron gate. Let us, then, be prepared for that emergency. All men think all men mortal but themselves; they regard others as having death written on their brow; and they reckon, at least, that they shall last for years to come. They will not dare to say that they are immortal; but, alas! they act as if they thought so. Balaam, though a base man, was no fool. He had thoughts of death. He did not shut his eyes to what he did not like. He believed that he should die. He expected it; he had desires about it; and though his desires were never carried out, but the reverse, he had wit enough to say from the very bottom of his heart—I doubt not it came sincerely—'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his.' The exclamation had in it a double wish—a wish about death; and, secondly, a wish about after death—the last end. First, Balaam, seeing that he must die, anxiously desired that he might die such a death as the righteous die. A certain carping infidel, after arguing with a poor countryman, who knew the faith, but little else, said, 'Well, Hodge, you are so stupid there is no use arguing with you, I cannot get you out of that said stupid religion of yours.' 'Oh, well,' said Hodge, 'I daresay I am stupid, but I like to have two strings to my bow.' 'Well,' asked the man, 'what is that?' 'Why, suppose, Mr. Infidel, it should all turn out as you say; suppose there is no God, no hereafter, don't you see I am as well off as you are; at all events, I shan't be any worse; but if it should happen to be true, what is to become of you?' So that either way it is well for the righteous."

It was believed that the mind became quickened at the hour of death, when a man's actions were like spectres before him. There was, however, a great difference between the death of believers and those who passed away believing themselves to be like the brutes which perished:—

"When Saladin lay dying he ordered that, as soon as he was dead, a herald should take his winding-sheet, and as he showed it to the people, should say, 'This is all that is left of Saladin, the conqueror of the East!' But he could not have said that if he had been a Christian, for there is left more than the winding-sheet and the grave; there is left the world to come and all its infinite riches of blessedness. It is written upon the tomb of Cyrus, 'Stranger, here lies he who gave the Empire to the Persians, grudge him not the little earth that covers him.' But the Christian does not lie there, for he is risen. Have you never heard a dying man exclaim, 'Though I walk through the valley of

the shadow of death yet will I fear no evil?' It is a ghastly thing to die and believe there is an end of you. But there is worse than death. The angel will cry, 'One woe is past, and behold there come two woes more—the judgment and the wrath to come.' The Christian dies in peace and sometimes in triumph. Sometimes it is still as the summer's evening, and the Christian crosses Jordan almost dry-shod. Sometimes there is a storm and the waves are up, and the Jordan overflows its banks; but then the saint rests in the arms of God and safely crosses. The Father is sometimes pleased to give His people strength that they go to heaven almost with the triumph of Elijah. In all cases there is peace and a certain confidence of God's love for His children. Balaam also said something respecting the 'last end.' We do not believe that life is the latter end of man. Those who do believe it are welcome to their belief. We certainly shall not quarrel with them; when a dog has a bone, let him keep it. We can see nothing in it suitable to us. If men like the thought of dying like brutes, perhaps they know their own value best. So they shall keep it if they like. But as for us, we believe ourselves to be immortal; that God has endowed us with a spiritual nature which is to outlive the sun, which is to outlast the stars; we believe, in fact, that we are to exist and be coeval with eternity. We suppose that the first thing after death is that the spirit is disembodied. What it is like you and I cannot guess. It is a thing not to be seen, or touched, or handled. It is quite out of the realm of materialism, yet you and I are quite sure there is an immaterial something within us infinitely more precious than the eyes, the hands, the feet. The saints in heaven are happy, but they are not quite perfect, nor will be until we are all gathered in and the resurrection day comes. Some of you have never exercised your spirits at all about the spiritual world. You have talked with thousands of people in bodies, but you have never spoken with any who have not bodies. But let me tell you that the Christian is in the daily habit of communing with the spiritual world. So when they die they will not go to an entirely strange place. All disembodied spirits will have to come before the fiery eyes of God."

Some of those present had probably never thought of death or of God; and for such there was no hope save through repentance. It was of no use their thinking about heaven, for heaven would be intolerable to the ungodly. This point was well illustrated by a young woman's dream:—

"She dreamed that she was in heaven unconverted. She thought she saw the pavement of transparent gold and spirits dancing to sweet music. But she stood still, and when the King said, 'Why do you not partake in the joys?' she answered, 'I cannot join in the dance or in the song. I cannot join in the dance, because I do not know the measure; I cannot join in the song, for I do not know the tune. Then said He, in a voice of thunder, 'What doest thou here?' And she thought that she was cast out for ever. You would be a stranger in a strange land. Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The last judgment was then pictured—the righteous and the wicked assuming different bodies, the bodies of the former being as superior to those of mortality as the flower is superior to the seed. The audience was then urged to make a practical use of this lesson. There was an old proverb which said, "Wishers and woulders make bad housekeepers;" and there was another equally pointed, "Wishing never filled a sack." It was useless merely wishing in such a matter:—

"There is an old story of the Goths and Huns, who, having once drunk the sweet wines of Italy, used to say, as they smacked their lips, 'Where is Italy?' And when their leaders pointed to the gigantic Alps covered with snow, they said, 'Can't we cross them?' So I would have you say with Gothic ardour, 'Where is heaven, for I fain would go there.' There was a Roman emperor who fitted

out an expedition and sent it to England; when the soldiers reached the coasts of Britain they leaped ashore and gathered shells, after which they went back, and that was all! Some of you are just so. You are gathering shells, and nothing more. Hear me when I say that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. I am Christ's enlisting officer to-day. If you want to be a Christian, come to Christ; take Christ, that is God's shilling, and you are enlisted—not bringing anything, but taking. If you will trust the Lord Jesus, and take Him to be your salvation, you are enlisted as a soldier of Christ. If you enlist you will have to give up your sins and some of your empty pleasures. Give your heart to Jesus and rest on Him alone. The victory will make amends for whatever you endure. On the floor of this hall the other day men wrestled for the mastery. It was a somewhat dangerous sport, but to those who gained the victory that seemed ample compensation. At Old Rome, when the legionaries passed in triumph through the streets, and all the people crowded to see them, it was a great thing to have been a soldier. Think of the victory and triumph of heaven, the shouts of the angels, the songs of the redeemed, the hallelujahs, the blessings for ever. Ay, these will make amends to the brave Christian warrior. Fight manfully in His cause, and the crown of victory will more than repay your toil."

Thus ended a truly remarkable series of services. In conducting them even Mr. Spurgeon's powers were severely taxed; and although only one sermon was given on each Sunday, some extra rest had to be taken during each week.

Chapter 66: A Continental Holiday

Chapter 66.

A Continental Holiday The Orphanages—Baptist Union Meetings of 1867—Baptist Noel—Ideal Missionaries—Chapel-Building Fund—Colportage—On the Continent—Conference at Hamburg—Illness of Mr. Spurgeon.

The great enterprise which was in progress during the spring of 1867 was that of the Stockwell Orphanage, the site for which, in the Clapham Road, had already been secured at a cost of £3,000. The sum of £20,000, which Mrs. Hillyard had set aside for the founding of the institution, was in railway debentures, and could not be sold at that time without loss. The cash needed for the purchase of the land had to be borrowed on the security of these debentures, and a strong appeal was made for contributions to the building fund. Mr. George Moore, of Bow Churchyard, sent £250, and ten thousand persons were invited to send a guinea each. The Baptist Union held its spring meetings in London, the Hon. Baptist Noel being chairman. At the session of May 17, at Walworth Road Chapel, Mr. Vince, of Birmingham, read a paper which The Freeman characterised as "one of the most masterly and suggestive papers ever written on the evils of Ritualism and the best means to counteract them." As an ex-Churchman, the honoured chairman defended the evangelical clergy against some of the hard things said about them. He did not think that their preaching was generally so feeble as was represented; and hence, he pleaded, "Be to their faults a little blind, and to their virtues very kind." This aroused Mr. Spurgeon, who remarked that Mr. Noel preached in John Street Chapel, and he had much of the spirit of John, but he was doubtful whether such a spirit would be found equal to doing the work of the present day. What had been said about the preaching of evangelicals was not, he contended, a whit too strong. "He did not think they could be otherwise than feeble when they remembered where and how the sermons were bought. The whole country had been injured to the last degree from sermons that were sold as low as thirteen-pence each." Then, amid some hearty cheers, it was added, that while all should aim at preaching the Gospel in the spirit of Mr. Noel, they should also infuse some of the vigour of Mr. Vince. On the evening of the game day the meeting of the Young Men's Missionary Society was held at the Tabernacle, when Mr. Spurgeon advised that not only should missionaries be sent out, but that the churches should themselves have the missionary spirit. Subscribing to a society did not relieve people of their responsibility to preach the Gospel. Men in love with the work should go forth into foreign lands, and while supporting themselves, should proclaim the truth. By such means alone would the Hindoos be made to see that the work was carried on through love to their souls:—

"Missionaries deserve all they get, and a great deal more; but when it shall please God to raise up at home and abroad free labourers, then, and I do not think until then, shall we thoroughly convince the heathen mind of our singleness of purpose, and possess one grand element of spiritual power by which to get at the minds of men. I do not depreciate any agency now in action, but I pray God to send us something more; for it would be easy to show that at our present rate of

progress the kingdoms of this world never could become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Indeed, many in the Church are giving up the idea of it except on the occasion of the advent of Christ, which, as it chimes in with our own idleness, is likely to be a popular doctrine. I myself believe that King Jesus will reign, and the idols be utterly abolished; but I expect the same power which turned the world upside down once will still continue to do it. The Holy Ghost would never suffer the imputation to rest upon His holy name that He was not able to convert the world."

It was urged that young men should learn a handicraft by which they could support themselves, and then go forth to proclaim the Gospel. If two thousand of such were to be forthcoming there would be room for them, and there would no longer be need to complain of missionary results being small. The preacher thus raised a high standard of Christian heroism which he could hardly have expected would ever be realised. At this time it was Mr. Spurgeon's belief that the Holy Spirit, working through the Church, would subdue the world to Christ. It would not appear that this view was held in his later years; I believe that he rather came round to the belief in Christ's personal reign as taught by millenarians. The fund of £5,000, for lending out free of interest in aid of chapel-building enterprises, was not readily subscribed. At Midsummer, 1867, £3,315 had been raised, but at the third annual meeting a further sum of nearly £300 was contributed. In some cases loans of £500 had been granted and had proved of the utmost service. In the course of a short address Mr. Spurgeon showed that such a fund was urgently needed in connection with the College:—

"As the young men who have been sent out are being blessed and their work extended they clamour for new places of worship. It is a sign for which we ought to be very thankful. I regard this fund as a great providence to the denomination. It came into working order and took the place of a gentleman who had largely helped in procuring new chapels, when his circumstances would not any longer allow him to afford that assistance. We have built a large number of new chapels. Our own church is very poor; we have only a few rich members. The majority are perhaps of the middle class, with large families in many cases, and the working classes, who, despite all that has been slanderously said about their not attending our places of worship, very readily attend the Tabernacle." The Colportage Society now employed seven agents, and Mr. Spurgeon and his friends became increasingly interested in the work, partly on account of the great success of the movement in Scotland, where 150 men were at this time engaged in the service. It was found that in the main the colporteur created his own trade. The ordinary bookseller was usually not within reach of his humble customers; but, as the President maintained, if it were otherwise the poor people would not buy of him, while they would readily purchase of the itinerant bookman who temptingly showed his cheap wares at their door. There was naturally an ambition on the part of the promoters to rival Scotland in point of success; but the more shrewd among them were not very sanguine in that respect. It was hoped that each district would find enough friends to support its own man, so that without burdening subscribers nearer home the work might continually extend. "It seems to be just the right sort of thing to take up," said Mr. Spurgeon at the second annual meeting held on Midsummer Day. "There are many of our earnest brethren who might not do as preachers, who might perhaps be scarcely adapted even for wandering about as preachers, but who are just the right sort of men to sell a book, to pray with the sick, to comfort the desponding, to guide the anxious, and to lead sinners to the cross of Christ." On the same occasion he mentioned some facts about the word colporteur, and the connection of colportage

with the success of the Reformation:—

"The word colporteur is a horribly ugly name. It is a French word which I wish we were rid of, for it is an abominable name. I have heard people call it coal-porter, and they have thought that a colportage society was a society for carrying coals. Well, that is quite correct. It is a society for carrying live coals about, and those live coals, I believe, set many a place on fire. Still, it is an ugly name, and 'book-hawker' is not much better. There is no good name for it. It is a sort of unmentionable thing, but still unmentionable blessings have certainly come through its agency. In our own country, since those times, the sale of religious books has always been a main help to the cause of truth. You may be quite sure that this would naturally be so, because the sale of irreligious books is a mainstay to the cause of evil. Why, how to this day do the Romanists scatter those little books of Dr. Challoner against Protestantism amongst young people, and on the cover it is stated, and very properly stated, I think, by the author, that we ought not to wonder at Romanists giving away books because we are always doing it. They say that the whole Reformation was got up through the distribution of books, and why should not they adopt the same means that we adopt for the spread of the truth? Quite right; if they believe their teaching to be right they ought to spread it, and they are wise in their generation to spread it in this way. Think of the infidel publications of England, and what is worse than that—the silly, trashy novels, from which people learn all sorts of mischief, and which debauch the mind of England; these things do infinite damage, I believe, to people's souls, and the only way by which we can meet the damaging effect of these books is to scatter good books all over the land."

It seemed to be providential that such a work as this should be commenced just before the era of Board Schools, when the pure Press would need to extend its work in order to counteract the great extension of impure reading. On the last day of July Mr. Spurgeon visited his native county, and preached two sermons at the beautiful village of Earls Colne. As it was a lovely summer day, persons were attracted from all directions; and it was said that there were never so many people in Earls Colne before. Not only was the crowd imposing, the tea and a bazaar all helped to impart to the occasion a fete-like appearance. On August 2, Henry Vincent gave a lecture at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on America and its people, and William Lloyd Garrison was present. It was, I believe, the only occasion on which the voice of the well-known abolitionist was ever heard in the Tabernacle. Garrison was of a Baptist family; but he drifted from the moorings of the Evangelical faith of early days, so that between such a man and Spurgeon there would be no religious sympathy. On Wednesday, August 7, Mr. Spurgeon again crossed the Channel, for the purpose of enjoying a month's rest on the Continent, Messrs. Charles Vince, of Birmingham, Reuben Seddon, of the Congregational Church, Victoria Park, and Henry Varley being engaged to preach successively at the Tabernacle. The pastor and nearly a dozen friends set sail for Hamburg in the good ship Granton, the objects of their visit being to attend the Triennial Conference of Continental Baptists, and to open a new chapel for Pastor Oncken, who was regarded as one of the Apostles of the Continent. The distinguished English visitor suffered from a day or two's illness after landing. Mr. Oncken himself was also indisposed, but both soon recovered; and the German missionary found more than ordinary pleasure in showing his English friends the chief places of interest in Hamburg. There was the house where Mr. Oncken had first preached in the city, more than forty years before; and then there were the places where, in days of persecution, the baptism of converts had to be undertaken secretly at night. One house was famous as the place where the

meetings had been broken up by the police, just as had been done in England during the reign of Charles II. Pastor Oncken was able even to show his visitors the prison where he had been shut up for conscience sake. The new chapel which was to be opened was regarded as a noble structure. The Conference attracted friends from New York, as well as from several countries of Northern Europe. A second party arrived from the British. Isles, for referring to Friday, August 9, a correspondent wrote:—"In the evening, we were cheered by the arrival of a number of warm-hearted friends from Scotland, including Mr. Alex. Sharp, of Cupar-Fife, who in the last four years has collected by personal application about £1,500 for the mission and chapel; Mr. David Ker, of Glasgow, one of the oldest and heartiest friends of the mission, and many other brethren who have taken a deep interest in Mr. Oncken's labours. Next came our venerable friends, Revs. J. Cooper, of Wattisham, and S. Collins, of Grundisburgh, who formed the deputation from the Suffolk and Norfolk Association of Baptist Churches; and finally, Dr. Warren, of Boston, and Mr. Osgood, of New York, deputed to bring the cordial salutations of our American brethren."

Mr. Spurgeon was much interested in going over the Rauhe Haus, or orphan asylum, which was then looked after by Dr. Wickern, his wife and daughter. Fifty acres of land attached to the institution was farmed by the boys, and maintained in a high state of cultivation. The children were housed on the family system, each house being picturesquely situated; but although the place was in a sense a hive of industry, it struck the English visitor as not being made the most of. At the same time he looked on all the arrangements with the greatest interest; and was apparently so struck with the account given of the success of the family system, that that system was accepted as the model for the Stockwell Orphanage, then in course of development. This is a description of the Rauhe Haus which Mr. Spurgeon met with at that time:—

"While there is the greatest diversity—each family living apart, having its own house and garden, its own habits and manners, its own history and character—unity is at the same time preserved, lest it should be forgotten that each household is a member of one large family, of which Wickern is the head. It is astonishing how such a system of supervision could be contrived as puts every child day and night under the direct control of an adult person, and yet has nothing about it of the surveillance of the prison, and very little even of the strict discipline of the boarding-school. When reading Stevenson's account of the 'somewhat complex machinery' of the Rauhe Haus family life, with its order of the day marked out from hour to hour—with its weekly meetings, its fortnightly conferences, its journals and records kept by the Brothers, its divisions of labour, and its various rules for regulating each child's business at home, from the cleaning of the bedrooms to the carrying the Bible to chapel—I could not but wonder how this complicated clockwork kept going smoothly. The secret lies in the thorough family feeling with which each household is inspired. The Brothers, who superintend and teach the children, live with them, not as officers live with their soldiers in the barracks, not even as teachers and governors live with their pupils at the boarding-school, but really as elder brothers, as members of one family; and when at work with them, they do not stand by in the attitude of overseers or instructors, but join as fellow-labourers, who have one common task in hand. This family feeling would be impossible were nut everything carefully avoided that would suggest artificial association—such as all the members being of the same trade or of the same age. Nature is followed as much as possible in the constitution of a family. All trades, all ages, and all characters are represented in each. When a child comes to the establishment, it is not registered with a family until after it has been duly tried and examined at the

novitiate-house, where it is kept till its nature and character are ascertained. The elder children have always some younger ones about them, who need their help and indulgence. The younger children, on the other hand, always see some elder ones near them, whom they have to thank for kindness, or to rely upon for direction. This engenders a feeling of cordial attachment. Each household is characterised by a family spirit peculiar to itself; and this causes a commendable ambition to keep up the family honour and reputation. Nothing is more dreaded by a family than to see one of its members censured for laziness or bad conduct in the weekly report, which is read in the presence of all the inmates of the establishment. So every one of the twelve is taught to feel an interest in maintaining the rules and regulations of his family, however multifarious these may be, and however cumbrous they may seem to those who stand outside. Such a thing as clannishness, however, is kept out with might and main, sufficient provision being made for the mingling of the families as one community. At school the children are classed according to their ages and capacities; in the fields and the workshops, according to their trade. The family union there completely disappears; but no sooner does the bell ring for meals, than it is formed again, each one, arranged in military file, marching to his own house, to enjoy for an hour the benefits and comforts of a happy home." On Sunday morning, August 11, Pastor Oncken preached in the morning, several other Evangelists taking part in the service. As members of the Church, the choir sang the concluding words of 1 Chron. xvii. Some account of the mission in the past was given, while all were called upon to magnify divine grace in connection with the work of the present. In the afternoon, Pastor Köbnor, who afterwards removed to Copenhagen, preached in German from "Behold, I make all things new." A friend who accompanied Mr. Spurgeon remarked, "A Scotch pastor who was by my side, although he could not understand the sermon, except in so far as my imperfect notes helped him, remarked that he would not have missed seeing the delivery of that sermon on any account." The great attraction of the day was in the. evening, however, when Mr. Spurgeon preached in English, the discourse being founded on the words of Christ, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Some fears had been expressed that the new building would not be altogether a good place to speak in; and, indeed, some alterations needed to be made. Nevertheless, the great English preacher's voice resounded through the new church, while the lofty arched roof seemed to give greater effect to his reiterated appeals to all to take of the water of life. As an acquaintance wrote:—

"The preacher seemed intent upon it that if never before in their lives, then, at all events, the rich merchants of Hamburg should hear the simple, unvarnished tale of redeeming love. It was no ordinary pleasure and privilege to witness the comparatively young soldier of the cross, whose praise is in all the churches, standing beside the now venerable patriarch who, through a long series of years, had amidst evil report and good report witnessed a good confession before many witnesses. Both had suffered reproach in the service of their Master, both had outlived it and forced the world to respect the religion which it cannot love; and it was meet that the younger should cross the ocean to exchange with the elder brotherly recognition and affectionate sympathy in this the hour of his joy and triumph. The delightful services of the day were brought to a close by the observance of the Lord's Supper, which here, as elsewhere throughout our churches in Germany, is held every Lord's day. Many hundreds were present, the members of the church at Hamburg being reinforced by many from surrounding stations, and a large number of visitors from all parts of the continent, as well as from England and America."

All things connected with the new church struck Mr. Spurgeon as being very Germanic, especially the fine singing, the great heat of the building, and the antique windows which would not open to admit of ventilation. The echoes, which were likened to bawling women in a fish-market, may have been less characteristic of the Fatherland; and endeavours were to be made to remedy that defect. Pastor Oncken seemed to keep open house for all comers; and the pleasure felt by everyone was only marred by the illness and pain which overtook the principal guest, who was laid aside for some days in his friend's house. The pastor was gladly welcomed by his people on Sunday, September 8; but on the following Tuesday he was unable to keep his engagement to preach at the opening of the new Baptist chapel at Upper Holloway, of which the present Dr. S. H. Booth was elected pastor. Spurgeon's place at the Tabernacle was taken by Mr. Gange, of Portsmouth; but a letter was read thanking all for the help which the congregation had given to the new enterprise of the Stockwell Orphanage.

Chapter 67: The Stockwell Orphanage

Chapter 67.

The Stockwell Orphanage The New Orphanage—An Enthusiastic Gathering—Illness of the Pastor—Alarming Reports of his Condition—Proposed Testimonial—Annexationists—Death of the Pastor of Helens-burgh and others.

Notwithstanding the relapse already referred to, Mr. Spurgeon was able to take part in what may be called the inauguration of the Stockwell Orphanage on Monday, September 9. There were some heavy showers of rain daring the evening, but no downpour seemed able to damp the enthusiasm of the people. Quite a crowd assembled at the gates some time before they were opened, and in half an hour four thousand persons with tickets had entered the grounds. A large number of collecting-cards had been issued a short time before, and 776 of these were now brought in with a sum of £1,776. The visitors who turned into the avenue from the Clapham Road walked between a double row of Venetian masts, befittingly decorated with banners. In the grounds the secretary and a number of assistants were busily engaged in receiving money; and further on was an immense covered space where hundreds at one time could partake of refreshments. Poles, pulleys, etc., marked out the sites of the houses which were first to be erected, and around these large crowds assembled. We are told by an eyewitness that "the scene presented at the commencement of the ceremony of laying the stones was an exceedingly picturesque one. A number of men climbed the trees, in order to get a good view of the proceedings, and we noticed that some of these persons sang with as much gusto as the congregation below, while balancing themselves on what seemed in the distance to be rather weak branches." It is added that "fears were entertained for the safety of some of the more adventuresome, and one man especially seemed in a most dangerous position, as he hung like a monkey, with his two arras on a branch, and his legs dangling against the trunk of the tree." So great was the desire to secure good positions for seeing and hearing, that a slight accident occurred through a number of persons crowding on to a fragile structure which gave way and threw many down. As no great damage was done, however, the cheery voice of Mr. Spurgeon was heard reassuring the spectators. "Our friends were told not to go there; but they did not come down of their own will, therefore Providence ordered it." This occurred just about the time that he was commencing his address, when the crowd closed in. The brief statement then made is a most succinct history of the Orphanage to the date of inauguration, and though it contains some details already given in these pages, it may be quoted at length:—

"My friends, it may be well that in a few words I should state the business of the afternoon and what has led to it. I think in the month of August last year I wrote an article in The Sword and the Trowel suggesting sundry modes of usefulness that might be adopted by the Christian public. That article was read by a sister in Christ who had for some years determined to devote her substance to the work of maintaining fatherless children. She thereupon thought that she had found out the proper individual to whom to entrust her money; and I received a note which, when I read and read

again, greatly startled me, as it said:—'I have determined to devote £20,000 to the work of maintaining orphans, and would you be good enough to see me about it?' I thought perhaps the lady had put down a nought or two too much, or that perhaps someone desired to play me a trick. I thought, however, it was my duty to see about it; and having seen my sister, I found that she was a benevolent, practical woman, desirous to have her money devoted to the maintenance of fatherless children, with a special view to their souls being cared for and trained in the fear of God and the doctrines of truth. I hesitated to undertake the work, having, as I thought, enough on my hands already; but I afterwards consented to do so, and we are here to-day on a piece of ground purchased for the erection of houses for the care of fatherless boys. Why our sister did not choose fatherless girls I don't know; but that is left open to someone else, and I am here quite prepared to assist them in procuring an asylum for fatherless girls also. Inasmuch as I found the money was first fixed so that we could not get beyond a certain interest for it, it was determined that the foundation-stones of three houses should first be laid. Now, the first stone should be laid by Mrs. Hillyard, our sister who gave us the £20,000, but unfortunately the workpeople have placed the tackle to the wrong house, and consequently I am obliged to begin. The cost of the house of which Mrs. Hillyard will lay the first stone is given by a merchant of the City of London. His name is well known, but it is not to be mentioned now or at any other time. It will be called the 'Merchant's House.' The house of which I shall lay the foundation-stone will be called the 'Silver Wedding House.' It is given to us by a sister who has lived happily with her husband for five-and-twenty years. About a month ago her husband said to her, 'I will make you a present of £500 on your wedding-day.' She said, 'I often wished to have so large a sum to give to Mr. Spurgeon for some of his good works.' So she has given me the whole sum. The third house will be called the 'Workmen's House.' The workmen in the employment of Messrs. Higgs agreed at a meeting to build a house, the materials being found by Messrs. Higgs. The workmen will faithfully redeem their pledge, but thinking it would be a long time before they could work their money out, they have given the whole in the shape of that large shed, which will suit for meetings, or for the children to play in. I think our working friends could not make a better investment than subscribe to an institution where their children should have the preference. One workman who had subscribed died only last week, leaving two children who will share in the benefits of the institution which he has helped. Let me say that though only these three houses are now to be built—or at least their first stones are to be laid—we have promises for others. The family of the Olneys, a name that is peculiarly dear to all our friends, have given a cheque for £500 for another house, to commemorate the memory of their sainted mother, to be called the 'Unity House.'" The ceremony of laying the stone of three houses was then proceeded with, verses specially prepared by the President—"Our poor poet," as he called himself—being sung at each station. The first stone, that of the Silver Wedding House, was laid by Mr. Spurgeon himself:—

"Accept, O Lord, the grateful love Which yields this house to Thee; And on the Silver Wedding House Let blessings ever be.

"Enrich, O Lord, the wedded pair, With choicest grace below; And when their pilgrimage is o'er, The Golden Crown bestow."

When a silver trowel was presented to Mr. Spurgeon by the trustees, he said he should present it to the lady whose silver wedding the house would commemorate. The President then gratified those who were curious in such matters by adding:—"The mallet used in laying the stone is the

same which struck the foundation-stone at the Tabernacle, which the Queen handled in laying the foundation-stone of the Orphan Asylum at Bagshot, and which was more recently used on a similar occasion by the Earl of Shaftesbury."

Mrs. Hillyard, the foundress of the Stockwell Orphanage, then proceeded to lay the stone of the Merchant's House, the graceful ovation she received being well deserved. These verses were then sung:—

"Accept, O Lord, the Merchant's House, The gift of grateful love;

Smile on our friend, and gild his heart With sunshine from above.

"And on our sister, who was first To give her wealth to Thee;

Let all the fulness of Thy grace Descend most plenteously."

Mr. Spurgeon then made some characteristic references to the foundress of the institution:—

"When Mrs. Hillyard's munificent contribution was first announced in the newspapers people said it had been given by a duchess, but I say no, it is given by a princess—one of the blood imperial—a daughter of the King of kings. She has given it in the most unostentatious manner, desiring that her name should not be known, and I and my friends have dragged her into light to-day contrary to her wishes. She is a simple, earnest, Christian woman, who has devoted by far the largest portion of her property to God without asking honour from anyone. She only asks help to this great work. I hope to see not 200, but 2,000 boys in the Orphanage, and I ask all those who now hear to break through their Christian rule and give three cheers for Mrs. Hillyard." The cheers were of course given in enthusiastic style, and the Doxology concluded this part of the proceedings.

Then followed what was practically a great picnic; a band of musicians played some pieces under the trees, numbers were seated on the grass drinking their tea, while others were accommodated at a gaily decorated table between three and four hundred feet long. Tea and its accompaniments were amply supplied, and all were in good holiday humour, and so continued even when, in the evening, rain succeeded the sunshine of a few hours before. The refreshment-tent was crowded, and the time was whiled away by singing. One who was present tells us that throughout the whole time "the enthusiasm was of the usual Tabernacle temperature;" and adds that "during the hour in which the audience waited for the arrival of the speakers, a number of popular hymn-tunes were sung, the people under the marquee striking up one tune, and those under the shed singing another. A little after six, amidst loud laughter and clapping of hands, Mr. Spurgeon made his appearance, after a novel fashion—the only one, indeed, left to him. By means of a ladder, he succeeded in reaching the window at the back of the platform, through which he, with the deacons and speakers, got on to the platform, much to the enjoyment of the audience. On the arrival of Mrs. Hillyard, she was cheered most vociferously." Mr. Spurgeon gave an address at the evening meeting, and he appears to have been the only speaker who was able to make the assembly hear without extra effort. In the course of his speech he said:—

"I should not have thought of this last enterprise but that it was thrust upon me in the name of God, and upon you also. Do you not all feel that if any Christian sister can give the major part of her income to such an enterprise you cannot refuse to give your help? The first work dear to my heart is the College. Throughout Germany a very large proportion of the ministers do not believe in the

truth of the Scriptures, and that arises from their training and education having been neglected; and it will be a dark day for England when her pulpits are filled with men who preach what they do not believe, or who covertly attack the Gospel under the pretence of preaching it. Our College under God will effect a great work; and whatever is done for the Orphanage will never militate against our College. We have made some provision for widows, and there will be eighteen alms-rooms open for them against the Elephant and Castle in a month. In a congregation of four thousand, there must be a large number of fatherless children, and it has become absolutely necessary to make some provision for them, and we ought to be thankful to our sister for enabling us to make it. I will undertake to prove that the prosperous people of the Tabernacle are those that have been generous in their gifts to God's work. I believe no Christian church could undertake the task committed to them so well as we can, because we are the largest Christian church. We shall require some £80,000 to finish and endow the entire Orphanage, and this no doubt we shall be able to accomplish." The addresses which followed were by Churchmen as well as Nonconformists; and by what he said the curate of a church hard by aroused quite an anti-Ritualistic demonstration. Mr. J. A. Spurgeon said he was glad this work of the Orphanage had been undertaken, because the world did not appear to understand the Baptists. He had himself been looked upon as a kind of hippopotamus. He then went on to say that although Mrs. Hillyard was the widow of a Church of England minister, she had become a Baptist: his brother had baptised her since she had given the £20,000 to found the Orphanage. "I am glad she is a Baptist, because she has evinced such a truly noble and catholic spirit," added the speaker. "Some persons have thought, because we conscientiously refuse to take a child to the font, we neglect taking children to the Saviour." The collection for the day amounted to £2,200, so that, altogether, a sum of £3,000 to pay for the site had been collected.

Mr. Spurgeon left this joyous meeting early, and on the following morning was so seriously ill that all engagements had to be cancelled, or substitutes procured. Keen was the disappointment of the people in the pretty village of Melbourne, in Cambridgeshire, which he had arranged to visit, not for the first time. Marquees had been erected, and other great preparations made, when Mr. Spurgeon senior arrived on the ground with the damping intelligence that he had come to preach in place of his son, who was ill in bed, a severe cold having been contracted at the Orphanage stone-laying ceremony. The pastor appears to have sufficiently recovered on Thursday, the 19th of September, to take the week-night service at the Tabernacle, but it was an unwise effort. "The exertion proved too much for him, for on Friday his malady returned, and confined him to his residence in Nightingale Lane, Clapham Road. On Saturday he was again much better. He then entertained some hopes that he should be able to preach at the Tabernacle on Sunday. The morning of Sunday, however, was so wet that his physicians, two of whom are in attendance upon him, advised him to remain indoors, and he did so. The consequence has been that for two successive Sundays he has now, greatly against his own wishes, and to the deep regret of his congregation, been absent from the Tabernacle." In the City and elsewhere exaggerated rumours were current to the effect that Mr. Spurgeon was dying, and even that he had actually died. The invalid was progressing, however; and when visited on Sunday, September 29, in his sick chamber, by Mr. Chown, who was engaged to preach at the Tabernacle, he was in good spirits. The pastor preached again at the Tabernacle on Sunday morning, October 6, Thursday the 10th, and on Sunday morning, the 13th. He was, of course, unable to attend the Baptist Union meetings which were held at Cardiff in bitterly cold weather, and no doubt it would have been more

economical had he not ventured out so soon. He complained still of great weakness, the pallor of his countenance too plainly told of the sufferings he had endured, and the manner in which the preacher slowly limped about the platform must have excited the sympathy of the overwhelming congregation which assembled at the Tabernacle.

Then came a relapse, which appears to have been brought on by too great an eagerness to recommence the routine of daily duty. On Wednesday, the 16th of October, Mr. Spurgeon spent ten hours at the Tabernacle and attended to a number of pressing matters, besides visiting the almshouses which were then approaching completion. When visited by a friend on Monday, October 21, he was found to be in great suffering, bat he was able to go into his study, which he had not been able to do since the preceding Wednesday. His illness had been acutely painful, while the biliousness to which the sufferer was naturally disposed seemed to have the effect of increasing his weakness. Towards the end of the month there was great improvement in the pastor's health, and he was able to preach twice at the Tabernacle on the first Sunday of November. He sought rest and change in a retired part of Surrey, which had long been with him a favourite county. Special prayer was offered for his restoration at the London Baptist Association meeting at Bloomsbury Chapel, on November 5, and on that same day Mr. Spurgeon pleaded the cause of the Orphanage in a letter to the denominational journal:—

"To the Editors of 'The Freeman.'

"My Dear Sirs,—It would give me very great pleasure if all our Sabbath-schools would assist the school at the Tabernacle in erecting a Sabbath-school House in connection with the Stockwell Orphanage. I think there is already £160 in hand, and to raise the remainder of £600 would only need a small sum from each of our schools.

"I have observed, with no small gratitude, that generous proposals have been made to raise a Ministers' and Deacons' House, and I have been asked whether the project would meet my approbation. My dear sirs, it will be considered one of the happiest events of my life if this should ever be done; and as the orphanage of our own ministry must, I fear, be large, it would be a wise thing for our friends to do, if our trustees will for this house give a preference of election to deceased ministers' sons should they be left in destitute circumstances. This I feel sure they will do. Our esteemed brother, Pastor Heritage, of Canterbury, has undertaken to forward this scheme, and in his hands I believe it will succeed.

"I am deeply grateful for all the kindness I have received on all hands, and especially from Baptist brethren. I am bound by a thousand bonds of love to the body which The Freeman represents, and daily pray for it, although just now I cannot labour for its increase. The last spontaneous proposal of my brethren to help my Orphanage has made my cup of thankfulness run over.

"May I add that the building of houses for the Orphanage is less difficult than the support of the inmates? Whenever our friends can spare us donations we shall be glad of them.

"Let them look upon the Stockwell Orphanage as peculiarly a child of the Baptist body, and assist it accordingly. A band of lady collectors would afford very great help; people want reminding now and then. Wishing The Freeman all success,—I am, dear gentlemen, yours truly, "Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, "C. H. Spurgeon."

"November 5, 1867.

There was something almost like romance in the way in which the Orphanage originated; and a number of friends were now desirous of supplementing the generosity of Mrs. Hillyard with subscriptions sufficient to build one or more houses which should be presented as a testimonial to Mr. Spurgeon. A circular was issued in which the suggestion was thrown out that the Baptist denomination should provide the means for building some of the houses This seemed to meet with so ready a response that a well-known pastor at Haworth wrote respecting it:—

"As a testimonial to our beloved brother, Mr. Spurgeon, the movement will specially commend itself to multitudes. His amazing gifts, his apostolic labours, his glowing piety, his deep humility, notwithstanding temptations to arrogance and pride which few could resist; his generous forgiving spirit, which has not been exacerbated by the misrepresentation and abuse even of good men in his early years; his princely, unselfish liberality; his genial, loving sympathy to his brethren in the ministry, far less gifted and honoured than himself; and above all, the great spiritual triumphs which God has granted him in the conversion of sinners, the quickening the zeal of many ministers and churches, and the comforting many a weary traveller to Zion—these things have won for him the profoundest esteem and love of thousands. By helping this work for God we shall show that we glorify God in him. An ordinary testimonial, such as a timepiece, dinner-service, or inkstand (by which we usually manifest esteem for ministers), Mr. Spurgeon would little value, even if made of solid gold—unless, indeed, he were permitted to melt it down to build chapels. But a gift to the orphans, which should also be a testimonial of the love and confidence of the churches of the denomination he serves, would indeed cheer his heart, lighten his cares, and send him joyously on his way." A week later Mr. Spurgeon replied to the above in a letter to the denominational paper:—"I fear I have made a mistake in my letter in last week's Freeman. I had no idea whatever that the matter of building a house or houses for the Orphanage had been taken up by my brethren. The announcement in Mr. Aldis's letter was a delightful surprise to me. I hope no one will imagine that I wished to take it out of the excellent hands in which it is already. I thank those friends most sincerely, and beg to apologise for having, through ignorance, intruded upon their labour of love." The Baptist Denomination Testimonial Houses were reared in due course, and it was understood that necessitous orphans of Baptist ministers should have the first claim to be admitted. Perhaps, however, the Workmen's House afforded one of the best evidences of the enthusiasm on account of the Orphanage which prevailed among all classes. A master builder offered to give all materials, and a number of his men volunteered their labour while building the house; but the building was undertaken by a contractor, and a sum of money subscribed instead. The son of one of the artisans was received into the home which his father had helped to build.

It was also during the year 1867 that Mr. Spurgeon was assailed with some rather severe criticism on the part of those who were known as Annexationists, or promoters of denominational union. Spurgeon and Brock appear to have been especially singled out as men who were too narrow-minded for such an advanced age; but as such representative Baptists were not incapable of taking care of themselves, the noise of controversy soon died away.

About this time several well-known characters, for whom Mr. Spurgeon entertained high regard, were removed by death. The pastor of Helensburgh—"My own John Anderson"—passed away on January 10, and a tribute to his memory was given at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Faraday, the

Christian scientist, died on Sunday, August 25. Then on the morning of Sunday, November 24, Dr. James Hamilton, of Regent's Square Presbyterian Church, passed away. References to the first and last of these worthies will be found in the Sermons for 1867.

Chapter 68: James Archer Sturgeon, Co-Pastor

Chapter 68.

James Archer Sturgeon, Co-Pastor A Co-Pastor needed—Mr. J. A. Spurgeon's Work at Croydon—Routine Work at the Tabernacle—Sympathy between the Brothers—The College—Spurgeon quotes from his Favourite Authors.

The severe illness from which Mr. Spurgeon suffered in the fall of 1867 had the effect of impressing his friends with the fact that the strain of the pastorate of the Metropolitan Tabernacle was becoming too great for one man's strength. Although he was only thirty-three years of age, the pastor was really old in service, while his features showed that excessive labour was beginning to tell upon his constitution. It was true that the gout, to which he was subject, was supposed to be hereditary; but, according to medical testimony, mental effort had more to do with the disease than anything else. When they took these things into consideration, the deacons at the Tabernacle came to the conclusion that the most common-sense thing to do would be to provide their pastor with such permanent assistance as would relieve him of a part of the burden which had become too heavy to be borne by one alone. Then a rumour of a co-pastor having been elected became current; and while remarking that this report was quite true, The Freeman added: "His brother has been appointed to the office; and though, should God spare his life, the pulpit will continue, as ever, to, be occupied by the pastor, he will be largely assisted by his brother, whose help for years past in the College and the other organisations has been as valuable as it has been—so far as the public is concerned—unperceived."

Mr. James Spurgeon, who was thus appointed to an arduous and responsible office, was three years the junior of his brother, and was consequently just about thirty years of age. He enjoyed considerable educational advantages in youth. Mr. and Mrs. John Spurgeon were well content to make great sacrifices on behalf of their children; and the younger son benefited by passing through the four years' curriculum of Regent's Park College. Following the example of his brother, he very early engaged in Sunday-school work; and he was baptised by immersion at the age of fourteen at the Baptist Chapel, Colchester. At sixteen years of age he preached his first sermon at Vernon Chapel, King's Cross; and was afterwards a frequent substitute for his brother, some of his early discourses being published. At the date at which we have now arrived, Mr. James Spurgeon had done some good service, besides having earned a high reputation as a popular preacher. In the course of our narrative, something has been said of the work he did both at Southampton and at Notting Hill, where the churches still remain in a flourishing condition. His connection with West Croydon commenced in 1868, or just after he had accepted the office of co-pastor at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. There seemed to be a fine opening for a preacher of ability and enterprise in this southern suburb, and now the man appeared who possessed the qualities which would ensure success. The parish, thirty-six miles in circumference, was one of the largest in the vicinity of London, and, especially in former years, the entire area well merited the name of umbrageous Croydon. The growth of the parish in population has been great and rapid, however,

so that roads and villas now cover what once were fruitful gardens or pleasant fields.

Several Strict Communion Baptist churches had flourished in Croydon for a good many years; but at length a number of friends decided on making the attempt to gather a congregation on a more liberal basis, that of strict membership but open communion, such as had proved so abundantly successful at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. From the first, Mr. Spurgeon showed the liveliest interest in his brother's enterprise, and always found pleasure in preaching for him. When Mr. James Spurgeon consented to take the pastorate for three months, the congregation was in such a low condition that one minister had left because he could not be supported, and it was debated whether or not this small community should be dissolved. The services were being held in an iron chapel in the Wellesley Road; but this became overcrowded when the new pastor commenced his labours, and the services were removed to the Public Hall. This also became crowded; and a committee to make arrangements for the erection of the present beautiful sanctuary at the junction of White Horse and St. James's Roads was formed. Satisfactory progress was made, for the people of Croydon seemed to be aroused to action. In May, 1870, C. H. Spurgeon laid the memorial-stone of the lecture-room, to seat five hundred persons, and which was called St. James's Hall. This involved an outlay of £1,650; and as the building became at once crowded, it was resolved to proceed immediately with the erection of the present chapel, which is planned for the accommodation of over a thousand persons. Including some additional rooms which have since been erected, the cost of the chapel has been about £10,000. The week-day work which Mr. James Spurgeon undertook at the Tabernacle did not prevent his thus building up a large church, as it were, with his left hand. His appointment as assistant to his brother had not been made a day too soon. The truth was, that at this time the Tabernacle had become a great hive of workers, and the great institutions now connected with the church—to say nothing of its network of mission-stations in the surrounding neighbourhood—afforded ample scope for a first-class man to work to advantage as organiser and general overseer. Though separated by a distance of some miles, the church at Newington and that at Croydon were in heartiest sympathy. The Orphanage and the College were dear to both; and while the people at the Tabernacle were privileged to enjoy the ministry of C. H. Spurgeon, the congregation at Croydon was hardly less interested in his work. The suburban church was, in its way, as aggressive as the larger congregation; for no sooner was the new chapel erected than endeavours were made to reach the poor of the surrounding district, mission stations being established that speedily became centres of influence which benefited the whole town. Like their friends at Newington, all the people were encouraged to do something. A town missionary was also engaged, for whose services an iron chapel was erected, while the Sunday-school work was greatly extended. In a word, this church at West Croydon became one of the most prosperous stations of the Baptist denomination in the neighbourhood of London.

During the last twenty-four years of his brother's life, Mr. James Spurgeon did a vast amount of daily routine work at the Tabernacle, of which the outside public heard little, and knew less, but in the doing of which he proved the most effective assistant to the senior pastor that could possibly have been provided. There was always the most complete harmony between the two brothers; and the elder rated very highly the abilities of the younger. Self-confident as he was, the senior pastor would often hesitate to act without taking the advice of his colleague. It was to the latter that the partially incomprehensible letter from Mrs. Hillyard respecting the founding of the Stockwell Orphanage was shown. "Brother, will you stand by me if I engage in this new enterprise?" asked

the senior pastor before he had finally made up his mind about what it would be best to do. "Like the steel to the blade," was the answer, and the work went forward. The Orphanage alone, with its five hundred and fifty inmates, and an expenditure of £1,000 a month, demands no small amount of business skill in its management. Once a fortnight, at eight o'clock a.m., the trustees have met in their board-room, and the Vice-President was rarely absent. Such constant and responsible service had of course become altogether impossible to Mr. Spurgeon himself; but to have it efficiently discharged by his brother was not only an immense relief to him, it excited his liveliest gratitude.

Sensitive as he was to the last degree, however, the senior pastor took careful notice even of little things, and at times even straws upon the stream, as showing the tendencies of the people, would give him some trouble, especially as he desired that the junior pastor should have the credit for being what he was, and for doing what he did. "Brother," remarked he one day, "I am taking from you your very name—they call you Mr. James." That was strictly true; indeed, the co-pastor really had three names, and by the name they gave him, persons at once showed themselves to be members at Croydon or at the Tabernacle, or outsiders. At the Tabernacle the co-pastor was Mr. James, at Croydon he was Mr. Spurgeon, among outsiders he was recognised as Mr. James Spurgeon. This did not please the senior pastor, who was consoled to think that a remedy might one day be found. "Brother," he added, "if ever the Americans offer you a doctorship you must accept it, and then Dr. Spurgeon will be a sufficient distinction from Mr. Spurgeon." Since the death of the great preacher it has really happened that the syndicate of Colegate University, U.S.A., has conferred on the younger brother the well-merited diploma of LL.D. as a recognition of his skill in ecclesiastical law. Some who are more accustomed to give expression to mere prejudice rather than to sober sentiment, have misrepresented this compliment through misunderstanding it. "Dr," is supposed not to go well with the name of Spurgeon, and if so it is pronounced a disfigurement. It is true that Mr. Spurgeon himself would not have accepted such a distinction; but, at the same time, it was strictly in accordance with the senior pastor's wishes that his brother should do so. The brothers appeared to be at one in everything; but the chief reason of their being able to work in unison as they did was that they were agreed in doctrine. If the influence of the patriarch of Stambourne was still perpetuated by Mr. Spurgeon, the equally Puritanical faith of the latter's brother was inspired by the home-teaching of his father and mother at Colchester. Many extracts from discourses of the great preacher have been given; and probably the most interesting way of showing how exactly his co-pastor agreed with him in point of doctrine, will be to give a passage from a sermon preached by Mr. James Spurgeon soon after his appointment to the co-pastorate at the Tabernacle. The title is, "Look and be Saved," the text being that of the famous "Look" sermon which was instrumental in C. H. Spurgeon's conversion in the Primitive Methodist chapel at Colchester:—

"Going back again to my old figure of the fire. The fire-escape came round near the house. Too short! They ran up the fly-ladder, and just as the man was going to mount it, that he might rescue a poor woman shrieking in the five there, it broke and she was lost. And if men had to work out their own and others' salvation, just when the test came it would break. I want something beyond man-made earth to build upon. I want the Rock of Ages; and if I had to depend upon any human arm, though it were a Samson's, he might lose his seven locks of strength and have his eyes put out. If I had to depend upon human wisdom, it might be a Solomon's, who played the fool. If I had

to depend upon boldness, it might be a Peter's, who trembled before a. maid. And so all through I find the greatest men fail in their greatness. The most patient of men, like Moses, speak unadvisedly with their lips. Men after God's heart, like David, fall into the foulest of sins. I find, I say again, that men fail in their very strength. How much more do they fail in their weakness? And if I had to depend upon men I should be lost, for, in the testing, that hour of direst need would be the hour I should find out that they were worthless and I was lost. Did you ever hear of anything more desperately deceptive than the account the other day of someone who had sold bad life-belts—manufactured without any cork being put into them at all, so they would not float themselves, much less hold up drowning men who might try to cling to them; and thus a ship's crew had been provided with life-belts that would not float. Did you ever hear of anything more vile than the giving of sailors, as medicine, a mixture which had no lime-juice at all, so that when the mariners might be out in the wide ocean, and began to drink that which they hoped would keep them from their dread disease of scurvy, they would find that they had some decoction that would not meet the case at all? You see, then, that we have no security against man's guilt and deliberate deception. I must turn to a God, and when I have one who can neither fail nor sin, I can rest upon Him in perfect confidence, and when He says, 'Look unto me and be ye saved,' there is a salvation which I need not be afraid to venture upon. 'Look unto me and be ye saved, for I am God.'

"Furthermore, recurring to the figure once again, the fire-escape and the friends about did manage to get out some three or four, but one of them nearly burnt to death. They saved partially, but there are the scars and the weakness to the end of life. It was a partial salvation, and if I had to deal with a man, however perfect, I must deal with a finite being. He never can render service more perfect than himself, and more lasting than he is. His work must be limited by the bounds which limit himself. I want, therefore, someone who for extent and for endurance will be able to say, 'I am God, a God that can never die; whose ear can never be deafened with lapse of time; whose head can never be frosted with a winter of old age; whose arm can never be palsied with gathering infirmities;' in a word, I want one who lives not under the conditions of time but of eternity. 'I am a God,' says our Saviour. 'Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am a God, and there is none else.' You see, then, that we must have a God. We have a God in our Lord Jesus Christ. Without Him you may leave me to face with angelic power and purity—with all that earth or heaven itself can supply; but in the creature I must have the inevitable created weakness. I want God's might, uncreated strength, and then I can venture my soul's eternal salvation, and believe that I shall be saved. Now it is unto this God in human flesh—to this man, Christ Jesus—we must approach if we would find salvation." On leaving the people at Notting Hill, whom he had served for some time in the pastorate, Mr. James Spurgeon was presented with a gold watch. His people parted from him with regret, but willingly made the sacrifice on behalf of the great church at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

Although Mr. Spurgeon's severe illness in the latter part of 1867 came as an affliction to his people, there was no abatement in the vigour with which the work at the Tabernacle was carried on. On Wednesday evening, November 27, there was another meeting of Mrs. Bartlett and her class similar to those previously noticed. Hundreds of girls and women attended, and when they sat down to tea they were waited upon by the students of the College. A sum of £100 was presented to the College funds—the collection of a few months; and Mr. Spurgeon presented the

leader of the class with several volumes of his own sermons handsomely bound, in addition to some other things. A large number of friends also assembled at the annual social tea-meeting of the College on December 10, the Tabernacle being nearly filled at the business gathering later in the evening. Mr. Spurgeon presided, and said that the work, so far, had been especially blessed of God, and thus appeared to be providential. To that date twenty-eight pastors had been settled in England, four were in Scotland, one was in India, and thirty-five, who were still preparing for future service, were preaching at various stations in the suburbs of London. Friends were heartily thanked for assistance in the past, and they were encouraged still to continue their aid by the President expressing the hope that he would be enabled to send a preacher to every town in England. From some quarters came complaints of there not being ministers enough; but on the other hand there were old fogies who grumbled at there being too many young preachers. It was not so with their church, however, for they saw in every faithful preacher who was able to raise a congregation a true servant of the Lord. It had to be confessed that during the pastor's late illness the subscriptions had somewhat fallen off; but compensation for minor difficulties was being found in the assistance which was now being rendered by Mr. James Spurgeon, who, on coming forward, was accorded something like an ovation. Several students also spoke, but the great attraction of the evening was Mr. Spurgeon's lecture on "The Holy War." As I have already shown, this work was his favourite so far as Bunyan was concerned; and on this occasion a series of brilliant dissolving views imparted additional interest to the subject. At the end of the year 1867 the almshouses near the Tabernacle were completed. There were twelve rooms for as many aged women, and, at a deacons' meeting held at Christmas, eight were elected out of about twenty applicants. The lack of endowment grieved Mr. Spurgeon's heart, however, for at this time the only fund available was the Poor Fund of the church, from which half-a-crown a week was allowed to each inmate. The endowment for which Mr. Spurgeon pleaded never came, until, in one handsome sum of £5,000, he gave it himself. The watch-night service on December 31 was a crowded meeting in the Tabernacle, and, as was usual, this was opened by the singing of Charles Wesley's familiar hymn, "Ye virgin souls, arise."

Mr. Spurgeon gave two addresses, one to church members, and another to the unconverted who might be present. For some minutes before the minute-hand of the clock touched the hour of midnight there was unbroken silence, after which the new year was welcomed with the Doxology. At six a.m. on New Year's day, Mr. James Spurgeon presided at a prayer-meeting. At this time the membership of the church had reached a total of 3,634, the clear increase for the year 1867 being 224 members. When the denominational newspaper, The Freeman, became the property of a limited liability company, Mr. Spurgeon showed his interest by contributing several papers, which were given under the general heading of "Saturday Evening." The articles chiefly consisted of extracts, and these were arranged so as to bring before the reader "one class of authors, and then another." The contributor added, "I cannot promise to confine the matter to the Saturday evening's peculiar nearness to the day of rest; but I will give some of the cream of religious literature from all sources, and possibly from authors but little known." A few sample extracts may not only be of general interest, they may prove some index to the old or little-known authors for whom, in his prime, Mr. Spurgeon harboured admiration. The first series had special reference to the Person and work of Christ; and the following, by McLaren, is from Bertram's "Parables of Divine Poesy":—

"They tell us that in some trackless lands, when one friend passes through the pathless forest, he breaks a twig ever and anon as he goes, that those who come after may see the traces of his having been there, and may know that they are not out of the road. Oh! when we are journeying through the murky night and the dark woods of affliction and sorrow, it is something to find here and there a spray broken, or a leafy stem broke down with the tread of His foot and the brush of His hand as He passed."

We find old Adams credited with the fine saying that "Conscience is God's spy and intelligencer in our bosoms and bedchambers; a most exact notary of whatever we think or do." A special favourite would appear to have been Sibbes the Puritan, whose works at one time were not always easily procured. This able divine is quoted as saying:—"When Satan cometh to us, he findeth something of his own in us, which holdeth correspondency and hath intelligence with him; there is the same enmity in our nature to God and goodness in some degree that is in Satan himself; whereupon his temptations fasten for the most part some taint upon us." At one time Spurgeon and John Ruskin were well acquainted, and each learned something from the other; for while you might readily have found "Modern Painters" and "The Stones of Venice" in the preacher's library, the author of those works listened to many sermons at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. In his selections of readings for Saturday evenings we find that Spurgeon was captivated by the following passage from Ruskin on Truth and Falsehood:—

"We are too much in the habit of looking at falsehood in its darkest associations, and through the colour of its worst purposes. That indignation which we profess to feel at deceit absolute is indeed only at deceit malicious. We resent calumny, hypocrisy, and treachery, because they harm us, and because they are untrue. Take the detraction and the mischief from the untruth, and we are little offended by it; turn it into praise, and we may be pleased with it. And yet, it is not calumny nor treachery that does the largest amount of mischief in the world; they are continually crushed, and are felt only in being conquered. But it is the glistening and softly-spoken lie; the amiable fallacy, the patriotic lie of the historian, the provident lie of the politician, the zealous lie of the partisan, the merciful lie of the friend, and the careless lie of each man to himself, that east that black mystery over humanity, through which we thank any mail who presses, as we would thank one who dug a well in a desert; happy that the thirst for truth still regains with us, even when we have wilfully left the fountains of it."

Spurgeon always professed great admiration for the character and work of John Wesley, and it was apparently a rare pleasure to be able to quote from the great Wesleyan leader anything which seemed to favour his leaning towards the doctrines of grace as understood by Calvinists. Such, for example, as "Grace does not depend on any power or merit in man; no, nor in any degree, neither in whole nor in part. It does not in anywise depend either on the good works or righteousness of the receiver; nor on anything he has done, or anything he is."

Before he had proceeded very far in his selection of passages on the Person and work of Christ, Mr. Spurgeon wrote:—

"For 'fat things full of marrow and wines on the lees well refined' upon the Person and work of the Lord Jesus, there are a few names upon our list to which we accord a very high position. They contemplate the Redeemer's sufferings and subsequent glory, it is true, from all points of the spiritual compass; but their gaze is so distinctly and constantly fixed upon Him that their other

views are but addenda to their being, and the soul of their character comes out when considering Him in whom they live. In reading the works of this school, the spiritual heart feasts with Jesus and feels the reality of His love, even when the head might raise questions and be moved to controversy. It is marvellous how much vitality of love to Jesus may occasionally be found amid the corruption of false doctrine and the rubbish of superstition, like a fair flower blooming upon a heap of decay. Our extracts will, we trust, be in themselves good and sound, but we by no means intend, by quoting them, to give any sort of opinion upon the author's works or character; it will be for the reader to get what he can from the handful of corn which we glean from the fields; we cannot be answerable for the poisonous weeds which perhaps may have grown among the wheat.

"It is not in our power to quote always from rare authors, and it is needful for completeness to levy contributions upon those which are commonly known. Our task is so entirely a labour of disinterested lore that we hope our brethren whose range of reading is wider than ours will have patience with us when we produce passages with which they are perfectly familiar, remembering that there are in all circles those who still need an introduction to those very books which we look upon as our familiar friends. There will be little or no order preserved, the fact being that we have not the time to attain it; and the choice lies between doing it as we can or not at all." Of Thomas Hooker, an old favourite, it is remarked:—

"Thomas Hooker, the author of the following passage, was born at Marfield, in Leicestershire, in 1586, and became a popular preacher in London. In 1626 he removed to Chelmsford, and being silenced for Nonconformity he opened a school, and had John Eliot, afterwards the Apostle to the Indians, as his usher. In 1633 he settled in America and founded Hartford. His 'Survey of the Sum of Church Discipline' was published by Thomas Goodwin in 1648. His 'Application of Redemption, by the Effectual Work of the Word and Spirit of Christ, for the Bringing Home of Lost Sinners to God,' was printed for the author, and recommended by T. Goodwin and Philip Nye. His most popular work is 'The Poor, Doubting Christian drawn to Christ.' A seventh edition was published at Boston in 1743." This is one passage from the quotation referred to:—

"You know always it is the privilege of kings and princes that all the coin that comes from their mint, and is coined with their stamp, is warrantable; but if there be any other coin that comes from any other mint the king will not allow of it. Just so it is with this love; it is the privilege of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God's love, to mint and to coin love that may be current love indeed, that He may take for good payment.... Canst thou say I love the Lord because He hath loved me? Then thy love is of a right metal; and know it for ever that that God who cannot but love Himself, cannot but like that love which came from Himself, who is the God of all love, and which comes from His own Divine nature." In quoting John Willison, it is said that many of his meditations on sacramental occasions "are peculiarly rich with devotion and the spirit of communion."

"The Life of Jesus Christ in Glory," from the French of Nouet, also came in for some attention. Mr. Spurgeon remarks that this work "is Romish in some degree, but withal full of spiritual life and gracious insight into divine truth." Ample extracts are made, and as a sample, take this striking passage on the resurrection of Christ:—

"Consider that Christ arose at the break of day, when the sun seems to make all the beauties of nature revive, and in springtime, when the fruits and flowers of the earth spring up afresh. 'My flesh hath revived.' Nothing blossoms anew which hath not blossomed before. The flesh of the Lord was

as an opening flower when it came forth from the Virgin's womb; it unfolded itself anew when it burst from the sepulchre, and like a flower exhaled upon mankind the sweet odour of immortality. Observe that our Lord died at three in the afternoon, when the day was closing, and rose again about three in the morning, when the sun was rising. St. Chrysostom says that the sun had fled before nightfall, when the Saviour of the world was nailed to the cross; but that when He rose again it indemnified itself by forestalling the night, and in its turn chased it away earlier than its wont, in order to restore to the day of the resurrection those three hours of which the darkness had robbed the day of the passion."

Then follow Isaac Ambrose, and James Durham, who "was sometime minister of the Gospel at Glasgow, and solemnly called to the public profession of divinity in the University there, and also his Majesty's chaplain in ordinary when he was in Scotland." The extracts are from Durham's work, published towards the close of the seventeenth century and entitled, "Christ Crucified; or, the Marrow of the Gospel, evidently holden forth in seventy-two sermons on the whole fifty-third chapter of Isaiah."

Richard Alleine's "Heaven Opened," published in 1665, also received attention; as did a man of quite a different school—Dr. Mason Neale. Lest he should be misunderstood in reading and quoting from such an author, Mr. Spurgeon writes:—

"In my copy of Dr. Neale's lectures to the sisters of a religious house, I find I have written as follows:—'Here is a lion—slay it. Here is honey—eat it. Samson on the way to his marriage feast, with the Spirit of the Lord upon him, is the man. Weak reader, begone, this is a book only for lion-killers and honey-eaters.'—1858.

"No reader will suspect me of any kind of leniency towards Puseyism; I can relish a sweet flower, but loathe the dunghill on which it grew. The author here quoted is frequently babyish and namby-pamby in his remarks; but frequently there is an unction about his writing which gives one the hope that he was a better man than his creed."

Then follow Alexander Grosse, B.D., 1647, and Samuel Rutherford, who was very highly valued. Less known was "Solomon's Sweet Harp; consisting of fine words, touched with the cunning hand of his true skill, commanding all other human speech; wherein clergy and laity may learn how to speak. Preached of late at Thetford, before his Majesty, by Thomas Walkington, Bachelor in Divinity and Fellow of St. John's College in Cambridge. Imp. 1603."

Some selections were also made from Thomas Walkington, which prove him to have been one of the quaintest wits of the reign of James I. Take this example:—

"We may see the difference of old wise men and young fools in the very wheels of a clock; the great wheels turn about the slowest, and the lesser run about the fastest; but we see the great ones are the cause of motion in the less, and the less be sooner worn by much. Which should make our greener heads more highly to esteem the hoary hairs in whom time has treasured up a greater portion of wisdom by their long experience."

These passing references to a number of old authors—familiar friends of Mr. Spurgeon's, and from whose pages he was able to give telling extracts—will help the reader to understand the character of the great preacher's reading. He appeared to like making extracts from them; for while he

confessed that he did so because he had not time to write original matter, he probably thought that such examples of old world wit and wisdom as he was enabled to give were really better fare for modern readers than the best original writing that could be offered.

Chapter 69: Work and Progress in 1868

Chapter 69.

Work And Progress In 1868

State of London—London Baptist Association—Disaster at the Orphanage—Princely Donations—Bury St. Edmunds—Fourth Conference—George Moore and Spurgeon—Messrs. Binney, Brock, and Martin—Exeter Hall.

The opening of the year 1868 was a time of great distress among the poorest of the people, and among the working-class population of London generally. We find one trustworthy authority writing on January 3:—"No adequate conception can be formed from the newspapers of the amount of real distress now prevalent; you must go into the poorer districts accompanied by those who know them well, and visit the inhabitants in their houses, to understand the extent of suffering induced by prolonged want of employment."

It has also to be borne in mind that quite apart from periods of distress occasioned by stagnation of trade or severe weather, London was then in a squalid and insanitary condition, far surpassing anything which is now generally to be seen. A typical mission-station was that established in Golden Lane about seven years before, and which, as has already been shown, has developed into the present comprehensive work at Costers' Hall, Hoxton. Mr. Spurgeon always regarded Costers' Hall as an outpost of the Tabernacle, Mr. Councillor Orsman being the pastor's son in the faith. In his report for 1867 we find the hon. superintendent saying, "Our Sunday morning meetings are usually interrupted by. a clattering of empty beer-cans, or by the shouts of Sunday newspaper vendors on the stairs." It is added, "Within ten minutes' walk of the General Post Office and Bank of England there are nearly ten thousand human beings of the lowest class of society." The area over which the mission extended its influence was about half a square mile in extent, and its condition, as described a quarter of a century ago, was neither better nor worse than that of many other plague-spots of London:—

"The houses are generally three rooms, and are without either back windows, doors, or yards. Each room is let unfurnished at an average rental of 2s. 6d. weekly; and a floor, ten or twelve feet square, serves at once as a kitchen and bedroom for a family varying from three to ten individuals, exclusive of cat, dog, birds, etc. In the midst of these houses are several closed burial-grounds, the receptacle for dead cats, dogs, and other refuse of the locality, whilst the fragrance of slaughter-houses and close dairies mingles with the rich ammoniacal odours of rotten fish and vegetable matter. Cologne and its smells, or Constantinople with its open drains, are tame when compared to the offensive stenches that generate fever in Golden Lane and Whitecross Street."

Mr. Spurgeon showed the greatest interest in the work in progress in this headquarters of costerdom as it was called; and while helping to collect the necessary funds for current expenses, he said he knew of no evangelistic work which was more effectual than this in good results. Soon after I became associated with Mr. Spurgeon in literary work, he asked me to visit Golden Lane

and to write a full description of the locality and of what his friend Orsman was doing. That article was published in the magazine, and overflowing was the delight of the great preacher when, soon after this appeared, Mr. Orsman received a thousand pounds by post from one anonymous donor.

There was a boys' catechumen class held at the Tabernacle on Sunday afternoons, with an attendance of about 130. It was conducted by several friends, and the object was to promote the study of the Assembly's Catechism. Mr. Spurgeon presided at the annual tea-meeting on New Year's night, and after he had himself given a telling address, he was gladdened by hearing a most satisfactory account of the spiritual progress of the members. A few of the former members were even pastors of churches, some were in the College, and others were advancing. The class had collected £30 during the half year for the College funds. The second anniversary of the London Baptist Association was held at the Tabernacle on January 14, all the representatives being handsomely entertained by Mr. Spurgeon and his people. Dr. Brock had been President for the first year; he was succeeded by Dr.

Landels, who was followed by Mr. Spurgeon in 1809. The latter gave it as his opinion that no church belonging to the Association should omit to make a collection for the Baptist Missionary Society. In the course of a more general address at the evening meeting, Mr. Spurgeon found cause to lament that the increase of the London churches during the year 1867 had been only 1,700, while some churches had remained stationary and others had even declined. The number of members belonging to the associated churches was stated to be 23,000. "I earnestly hope that our increase will be much greater next year," he added, "and that the Holy Spirit's influence will be manifestly felt both by ministers and deacons, and churches and congregations."

He appears to have discontinued sending articles or letters to The Watchman and Reflector; but that transatlantic journal at this time published the discourses given at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. It was remarked that "the sermons of the London preacher are a source of spiritual comfort and strength to many thousands of our readers, as we have reason to know."

While the work at headquarters was ever growing on his hands, Mr. Spurgeon seemed to be continually assisting some cause in the distance, either by preaching on its behalf or by giving his money. During the early days of 1868 we find him contributing £50 to the new chapel at Nailsworth, the members of which had separated from an older congregation on account of disagreement in doctrine. Mr. Spurgeon was not able to preach at the opening, but he sent his brother, the co-pastor, in his stead.

Saturday, February 1, was remarkable for a heavy gale, which swept across the southern part of England, and among the places damaged was the Stockwell Orphanage, where a large wooden building, erected as a playroom for the boys, was blown down. As the structure had cost £600 to put up, while a large amount would be needed to complete the boys' houses, the loss was not a small one; but the new interest which it awakened was very widespread. "We desire," said The Morning Star, "that this heavy blow upon a most excellent institution will awaken public sympathy, and that Mr. Spurgeon's good work may not be hindered." This wish was altogether realised. Mr. Spurgeon himself made the best of the affair by looking on its bright side. The wind had destroyed the building, and of course that could not be helped; but it was needful that the public should raise the wind in another sense to repair the damage. It was arranged that a great bazaar should be held at the beginning of the summer on behalf of the funds of the institution. The loss occasioned

by the gale was soon more than made good by large and small donations coming for the Orphanage and also for the College. On Thursday evening, February 20, Mr. Spurgeon conducted the usual week-night service at the Tabernacle, and on his return to Clapham, at nearly eleven o'clock, there lay on his study table an envelope which he had seen before, but the writer did not give his name and could not be identified. The note was from a person who had sent £1,000 to the Orphanage a few weeks previously, however, and his somewhat mysterious note was as follows:—

"My Dear Sir,—You will remember my intention to send a donation to your College. I have this day dropped into your letter-box an envelope containing bank notes (£2,000), one of which is for the College, and the remaining £1,000 to help complete the Orphanage. The latter led me to contribute to the former. I am a stranger to you, but not to your sermons (printed.) May the Lord give yon health and strength many years to preach His Word and carry on His work.—A. B." A little later another anonymous note came to hand, but it was quite of a different kind, and the enclosure amounted to one pound instead of a thousand. This note ran thus:—

"Dear Sir,—The enclosed stamps, £1, is money that was begged from you wrongfully. God has taught me to make restitution; I thank Him for it. Kindly acknowledge in The Christian Times. May God bless you."

Mr. Spurgeon's example in dropping the title of Rev. was now being followed by other eminent ministers. The name of the present Dr. R. W. Dale and that of the late Charles Vince, of Birmingham, would be advertised without any prefix whatever. On March 17, "a very interesting and pleasing ceremony," with which Mr. Spurgeon had had something to do, took place at Garland Street Chapel, Bury St. Edmunds, of which Cornelius Elven was pastor. Mr. William Cuff, whose extensive pastoral and evangelistic work in Shoreditch during the last twenty years is well known, was then recognised as co-pastor with Mr. Elven. Some years before, while working as a young tradesman at Cheltenham, Mr. Cuff had been introduced to the great preacher by Dr. Brown in the vestry of Cambray Chapel. The result was that the youthful aspirant was taken into the Pastors' College, and was so successful even as a student, that during his educational course he never had even one Sunday to himself on which to hear the pastor preach. Mr. Guff settled in the delightful Bedfordshire village of Ridgmount, bordering on the Russells' princely domain of Woburn Abbey, the old chapel having pleasant memories of John Bunyan clustering around it. Here he was abundantly successful, and greatly attached to his people; but on a certain summer morning in 1867, while reading in his garden, a note from Mr. Spurgeon was handed to Mr. Cuff:—"If you hear from my good old friend Mr. Elven, of Bury St. Edmunds, please give it your best attention." A note from Mr. Elven followed, and Mr. Cuff soon after settled at Bury. The meeting to welcome him was a crowded one; and after Mr. J. A. Spurgeon had given a charge to the younger minister, a collection was made for the Pastors' College. The fourth annual conference of the students and the ministers educated in the College opened at the Tabernacle on Monday, March 23, the number in attendance being one hundred and eighty, forty of whom were students who had been in the institution six months. On the following morning these reassembled at Trinity Chapel, John Street, Edgware Road, of which Mr. J. O. Fellowes was pastor.

After the usual hour had been given to devotional exercises, Mr. Spurgeon, as President, gave an address on Ministerial Difficulties and Success. He first of all referred to the difficulties which

young ministers more especially met with in their work, and such as they were likely to experience as they grew older.

It was pointed out that on first entering upon their work everything seemed to hear a roseate hue; but as they proceeded they found things assume a somewhat different complexion. He believed that the tendency of the ministry in nine cases oat of ten—with its cares, trials, and sometimes privations—was to induce ministers to become weary in well-doing. Many had to meet, even in success, with such terrible disappointments that if they were left alone and without the sustaining power of the Spirit of God they would have to say, "Woe is me that I am a prophet. Better had it been for me that I had broken stones than been a minister of Christ." As that was the tendency among them, he was glad that they were not disappointed because they had to contend against difficulties. They had expected to meet with difficulties before they set out, and they had not been disappointed. They had expected that some who would be warm-hearted at first would cool in their affections, and they had not been disappointed. They had even expected the recurrence of a revival exceedingly hot, and that the people after a time would return to their normal condition, and they had not been disappointed. On the other hand, they had expected to have the Holy Spirit's presence, and they had had it; they had expected to hear some songs of penitence from those who had been pardoned, and of comfort from saints who had been led forward in their experience of divine things, and they had been rejoiced because of this. Besides, they had not found the ministry to be a dull, dead thing, and they had got this day a Gospel which was as new then as when they first learnt it. They did not find the Bible to be like an old almanack; its doctrines were still charming in their freshness. He was glad, then, that they did not come there to the conference like galley-slaves, with manacles on them; but as those who delighted in their work and delighted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Moreover, they were not troubled as some were because their friends had forsaken them. He did not say that some of their members had not been false, but their best Friend had not left them. While they had Christ to go to, they would not be immoderately troubled because of some backsliding members. Might he not add that their confidence in. the message they had to deliver, and the work of the Lord they had to engage in, was undiminished? Had it not grown with their growth? Had they not believed that the Gospel could turn the desert into a garden, and the lion into a lamb, and had not experience proved it? Still, for all that, as they looked forward to the future, it was worth his while to say to them that in the long years to come he trusted that the same confidence and joy would remain among them. Some of those present had been most successful in their labours; others of them had been much dismayed by the difficulties of their work, and he would therefore say a few words to them by way of urging them to perseverance. The President went on to show that a first essential to ensure success was perseverance; and it was also necessary that they should keep up the freshness of their preaching. "I have heard of some men who commenced their ministry by giving wine," said Mr. Spurgeon; "then they gave wine and water; then water, and by-and-bye that fountain was dried up. You should always try to impart some freshness to your sermons." It was also necessary that zeal should be maintained; for it was possible even to give fresh matter, and still to serve it up in such a way that no one would be the better for its being new. Then, as preachers, they would have to keep up an intense love for the truths they preached; and it was not certain that that could be the case unless they got new views of truth. Some suggestions were then given in relation to freshness in preaching. New fallow ground should constantly be broken up, while waste ground should be as constantly reclaimed. It was urged that pastors in London should look about for new

preaching-stations, and new districts for tract distribution. In the country what a world to be influenced stretched before them, even in the little hamlets surrounding their chapels! There were also many back streets where the Gospel was never preached, but where much good might be reaped. If they could not undertake fresh things, they should still impart freshness to what they did do. All opportunities to contribute to this freshness should be embraced. They should make constant visits to their God. In order to stimulate perseverance, let them think of the world's great wants; of the pangs of Hell, of the numbers going thither; let them remember the shortness of time, the joys they had had in conversions—for he would not change the joy which one of his spiritual children had given him for all the crowns of the world; the Master's cross, and life of unexampled industry and death of bitter woe, should move them. Nor let them forget the reward in store for them—all God's saints were blessed, but especially His ministers. In the annual report Mr. Spurgeon again showed that the main object of the institution was to turn out preachers rather than scholars; and it looked well for the credit of the College that applicants for admission had written from the Colonies, from the United States, and from Germany. At this time the College building was not erected, but was being anticipated as one of the provisions of the future which would give a great impetus to the work, and enable the tutors to admit men of superior class. To this date 253 men had been received, while 460 had received instruction in the evening classes. The College men had also been instrumental in erecting twenty-two new chapels; and efforts were being made in London alone to establish churches in eleven destitute districts. There were then seventy-eight students in course of training, and more than double that number in the evening classes. The annual tea and supper were given on Wednesday, March 25, when Mr. George Moore, of Bow Churchyard, presided, and in the most cordial way expressed the pleasure it afforded him to be present. The chairman continued:—

"From what I have seen and heard of the work of the College, I can say that the institution is worthy of your support. I have never attended any of your meetings before, but when I received the invitation on the present occasion, I could not help coming, although somewhat against my will, since I saw plainly enough that the hand of God was with you. I have never found any institution better conducted; everything is managed in as businesslike way as if the place was a commercial house. One thing I especially admire—namely, that my friend Mr. Spurgeon never got into debt. Perhaps the best feature about the place is the well-attended evening classes, which seem to me to form a kind of sieve for sifting the candidates for the College. I commend the education of the College, because it is so thoroughly practical, and because they take care first of all that the men shall be proper persons to enter the ministry. I believe that there are numbers of persons sent to Cambridge and Oxford as students for the ministry who have neither the call, nor the spirituality, nor fitness for the work—men that are as useless for the sacred office as the ploughmen of their parish."

Addresses were given by Mr. Spurgeon, Mr. James Spurgeon, and others, after which there followed three speeches which were long remembered by those who heard them. The great London merchant, whose life and character have been so well delineated by Mr. Smiles, was supported on this occasion by three eminent London preachers, the first to speak being Thomas Binney, of the Weigh-house Chapel, to whom something like an ovation was given by the company. After this distinguished man had got through the usual commonplaces about the pleasure it afforded him to be present, he continued:—

"I have a very high and hearty respect for Mr. Spurgeon. I have often wished when I have read the accounts of these meetings that Mr. Spurgeon had thought of asking me to be present; but he has never done so. I am here to-night because I have asked myself. My excellent friend, Mr. Colman, who is as good as his mustard, has told me that he had a ticket for the meeting, though he did not know, he said, that he should go. I recommended him to go, and promised that I would go with him. I wrote to Mr. Spurgeon and said that I would come if there was no prohibition, and instead of a prohibition I have received a very hearty welcome. I assure you that I am very glad to have heard what I have heard, and to have seen this evening, and to stand on the same platform with, a man whom I honour so much as Mr. Spurgeon. I did not always do so. I heard him once say many things that I did not like; but then I have heard Mr. Spurgeon himself say that he has made in his earlier sermons some extravagant assertions. I remember on leaving the chapel once saying to someone at the doors that I did not like it. As I went away I noticed someone following me pretty closely, and I turned round to him and said, 'Well, sir!' 'Well, sir!' replied the gentleman, 'I shall know you again.' So that even then Mr. Spurgeon had his defenders. I have frequently seen Mr. Spurgeon since then, and have frequently been edified by reading his sermons. The College I consider to be one of the wonders of this great metropolis. I was speaking to an archdeacon the other day, and his lady, who was a titled lady, said that she had heard a great deal of Mr. Spurgeon, and a great deal against him, and she was determined to hear him preach. She did so, and she said that she had liked him so well that she would never let anyone say a word against him again. I have known many a case of that kind. I hope the young men who will go from the institution will become very useful. I know, and Mr. Spurgeon knows, there are many breakers ahead. Mr. Spurgeon might multiply a certain class of men until they would be too numerous, and I hope, therefore, that the young men will not try to be mere imitators of Mr. Spurgeon. I know that the young men at Bristol imitated Robert Hall; and one day Mr. Hall spoke of one who so closely followed him that he even imitated the pain in his back. I heard of a young man who preached for a certain congregation, and who satisfied them, but he made so many pauses in his preaching that the people kindly remonstrated with him on the subject. 'Don't you like them?' said the young man; 'why, they are the great secret of Mr. Binney's popularity.' The worst is, such persons generally imitate those matters which they should never copy."

While congratulating Mr. Spurgeon on what the College had been enabled to effect, Dr. Brock, who spoke next, gave some advice to the students. The matter of theological education appeared to be a matter of great solicitude to him. What the pastor of Bloomsbury Chapel went on to say, showed that theologically he was in hearty accord with Mr. Spurgeon. There was a danger of the old theology being held at a discount; while intellect advanced, the old truths, such as were the proper basis of a preacher's acquirements, might be neglected. The students were thus urged to master well their message, to utter it intelligibly, and not in misty forms of speech. "Preach with all earnestness and simplicity of speech," it was added; "remembering that to those who believe the Gospel is their salvation, while those who believe it not will be lost." The pastor of Westminster, Mr. Samuel Martin, who followed, thought that of all Independents C. H. Spurgeon was the greatest; and he strongly urged the students to be themselves sanctified, and not imitators. It was at this meeting that a sum of £301 was given to Mr. Spurgeon as a first instalment towards the building fund of the Students' House at the Stock well Orphanage. The collection at the supper table amounted to £1,300, including £150 from George Moore.

National education had now become one of the main topics of public discussion, and to many the religious aspect presented some difficulties. As the discussion broadened and deepened, Mr. Spurgeon may probably have modified many of the opinions which he held at the opening of the controversy; but all along, he was supposed to represent the views of a large body of Nonconformists on this great question. At this time he thought that the divorcing of religion and secular teaching could not be prevented; and after all, the loss to the children who attended the majority of the national schools would be more imaginary than real. To part company with the Church Catechism would be a gain rather than a loss; and as the greater number of children might carry in a hollow tooth all the religion they had ever received from their teachers, the new arrangement would not very greatly redound to their loss. If the days were devoted to secular teaching, one or two evenings a week might be given to religious instruction. On April 14 the London Baptist Association held its quarterly meeting at Camden Road Chapel, when Mr. Spurgeon read a paper on "The Management of the Voice," and at the evening gave an impressive address. There was a discussion on the disestablishment of the Irish Church, a petition being adopted to Parliament in favour of Mr. Gladstone's measure. There were then about one hundred and eighty congregations having ministers belonging to the Pastors' College, and to all of these forms of petition for signature were sent by the President. On Monday evening, April 20, Exeter Hall was crowded, chiefly with young men, on the occasion of the annual meeting of the Young Men's Christian Association. Lord Shaftesbury was in the chair, and, though suffering somewhat from gout in one leg, Mr. Spurgeon gave an address. Dr. Miller, who was then vicar of Greenwich, also spoke, although he confessed to having received a letter from an ardent Churchman urging him not to sanction, by his presence, what was characterised as practically a Dissenters' society. This created some merriment, and when Mr. Spurgeon rose he was greeted with rounds of cheers several times repeated. He commenced by remarking that he had one leg to stand on, and only one, so that he would not keep them long. The Association was then shown to be worthy of support, because it believed in a creed—the creed of Scripture. It was a day in which men sneered at creeds; but he could not afford to lose even a fragment of the faith once delivered to the saints; and if the body of their religion were to go the soul would go also. "The silly kite, that thinks, because it is sailing so pleasantly in the air, that if the strings were cut it would pierce the very clouds, found, when the string was gone, its level on the ground; and so, I believe, it would be with religion." Then came cheers and laughter as the speaker referred to those who accepted the teachings of priestcraft until their brains were addled and their minds bewildered. While enforcing the teachings of the Bible they had no time to oppose mere tradition. Complimenting the young men on the catholicity of their Association, Mr. Spurgeon strongly urged them not to smother convictions in order to maintain peace. The preacher continued:—

"I think the truest love to the brethren is consistent with the greatest frankness. I do not think peace is always the most desirable, delightful, and healthy thing; but a good fight brings out the muscles and puts them into play. It is easy for people to talk about loving each other when they are at peace, but when they have stood up in a fair fight, and well pummelled each other, and have hit hard and well, then to profess love is perhaps the best proof they could give of their sincerity. I recommend the society because of its work—the work of soul-winning. I do so because I am a Conservative. I would have every man a Radical against error, but a most blessed Conservative in the truth. I have noticed, and perhaps you have done the same, that all heresy conies from those who do not work. Workers are not generally heterodox. If a man were no preacher he would be

sure to find out some heresy. There is no school for orthodoxy like the work of soul-winning. I strongly urge you, therefore, to increasing activity for Christ. You all have your conscientious differences; but it is when you are dealing with the sin around you that you feel they are one. This unity of feeling will cease when you are idle. The hoop that the boy is bowling in the streets will run till it stands still, and when you stand still you cease to do good." An old Romish legend was then brought in by way of illustrating the subject:—

"There was a monk in his cell who in his dream saw the Saviour. While full of the most transporting joys, he heard the ringing of the bell calling him to take his place at the gate to dole out the bread to the poor who came to the monastery. In the midst of such ineffable bliss it was hard for him to quit his cell, but duty compelled him, and so he went; but when he returned to his cell, after the hour had elapsed, he saw the same bright figure, and it said to him that it had returned to him because he had fulfilled his duty; but had he not done so He would not have returned to refresh him."

Finally, the young men were urged to get power from heaven—the power which came from God's Holy Spirit, and apart from which their influence would not be for good. Then came another picturesque monkish legend:—

"A priest was about to preach to his congregation, when the devil, hearing of it, went and forestalled him. The devil entered the pulpit and preached a sermon on hell that was most experimental and vivid; and when the priest entered the building he said to Satan, 'How could you draw such vivid pictures of hell, and warn men to flee from it and from their sins?' And the devil replied, 'Ah, you see, it did no harm; I had no unction, you know.' And so, had they no unction, all their appeals to their fellow-men would be of no avail." His attendance at this meeting showed how great was Mr. Spurgeon's solicitude for young men. Though he may not have undertaken another lecture in the winter courses, which appear at length to have been given up, he was ever glad of an opportunity of speaking to young men, or even of preaching to them at Exeter Hall on a Sunday evening.

Chapter 70: Spurgeon and the Irish Church

Chapter 70.

Spurgeon And The Irish Church

Mr. Gladstone's Resolutions—Meeting: at the Metropolitan Tabernacle—A Striking Scene—Great Speech by John Bright—Mr. Spurgeon's Letter.

As the year in which the question of the disestablishment of the Irish Church came finally before the public, 1868 was a time of considerable ecclesiastical excitement. The meetings for and against Mr. Gladstone's Resolutions, whether in London or the provinces, were of the most lively character—some were uproarious, a few may have been even riotous. To many the agitation seemed to savour of the beginning of the end of the Established Church as such in the British Isles; and while such a prospect was welcomed by a minority of Anglicans, as well as by the main body of Nonconformists, it signified to others the decline of Protestant ascendency in the British Empire. There was probably a class of seers who associated the controversy with the breaking up of old-world institutions, regarding it as the prelude to still greater convulsions and changes which were coming on. The theme could not be otherwise than of commanding interest, when the very foremost men of the age were the combatants. Spurgeon and John Bright, Gladstone and Earl Russell, were all on one side; and all of these spoke with the enthusiasm of men who felt sure that they were on the winning side. On April 19, Mr. Spurgeon preached at the Tabernacle from the words "He must reign," thus referring to the dominion of Christ as mentioned in 1Co 11:25. He enlarged at some length on the kingdom of the Saviour, which was to last for ever; and referred by the way to colossal empires which had passed away, their governments not having been based on truth. The preacher went on to say that it was undeniable that Napoleon had founded an empire, and founded it in a great degree upon justice, for he taught the lesson that old kings were not to expect to have their crowns upon their heads always; and he produced a code of laws which, for justice, had never been excelled. But after a while he failed; and it was said of him that at St. Helena he made use of this memorable remark: "My empire has passed away. I founded an empire on the sword, and it has failed; Jesus Christ has founded His empire on the law of love, and it will stand for ever and ever!" And so it would. Christ was the true Liberator of captive nations. No kingdom would ever rest until it rested upon Him, and nothing could possibly resist His onward triumphant march. The text was particularly comforting at the present time, when many were frightening themselves out of their wits by the bugbear that we were all going back to Roman Catholicism. He had not the slightest fear that any such result would ever come to pass, for Christ "must reign," and under the sway of His divine rule it was impossible, and would ever be impossible, for all the drivelling priests in the world to bring this country back again to the bondage of the Papacy. True it was that the Jesuits were creeping in, and equally true that a great many Protestants were alarmed at their approach; but the Gospel was not going to be trampled under foot by such means. Others, again, were alarmed lest the disestablishment of the Irish Church should be detrimental to Protestantism. But there was likewise no fear on that head; for the Church

of Jesus Christ would do well enough in Ireland without the aid of bayonets or policemen. It was not by means of the sword that the Gospel was to be preached, neither was it in any human arm that the Church of Christ was to confide. Changes, instead of preventing, would only be found instrumental in accomplishing the great purposes of the head of the Church; and, instead of indulging in fears and forebodings relative to Protestantism and the Gospel, if we believed that "Christ must reign," we should rest secure, satisfied that His reign must last until He had put all enemies under his feet.

After leaving Exeter Hall on the evening of April 20, Mr. Spurgeon's lameness developed into a painful attack of rheumatic gout, and he appears to have been absent from his pulpit for one Sunday. So far as the pastor himself was concerned, this illness could hardly have come at a more inopportune time; for on Wednesday evening, April 22, there took place at the Metropolitan Tabernacle what was characterised as "one of the most remarkable meetings ever held within any building in this country." The demonstration was got up by the National Reform Union, and so far succeeded that, for nearly an hour before the time of commencing, the building was crowded in every part, the aisles being filled, while thousands were outside unable to gain admission. The audience consisted almost entirely of men, and seemed to represent all classes. On the preacher's platform were several members of Parliament. The chair was occupied by John Bright, who declared that he had never in the whole course of his life stood before such a throng. Of course, such a patriot received an ovation. Professor Fawcett, who was afterwards to become the first blind Postmaster-General, was led on to the platform, and he also was vigorously applauded. One who was present remarks that "It would be impossible to describe in words the enthusiasm of the meeting, while the sight of seven thousand persons waving their hats and handkerchiefs was one not soon to be forgotten." The object of the meeting was to hear a lecture by Mr. Mason Jones on the subject of the Irish Church; but of course the chief attraction of the evening was a speech by the chairman. Next to that, the interest of the audience was centred on the pastor's letter to John Bright, which was read by Mr. J. A. Spurgeon:—

"Dear Sir,—I have all along hoped to be at our meeting to-night, but a sharp attack of rheumatic gout in the leg has made me a prisoner since Monday. I am most sorry for this, because with my whole heart and soul I would advocate the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church, and should like to have said my little word.

"It is in no spirit of opposition to the Irish clergy that I would urge upon the House of Commons to carry out the proposed resolutions, for I believe them, as a body, to be among the best of the episcopal clergy, and to hold evangelical truths most earnestly. But because they are the best of the clergy they should be the first to be favoured with the great blessing of disestablishment. If they were all Baptists I should be none the less, but all the more, earnest that they should at once be delivered from their present invidious position, and placed where all churches of Christ should be—viz., on the footing of freedom from State patronage and control. They are at present supported by payments which are not theirs by the will of the Irish nation; payments which effectually bar the door of their entrance into the Irish heart; payments which I believe to be hateful to God and injurious to themselves: therefore, because they are men in their own persons excellent and respectable, let it be the ceaseless object of their friends to set them where they need not incur such reproach or commit such injustice. They will only be called to do what some of us have for years found a pleasure and advantage in doing—viz., to trust to the noble spirit of

generosity which true religion is sure to evoke. They little know how grandly the giant of voluntaryism will draw the chariot when the pitiful State dwarf is dismissed.

"Our Lord's kingdom is not of this world. This truth is the corner-stone of our dissent, and we feel ourselves deeply interested in the present question, because the result of Mr. Gladstone's resolutions will be a step in the direction of freeing one of the churches from a worldly alliance which we hold to be in every case unscriptural and unhallowed. How a faith so spiritual as ours ever came to be the tool of the State—how the Church of God ever condescended to yield its liberties to earthly powers—is a mystery. To tear it from its too willing captivity is a task worthy of the Eternal Providence—a labour in which all good men should unite.

"The one point about which the dissenters of England have any fear, is one which I trust you will mention to-night. We fear lest any share of the Church property should be given to the Papists. To a man we should deprecate this. Bad as the present evil is, we would sooner let it alone than see Popery endowed with the national property. Not one single farthing ought any religious denomination receive, and the whole matter will be imperilled if those in power are not quite clear as to any douceurs to the Pope. We are not agitated by the dead horse of 'No Popery,' which knaves would raise that fools may be their instruments; but we are very determined that it never shall be said that, under guise of removing the grievances of Ireland, we made an exchange of endowed churches, and put down the Anglican to set up the Roman image.

"May you, dear sir, be sustained as the champion of the people, and as you have already lived to see many of the dreams of your youth to become realities, so may you survive to see the matters in question enrolled in history as triumphs of the right and the truth.—Yours, with profound respect, "C. H. Spurgeon."

"To John Bright, Esq., Chairman of Meeting.

Mr. Bright's speech was in his best style, and would have been still more effective if the audience had not yielded to the foolish custom of choking the great orator's utterances by their interrupting applause, almost before the words were well out of his mouth. The enthusiasm of the people perhaps reached its height when the erection of the Metropolitan Tabernacle itself was referred to as an illustration of the power of voluntaryism; and when it was emphatically declared that during the preceding three hundred years the Protestants of Ireland had probably not done so much for their religion as the members of that great building were doing week by week for the furtherance of the Gospel.

What was the chief advertised attraction of this meeting—i.e., the lecture—does not appear to have taken so well with the people; but then any man who had to follow John Bright and a characteristic letter by Spurgeon manifestly claimed sympathy as one who did not occupy vantage-ground. We find it remarked: "Mr. Mason Jones gave an address on the present position of the movement; the first portion was received with considerable impatience and cries of 'question;' and the chairman having reminded the speaker of the question, he devoted the rest of the time to its consideration, and received at the close a hearty cheer." The lecturer proposed a resolution which Professor Fawcett seconded in very good style; but he spoke too long, and the impatience of the audience at last found expression in cries of "time," and he sat down. When the resolution was put to the meeting, Mr. Bright asked that its acceptance might be signified by the

parliamentary method of all who agreed with it saying "Aye." The response was hearty and immediate, the only dissentient being a working tailor, who all through the proceedings maintained an heroic attitude of opposition. In the course of a brief speech, Mr. J. A. Spurgeon, speaking on account of himself, his brother, and the congregation, said some good things about Mr. Bright and the age of reform. He then referred to one or two things which had occurred in connection with the Metropolitan Tabernacle:—

"In regard to the Evangelical clergy, it is with pain and not with pleasure that I stand opposed to their position. As to any feeling of bigotry, I would say that in this building a clergyman has addressed a congregation, but so broad was the bosom of Mother Church that the clergyman's name had never been mentioned, in order that no disagreeable ecclesiastical proceedings might take place. As another illustration, I may mention that when the Pan-Anglican Synod was sitting, the Bishop of Ohio expressed a wish that he might speak in the Tabernacle, and I sent him word that we should be glad to see him or any other Church clergyman who might desire to come. If, then, any bigotry existed, it is not on our side, and if the battle of Popery has to be fought, it will lay with the brethren of the Church to come over to us and join us in fighting it." This action of Mr. Spurgeon on behalf of Mr. Gladstone and the disestablishment of the Irish Church had the effect of kindling much ill-feeling, similar to that which had characterised the Baptismal Regeneration controversy of four years previously. The Earl of Shaftesbury came in for some censure; for when the Metropolitan Tabernacle was to become the scene of a great anti-State Church demonstration it was held that the great philanthropist should not have stood on the same platform with Spurgeon at the young men's meeting at Exeter Hall. Being thus put on his defence, the Earl wrote a sententious letter to the leading organ of the Evangelical party:—

"Sir,—On Monday evening last I was on the same platform with the Rev. Mr. Spurgeon in Exeter Hall, "For this I have received a rebuke, and I shall, possibly, receive many more.

"May I, once for all, through your columns, give an answer retrospectively and prospectively to all such doubts and castigations?

"In the first place, I am a member of the Church of England, and by God's blessing I intend to continue so.

"Secondly, I shall do my best to maintain in full vigour the Established Church of this kingdom.

"Thirdly, although I do not concur in all Mr. Spurgeon's sentiments, nor always approve the language in which they are conveyed, I regard him as a man of great ability, of great earnestness, and doing a great work. And in these days of trouble, rebuke, and of blasphemy, I will, if requested, give the right of fellowship to him, and to every other who will preach Christ to the masses of our people.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant, "April 27, 1868.

"Shaftesbusy." When Lord Shaftesbury had such rebukes administered to him, it was to be expected that Mr. Spurgeon would be visited with still harsher censure. The bitterest memories of the comparatively recent dispute about the meaning of phrases in the Prayer Book were revived; and the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle was again reminded how much had been given by Evangelical Churchpeople to the building-fund of his great chapel. According to the leading Low

Church organ, Spurgeon had actually fallen, and great was his fall:—

"It has been painful enough to see his Tabernacle profaned for the purpose of 'hindering the truth' by attacks on our Evangelical clergy, but it is now to be lent as a place of political agitation, where he may revile at pleasure the compact ratified by two Parliaments at the Union of 1801. Thus he may stir up the passions of the multitude; but it will be against one of the bulwarks of Protestantism in a country where Popery is more rampant than in any other country in Europe, Spain itself hardly excepted. We think that Mr. Spurgeon, in his fall, descends to a lower depth than the ex-Premier, inasmuch as an evangelist of Christ's everlasting Gospel he is bound to discharge his hallowed mission under higher sanctions than the man of more worldly ambition, whose aim it appears to be to court popularity at any cost of official dignity or personal consistency."

While this din of battle was heard all around, Mr. Spurgeon's health was improving, and on Thursday, April 30, he had sufficiently recovered to attend at the second day's meeting of the Baptist Union' at Walworth Road Chapel. There was a discussion during the morning on the augmentation of ministers' incomes, and into this Mr. Spurgeon entered with great heartiness. He remarked that any plan was better than doing nothing. As pastors they might not be able to give up their principles for the sake of bread; but unless they gave their ministers bread they would not be able to hold their principles. It was then pointed out that there were only ten churches which were doing anything for the poorer brethren, and those were in London in association with the Baptist Fund., There was some uncertainty about new societies; at all events, the old ones should not be forgotten, and if new agencies were started they ought to work parallel with the old ones. The Church at the Tabernacle had given as much as £240 in one year to the Baptist Fund, and he hoped others would do more, for their fund ought to be ten times as strong as it was. It was thus hoped that all would take the matter into consideration and determine to do what they ought. Mr. Spurgeon then concluded: "There are some in London whose poverty is as great as that of ministers in agricultural districts and who cannot be assisted by the fund; it does not help any brother in London, although his poverty is aggravated by the fact that he has to live in sight of people of expensive habits. I hope something will be done, and at once; for while the grass grows the steed starves."

Meanwhile the great battle of the Irish Church was going on, and the combatants on either side showed more signs of temper than was always consistent with Christian charity. Some thought it showed some want of good taste when Mr. Spurgeon issued his tract, "A Fable for the Times." There was an engraving of a pig and a clergyman feeding out of one trough. The latter was dressed in full canonicals, while the sow had painted on her side a pope's mitre and the keys. This was to show that the Protestant and the Romish Churches in the Emerald Isle were feeding at the same table. Archdeacon Phillpotts had some of the popular preacher's smart sayings in his mind when he asked, "Did Mr. Spurgeon forget that there were few besides himself who had the talent to appear at once in the double character of apostle and buffoon?" The Rock compared this same "buffoon" to a skittle-sharper; and while efforts were also made to prove that the members of the Metropolitan Tabernacle were disagreed on the great question of the day, if not actually opposed to their pastor, the charge of ingratitude for the help accorded by Anglicans in paying for the Tabernacle was reiterated. It turned out, however, that the Church friend who had given most largely to the great enterprise had been, after all, more of a Nonconformist than a Churchman. Still more baseless was the notion that there was anything like disaffection towards their leader among

friends at the Tabernacle. If anyone acquainted with the facts had been asked to point out one congregation which was more united than others, and more devotedly loyal to the pastor, the Metropolitan Tabernacle would at once have been named. What Spurgeon desired was that the Irish Church should have more freedom, as he understood the term, and so become more of a missionary organisation in a Romish country. The pastor's admiration for Mr. Gladstone was such that he accorded the distinguished statesman his full sympathy. The newspaper attacks on the political leader were taken notice of; but it was not supposed that they would ever end in his discomfiture. It was rather thought that Sir Henry Wotton had Tory journalists in his eye when he said: "An ambassador is a man of virtue who lies abroad for the benefit of his country; and a news-writer is a man without virtue, who lies at home for his own profit."

Usually it was not Mr. Spurgeon's custom to reply to attacks and misrepresentations; but as the utterances of the leading Evangelical organ were being widely circulated by other newspapers, he thought it worth while to pen the following letter:—

"To the Editor of 'The Record.'

"Sir,—I have no complaints to make of your criticisms upon my language and conduct, both are doubtless more or less faulty; you have a right to criticise them, and I have pleasure in enduring your censures. Even when your remarks are most severe I do not feel aggrieved, for I am severe also. In the present conflict you conceive yourself to have great principles to defend, and you are bound to cut right and left at those who assail them. I also am conscientious in pushing forward principles which are dear to me, and I cheerfully accept the consequences of my advocacy. But I write you to-day because I cannot suppose that you would wilfully misrepresent any man, and because I would give you an opportunity to abstain in future from unfounded reflections upon me. I have spoken so severely about what I consider to be the anomalous position of the Evangelical party, and have so little guarded my expressions, that you have many fair points of attack and need not fight unfairly, which will be more to your discredit than to my injury, and, worse still, will lead the public to think that religions controversialists will condescend to mean things in order to overthrow an opponent—an impression which will be greatly injurious to our common evangelism.

"I allude to your scarcely dignified mention of the aid afforded by Churchmen in the erection of the Tabernacle. Now it may be, and I trust was, the fact that many Episcopalians gave small sums at collections towards that object, and to such I am still indebted; but, so far as our accounts show, there were no donations of any mentionable amount from any persons known to us as Episcopalians, with but one, or perhaps two exceptions, and those happen to be persons whose views upon the Irish Church are quite as much in harmony with ours as with yours. I am not ungrateful for the very minute aid which was thus accorded, but it is made to figure so largely in your journal and other kindred papers that I thought you must be labouring under some misapprehension. I should scarcely imagine that any man out of Hanwell would assert that I accepted the donations referred to with an implied contract that I was henceforth bound to the expression of opinions favourable to the Establishment. No sort of condition was appended to or implied in these kind but comparatively trifling gifts, or they would have been indignantly refused. I do not believe that any gentleman in the whole Episcopal body would be so little-minded as to offer a voluntary contribution to a member of another church and then twit him upon the reception of it. We Nonconformists, who have so few amongst us of the great and noble, and may not,

perhaps, presume to claim any great refinement of manners, would hardly like so greatly to demean ourselves, and therefore I suspect that this view of the subject has escaped you, and that upon second thoughts you will withdraw the allusion which you may have been led to make in a moment of natural irritation. A great question deserves to be handled a little more magnanimously by the organ of a great party.

"I must further trouble you for another moment. It has been insinuated, more or less plainly, that I had sinister motives in deprecating an attack upon the State Church in connection with the Bicentenary Celebration. Those who choose to think so after the following explanation may enjoy the pleasures of malignity undisturbed by me. I held, and still do hold, that the main body of the expelled Nonconformist divines were State Churchmen in their opinions, and would have remained perfectly content in the national Establishment if it had been moulded in their will. I did not, therefore, see how their expulsion could bear upon our views as anti-State Churchmen; and as I thought the public would believe that we were claiming these divines as on our side, I did not think it a fair mode of warfare. Happily those good men were driven out of the Establishment, as I heartily pray that all our Evangelical clergy may be if they will not secede voluntarily; but the expelled Puritans were not ecclesiastically dissenters of the modern school, nor does the weight of their testimony tell for the principles of the Liberation Society. I wish it did. This it was which held me back; and, I may add, there did not seem to me to be so much need at that time as there is now for the discussion of the position of the Evangelicals. Pardon me for observing that every year appears to some of us to add to the culpability of those who remain in fellowship with undisguised Romanists, and calls us more and more loudly to bear testimony against what seems to us an unhallowed union.

"One word more. The letter of Lord Shaftesbury is more calculated to soften asperities than your indulgences in them. If it be a great stretch of charity for Evangelical clergymen to appear with me on a platform where we meet on the common ground of service to philanthropy, the Gospel, and the Redeemer's cause, how much more charity, with my view of their position, must I require to be found in such a connection? After all that has been said severely, and perhaps angrily, on either side, Evangelical Christians may well co-operate in holy service, since with all our conflicting views we alike love the Gospel and hate Popery, and hope to meet in the same heaven.

"I cannot expect you to insert this; but if you will oblige me by so doing, I shall—though determinately opposed to your views in many respects—remain, yours respectfully, "C. H. Spurgeon."

"Clapham, May 4, 1868. On Tuesday, May 5, Mr. Spurgeon attended the Triennial Conference of the Liberation Society at the Cannon Street Hotel, and so continued to give offence to the section of which the Evangelical Church newspaper was the ablest representative. While inserting his letter, The Record reminded the great preacher that in early days, when others of his own denomination had looked coldly upon him, he had been spoken well of in its columns. Then a venerable clergyman had for long supplied Spurgeon with a text with which to begin each year. It was still believed, moreover, that the contributions of Church people had greatly helped to swell the large collections at the Tabernacle. In those days it was customary to speak of Spurgeon as the modern Whitefield, and the great meeting-house at Newington was looked upon as a place erected somewhat after the pattern of the eighteenth-century Evangelist's Tabernacle at

Moorfields. Hence, the people who belonged to the same church as Whitefield professed to be greatly aggrieved when the Metropolitan Tabernacle was "used as an arena in which, at a time of great public agitation, Mr. Bright or other political demagogues should harangue an assembly of excited politicians."

Notwithstanding such opinions, and much beside which was even less complimentary, Mr. Spurgeon was the observed of all observers among the five hundred representatives from all parts of. the country who assembled in conference at the opening of May. He was at this time in hearty accord with the aims of the Liberation Society. That Society was founded in 1844 as the British Anti-State Church Association, but in 1853 it was re-named the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control. In the Report presented to the meeting the Irish Church was of course the main topic; and in seconding the resolution, which Mr. Duncan M'Laren, M.P., had moved—expressive of satisfaction at the attitude of Parliament and admiration for Mr. Gladstone—Spurgeon stirred the enthusiasm of all present.

He remarked that he felt like one who had come on the field late in the day; still, their battle of Waterloo was drawing to a close, and even those who came in at the end, like Blucher, might after all render some help and wear some of the laurels. Then came a retrospect:—

"Some gentlemen present, who have been members of the Society from its commencement, must lately have felt that they had realised the words of the Lord which He sent by His prophet: 'I will work a work in your day which ye would not believe even if a man were to say it unto you.' When they woke up one fine morning and found that Mr. Gladstone had moved his resolutions, they must have looked to their almanacks to see whether they had not been, like the famous Ephesian sleepers, sleeping for fifty years at the least; and when they really found that they had been awake, their first spontaneous impression must have been to cast themselves on their knees before the Eternal Providence, and thank Him for what had been done."

Apart from such things, or the resolutions, the Society had great power in the land. The pastor continued:—

"It was said of Richard Cœur de Lion that his exploits became so famous that the Saracen mothers threatened their naughty children that they would give them over to him. So, I have frequently seen in the Ritualist prints the threat to the Evangelical infants, that if they do not behave themselves they will certainly be handed over to that dreadful Liberation Society, whose teeth are iron, and whose stomach is as an iron cauldron, and to be handed over to whose tender mercies is analogous to being received into the infernal regions themselves. The success which the Society has achieved is due to the purity of its principles and the wonderful skill with which it has been conducted. You may congratulate yourselves on the position you have attained; but I think it is very probable that there may be considerable delay before the matter now in hand is actually carried out. You do not disguise, whatever others may do, the object you have in view, which is the disestablishment of all churches; and I thank God that the conductors of that Society have never been reticent about what they intend to do. Having avowed their intentions, they can go on in the straightforward course of honesty; and they may depend upon it that, in the long run, that man will succeed who scorns policy and follows principle."

Mr. Spurgeon went on to say that if he were a member of the Established Church he would recommend the members of that church to close the question as soon as possible. The proposals of Mr. Gladstone were quite generous enough. He then condemned the action of the Irish Church in the past in strong terms. He was against all Church Establishments; but while leniency was now counselled, the day of compromise might soon be past. He wished he could be eloquent once in his life. If they differed from such a man as Mr. Gladstone they still respected him, because they believed him to be honest and straightforward, and above all mere tricks of policy. In response to an invitation the audience gave three cheers for the statesman, and Mr. Spurgeon proceeded to pass a glowing eulogy on Mr. Gladstone:—

"The point upon which Mr. Gladstone is so constantly attacked only provokes our laughter. It was said, 'Oh, but he has such an irritable temper.' That Mr. Gladstone has a temper is a mercy for us all. A man who has no principles, but can veer round with every wind, might well put on a placid smile and never have a temper; but a man of principle must be angry against everything that is shifty and tricky. I have heard of people who are as easy as old shoes, and such people are generally worth about as much. We have heard enough of coming into the House of Commons with a sprig in one's mouth, and of gentlemen asserting that they do not feel a weight of responsibility when they really ought to feel it, considering that they have the affairs of a nation upon them. I consider that Mr, Gladstone does regulate his temper exceedingly well, considering the wonderful irritation he has to endure; and the possession of such a temper, so far from being wrong, is perhaps one of the qualifications for the position he now occupies. I take Mr. Gladstone, for all in all, as being one of the noble Englishmen alive, and hope that God will long support him. The fight which we have before us will be a long one, for the intense stupidity of a certain party in the nation will require a long time to be dealt with; but I hope the day will come when everything like Episcopal, or even Protestant, ascendancy will be cast to the winds, and the whole work of the Society will fee done in the name of God and of truth."

It was pointed out that the one cry of the next election would have to be "Religious Equality," and he even asked teetotal enthusiasts to postpone their measures till the great question of the Irish Church was settled, feeling sure that lesser matters could then be successfully brought forward. Even as regarded Sunday closing, Mr. Spurgeon's advice was, "Emancipate a people who could keep the Sunday," before the question was fully entered upon. All ministers present were urged to indoctrinate their people with right principles, and to teach them that it was their duty to record their votes in the coming election in the name of Christ and His truth. In conclusion, the value of the voluntary principle was pointed out, while a better day for the Church and the country was foreseen:—

"Specially is it the duty of all to vindicate the voluntary principle which you profess. Voluntaryism may not have done all it can or should do; but one of the reasons for this is that the people who practise it are burdened with the incubus of having to support the ministers of the State Church. One of my two deacons has told me this morning that he has to pay £180 a year in tithes of two parishes, and that there is a poor man in his employment, who is a Primitive Methodist, who is acknowledged by Church people themselves to do more good than the two clergymen whom the master helps to support. I hope that you will keep the voluntary principle going with greater earnestness than ever you have done before. I believe there is a bright and glorious future now dawning, and I hope you will live to meet and sing Hallelujahs of praise to God, when there shall

be not only a free Church in a free State, but a Church that is really a Church, because it owns Christ for its head, follows Christ's teachings, carries those teachings out in Christ's spirit, and scorns to tamper with the kings and princes of the world." For many reasons this was considered to be a red-letter day; and the victory as regarded the Irish Church Establishment was not many months distant. Nonconformists and Anglicans seemed to be fairly matched against each other in this warfare; but when the noise of controversy rose highest, then did it become most painfully apparent that another war relating to practice and theological belief was raging inside the Church itself. A new penny weekly evangelical organ had just been commenced, and a High Church contemporary referred to "the nauseous petroleum that flows from The Rock." In accepting the compliment the new journal quietly remarked, "It is the light which our petroleum sheds, we fear, which hurts the blinking eyes of these Church owls."

Chapter 71: Breakfasting With Congregationalists The Stockwell Orphanage

Chapter 71.

Breakfasting With Congregationalists The Stockwell Orphanage

Spurgeon not fitted for Controversy—Breakfast with the Congregational Union—Address on Christian Unity—Mr. Cuff's Reminiscence.

The determined battle of the Irish Church, which was now being fought without signs of yielding or compromise on either side, was pleasantly relieved by intervals of catholic service, in which our preacher always showed to best advantage. In point of fact Spurgeon was not formed for controversy; he was most effective in opposing error when he simply proclaimed the truth. It was always felt by his best friends that such a man was given by God to the Church at large rather than to one denomination; and the young pastor himself was never happier than when he was surrounded by a gathering of those who, according to Scriptural phrase, loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. There was a mistake somewhere when anything happened to break this harmony. The special services referred to, in which Mr. Spurgeon engaged, were on behalf of young men; and then, on one delightful occasion, he breakfasted with the Congregational Union at Myddleton Hall, Islington. A sermon, "A Young Man's Vision," being founded on Acts 2:17, "Your young men shall see visions," was given at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on April 16 on behalf of the Young Men's Association in aid of the Baptist Missionary Society. On Wednesday evening, May 13, a discourse of a similar kind—"Unto you, young men," 1Jn 2:14—was given at Westminster Chapel, being the annual sermon to young men in connection with the London Missionary Society. The address to the Young Men's Christian Association at Exeter Hall has already been referred to.

Mr. Spurgeon's breakfasting with the Congregational Union, when be gave an address on "Christian Unity," was another characteristic episode of this period. The President of the Union for 1868 was Dr. Alexander Raleigh, and in accordance with a custom which certain of his predecessors had found to be productive of happy results, the President gave a breakfast to ministers and delegates on Saturday, May 16, about three hundred guests attending. After one or two leading men, such as Mr. Newman Hall of Surrey Chapel and Mr. J. Kelly of Liverpool, had spoken, Mr. Spurgeon, who was really the guest of the occasion, was greeted with deafening acclamation. It was, of course, a graceful act on the part of Dr. Raleigh to invite the most prominent Baptist preacher of his time to speak to a company of Independents on "Unity;" but while the speaker realised this, there was something else which had touched his heart—the event which had led to the invitation being given. On a certain Sunday morning in the previous year, when Mr. Spurgeon was at the Agricultural Hall, Dr. Raleigh had closed his own chapel in order to be present. Mr. Spurgeon thought that even the Americans could not have surpassed that in the department of Christian fraternity. That led to the invitation to breakfast being given, and having

come, he thought he had an audience who could bear plain speaking. He continued:—

"If I have a man's friendship at all, I will only have it on the terms that he will allow me every now and then to cudgel him, on the principle that he should also cudgel me; which reminds me of Robin Hood, who admitted no man into his cave until he had first beaten him with a sound oak cudgel. I think these are times in which we must all speak out what we believe; and of course we all have our own ways of speaking it. It must not be said, 'You shall be silent on that point and not speak upon the other;' but, 'You shall speak, each one of you, just as you please and if some of you are a little ill-mannered, and cannot speak as well as others, yet you shall be borne with and pitied, but you shall afterwards be forgiven.' I think the time has gone for all the palavering and speaking of sweet things which seems so necessary for admission into the Evangelical Alliance, against which I say nothing, only this, that the moment I for one felt it my duty to speak out on a certain matter I received at once a letter from the secretary, spying that as a Christian and a gentleman I was bound to retire, and I did so of course. I think it is possible, however, among ourselves for us to differ, and differ very widely, and to have each our own say, and yet to feel the most intense respect for each other after all. I shall, if I remain in the humour I am now in, with all my might oppose anything like the absorption of our denomination into yours. I shall most earnestly assist anything that looks like the uniting of us in close bonds for common action. Anything that serves that end shall have my hearty sympathy; and you will not think any the less of me for saying what I have just said, I am sure. If I am wrong it is my misfortune as well as my fault. I shall be drifted down the stream of time, and all these wrong things do generally get right at last. None of us can stand against the current of right after all. It sets so very strongly that if we get opinions and prejudices, if they are right and true, of course they will last for ever; but if they are not true it will prove them to be wrong, and if we do not give in they will carry us with them, and leave us on some bank where we shall be prevented from doing mischief, or else drift us away into some 'quiet resting-places.' These gatherings, even to eat bread, are, I am sure, amongst the most salutary institutions of our Christian economy. It does a man a world of good to eat bread with a brother Christian. Even the mere eating and drinking has more in it than we sometimes imagine. It is not altogether a carnal thing. It is remarkable that our Saviour should have chosen a meal as one of the memorials of Himself, and it is not altogether without suggestiveness. Sometimes the meal may be a great means of promoting brotherhood, and I believe our missionaries very often miss their way through not accepting more the hospitality of Eastern people, and casting themselves more entirely upon them; for when you eat a man's salt and are received into his house, you may rest assured that you have got the nearest way into his heart. I am sure that brethren coming up from the country, younger ministers, must have derived much good during this week from meeting with those who are labouring and who are fighting the battle in more prominent places than themselves. Look into people's faces, my brother. There is more to see in a man's face, perhaps, than in any book in your library; and when our brethren know that those who are supposed to be very successful have to struggle under the same difficulties, and are the subjects of the same depression of spirits, and have to resort to the same grace for strength, and to adopt the same means for recruiting their spiritual energies, the young and inexperienced brethren go away thinking that after all the Master has not dealt with them hardly in not putting them into the front of the battle as He has the others." The ministers were then urged to strive earnestly after an increase of spiritual power, and to utilise that power more in the churches. Mr. Spurgeon was then more of a politician than he was in after days, and he spoke now as "a political Dissenter,"

despised as that genus might be by many of their ecclesiastical opponents. "We ought just now to be political," he said. "This is a time when the battle must be fought out. But we must not let that detract for one single moment from our earnest attention to our spiritual condition; for all the real power we have in the political will emanate from the spiritual." Their holy life, and the patience with which they bore with the injustice of a dominant Church, would be their power. It was that which had brought about the progress in which they all rejoiced, and that power needed to be maintained. Preachers should be more deeply spiritual, seeking to preach the Word with greater power, and they should see that their people did not flag, or the hour of triumph would really be a time of sorriest defeat. Then came a plea for prayer-meetings:—

"We must keep up our people's prayerfulness above all other things. The prayer-meeting is an institution which is not regarded by all ministers as being so eminent as it should be, for it is the engine-house, outside the cotton-mill, where the power is that works all the spinning-jennies in the mill. 'Only a prayer-meeting,' say some; but it is the prayer-meeting which will supply force for all the agencies of the Church, from the Sabbath-school up to the ministry itself. In a pass in Switzerland there is an immense stone or rock, and the driver told me that the devil carried it there. He was going along with it one bright morning under his arm—I do not know what he was going to do with it—but an old lady going by crossed herself and offered a prayer, and he was obliged to drop it. There has been many a big stone dropped as the result of an old lady's prayer.

'Satan trembles when he sees The weakest saint upon his knees.'

Then we must seek to utilise our power well when we get it. I wonder whether it would be tolerated to say to our friends that we do not all of us in the government of our churches utilise the power we have?"

Something was next said about the church officers at the Tabernacle, which gave an interesting insight into the manner of managing that great congregation. Mr. Spurgeon had a high opinion of the value of good deacons, notwithstanding many representations to the contrary; but in his own exceptional case he had found it necessary to supplement this order of helpers by others who were called elders. His own notion was that deacons should be men of good business ability, and as they were the more prominent in office, taking the lead in various enterprises, it might be quite as well if they were the more wealthy. Mr. Spurgeon then showed how the eldership might be turned to advantage:—

"There is a considerable number of men in our churches who are very spiritual, men quite fit to visit the sick, to see inquirers, and to attend generally to the work of the church, who might be immensely useful if you put them in office, who probably would otherwise never associate with your deacons, being men of a somewhat different class, but who would be greatly useful if they were made officers. I do not suggest that as an alteration, but I do say of it that it has been the saving of the Church over which I preside, and that if it had not been for the eldership we must have gone to pieces years ago. They meet in their different sessions. The deacons attend to the finances, the elders to the truly spiritual things. I preside over both these courts, and we never allow one to interfere with the other. We have found that We have brought out many in the church who, perhaps, would have been unruly or sowers of dissension if we had not employed them; but who, having been put in office, have grown and expanded and become first-class men, and have helped us to carry on our vast church with something like order. Let it be a rule that there shall not

be a single young man or young woman in the Church unemployed. We must bring out every single talent that God has committed to any one of His people." The subject of religious education was then touched upon; not, however, in the sense of getting more scholars, or of founding more schools, but rather of making an effort to keep lads and lasses after they have left the school. In what were called catechumen classes even elderly persons were still content to be taught, and they were taught to some advantage. As Mr. Spurgeon said:—

"We have one class of between seven and eight hundred women, and classes of men of the same kind, who become little churches inside the church, and get into methods of self-government and self-education, and become themselves workers again in all sorts of directions, making the classes the centres of their operations. I am afraid we have not quite got 'the missing link' between the Sabbath-school and the church, unless we have looked carefully after that class who are just between the church and the school. Of course Bible-classes are exceedingly useful, and could not be done without, but still a minister cannot carry on a Bible-class that would be sufficiently large to comprehend all these."

Then followed some references to the scheme of national education which seemed to be coming on; and as the schools would be secular it would be advisable to have a supplementary system for the teaching of religion, "which the Irishman described as 'having Sunday-school three days a week.'" Next came the question of denominational extension generally:—

"There ought to be a distinct invasion by us. We must not be satisfied with building old chapels over again. However, that has been got through, I hope, and now is the time for an advance. There ought not to be a single town or village, or even hamlet, that shall be unoccupied by these two denominations. We must resolve, as Christian ministers, to be willing to part with our members. The true way for a church to increase is to be willing to dimmish. We know that in the body the centre must be kept strong. Just so; but if the heart stores up its blood and gives none out the whole body will expire. But the heart becomes strong as much by its pumping out as by its pumping in. So with your churches. God always rewards generosity of spirit in Christian ministers with regard to their churches. If they can part with the valuable deacon or the excellent Sabbath-school superintendent, and that bevy of excellent ladies who contributed so much, God has secret methods of reparation. It is true that He recruits the body, and whatever it casts off is sure, by some secret process of His Holy Spirit, to come back again. We must increase. In God's name we shall increase. We have got the truth of God. We have got the right policy. Our system of congregational churches is the most workable of all systems. It is the most adapted for mission purposes, and we must prove it to be so. It will be of no use to laud ourselves generally all the way round upon our being Congregationalists; but we must prove the wisdom of the entire system by working it thoroughly out, and saturating this kingdom with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. None of us ought to be discouraged, I think, though we are all of us inclined to be so, because things go not as we would have them. I suppose when we prosper most we still lament that we have not more from God, and do not do more for God. When our sermon has been most blessed we toss to and fro upon our bed, and groan before God that we have not gone deeper into the root of the subject and pierced more thoroughly into the core of our people's souls. I am not sure that the habit of getting downcast and complaining to one's self is altogether a good one. 'The joy of the Lord is your strength.' It is delightful at Venice to hear the gondoliers singing as they row. Let us serve the Lord with gladness. We ought to tug at the par and sing at the same time. Stopping

near a lake in Italy one Monday morning I heard the thundering of the cannon from various parts of the coast; and by-and-bye, when I went down to the beach and looked around, I observed that in the middle of the lake there stood an island on which was the cathedral. From every quarter of the coast of the lake, around which small towns were dotted, I saw white boats coming. They looked very beautiful indeed. There was a procession of boats with a big cross in front, and all converging to one centre; and as the oars kept time with each other the people on the boats all sang the same chant, which was rather monotonous, it is true, but still it was exceedingly musical in its rhythm, as they came nearer, and nearer, and nearer, all to meet around the island and then to march up to the shrine to worship. I thought it was very like the entire Christian Church—various bodies of Christians coming from various quarters of this great sea of providence—rowing and singing, and hoping all to meet in the one great church above, where they shall worship God, even the Father."

It was on this occasion that Mr. Spurgeon advocated the formation of a General Nonconformist Alliance—a body which would represent the united action of all Dissenters. One good result would be the production of a better literature on the principles of Nonconformity. It was thought that there ought to be a constant issue of first-rate tracts and pamphlets; for as it was they had to go a long way back before they came to any such of the standard sort. "I wish some such union could be formed," said he, and then he proceeded to give a parting word to his brethren in the faith in his own characteristic way:—

"Now, my brethren, my heartiest fraternity is with you; and I am sure I might speak, though I am not authorised to do so, in the name of the whole Baptist body, and say that we rejoice in your success. We wish that you may be more and. more abundant; we pray that you may go from strength to strength; and we always look upon you as our next of kin, our natural allies, and those who have always rendered to us the greatest kindness and fraternal charity. I again thank; Dr. Raleigh for the opportunity of being here. He wrote me a very pressing letter, as if he thought that I should not like to come. I am delighted to meet with such brethren as are around me. Till we get to heaven it may be we shall never have an opportunity of meeting with brethren who have served the Master better, and who deserve more our love, than the brethren who are here this morning."

Among the pleasant anniversaries of June, 1868, was that of Cornwall Road Chapel, Bayswater. Mr. Spurgeon preached in the morning, and then followed a dinner, at which one proposed the health of the Queen, and another that of the preacher of the day. In responding to this, Mr. Spurgeon referred to the generous feeling evinced by the Church in giving him what he might consider to be an inestimable boon—viz., the services, of his brother. He said that he believed it would be found this year that the increase to their Church at the Tabernacle had been upwards of six hundred, which was probably the largest number ever added to a Christian Church, since Pentecostal days, in the course of twelve months. He attributed it very greatly to the way in which his brother had looked up the members of the Church, and had visited cases which it was simply impossible that he could attend to. He hoped that in the providence of God the Church that had given him so good a helper would be abundantly rewarded.

Allusions were then made to Mr. Gladstone, the Irish Church, and to Bishop Wilberforce, who had mentioned Spurgeon in the House of Lords. Of the Bishop something more will presently be said. Alluding to the Irish and English Churches, Mr. Spurgeon went on to say that perhaps they might even see the two Establishments, which were being put together by the Erastians, treated in the

same way as was now proposed only for one of the churches. The Humpty-Dumpty of the State Church had been set upon a wall, and Humpty-Dumpty had had a great fall; such a fall that all the king's horses and all the king's men could not set Humpty-Dumpty up again. This was the season for open-air services in which, when the weather favoured him, he still found great delight. Mr. Cuff, of the Shoreditch Tabernacle, who has already supplied some reminiscences of Spurgeon as a field-preacher, sends the following sketch of one of these pleasant meetings at which he was present:—"The next time I heard Mr. Spurgeon preach in the open air was at Stowmarket in the year 1868. He came down to preach for the Suffolk Benevolent Society, and preached in the morning in the Congregational Chapel to a crowded house. It was a truly wonderful sermon.

"In the evening the service was held out of doors because there was no place large enough for the crowd. Good Mr. Manning Prentice threw open to the public his lovely grounds. A most picturesque place was chosen for the service. It was a sort of lovely dell—long, narrow, sloping down one way, and gracefully tapered up the other to a kind of semicircle end. Beautiful shrubs and evergreens covered the banks on either side. From every bush, in every tree, between every shrub, there peered eager faces of all classes and conditions of men. There was a low platform at the bottom of this dell, and there Mr. Spurgeon stood, with the crowd all rising gradually above him like a strange and beautiful amphitheatre. He was quite himself, and I know he felt happy in his subject. His text was Isa 53:5, 'With his stripes we are healed.' Oh, what a Gospel sermon it was! It stands to-day a model for open-air preachers. It seems to meet every case. The title of the subject is, in Mr. Spurgeon's own words, 'The Universal Remedy.' That service was a weird, wonderful, never-to-be-forgotten scene."

Chapter 72: A Testimonial—Spurgeon and the House of Lords

Chapter 72.

A Testimonial.—Spurgeon And The House Of Lords

Whit-Monday at the Orphanage—Dr. Binney's Speech—Stone-laying Ceremonies—References to Spurgeon in the House of Lords—Speech of Bishop Wilberforce—Opinions of the Press—Spurgeon's Reply.

Monday, June 1, 1868, being Whit-Monday, was another high day with the founders of the Stockwell Orphanage; for it was then that what was called a Testimonial was presented to Mr. Spurgeon by the Baptist churches. This consisted of the cost of two orphans' homes, the memorial-stones of which were laid on the day named. The avenue leading from the Clapham Road was decorated as became the occasion, while the grounds, in which between three and four thousand persons assembled, also presented a holiday appearance.

Dr. Binney presided at the afternoon meeting. From Mr. Spurgeon's statement it appeared that a sum of close upon £30,000 had been subscribed, and that £3,400 additional would be required to complete the whole of the boys' buildings. Dr. Raleigh, Dr. Binney, and others gave addresses, and the then famous pastor of the King's Weigh-house Chapel referred to the criticisms to which Spurgeon had been subjected:—

"Mr. Spurgeon does not look any the worse for all the criticism he has received. I myself have been at one time of my life the best blackguarded man in London. I never took up a newspaper or a magazine without finding some abuse of me in it. And when Mr. Spurgeon lives to be like myself, who am now somewhere between seventy and a hundred years of age, he will not appear to be personally any the worse for all the abuse he has met with."

Mr. Aldis of Reading, who laid one of the memorial-stones, had formerly been associated with friends in Southwark, and understood all about the old days when Spurgeon commenced work in London. In the course of a brief address some interesting reminiscences were given, e.g.:—

"I am glad to be with you. All along I have felt great esteem for Mr. Spurgeon. I had something to do with promoting his way to New Park Street Chapel. I never heard such an eloquent discourse from him in my life as I heard when he addressed some Sunday-school children on my first visit to London. I thank God for all that God has done for him, and I hope that all that has been done will be but a beginning to what shall follow. The most splendid address I ever heard in my life I heard from Mr. Spurgeon in connection with the Southwark branch of the Young Men's Christian Association. At the close of that address, a very godly man came to me and asked me to go aside into an adjoining small room. I did so. The man said, 'You do not know me, but I know you, sir. Could you not constitute a little meeting for prayer on behalf of Mr. Spurgeon?' I asked, 'Why do you want a special prayer-meeting organised for so special a purpose?' The good man replied, 'Because, sir, I think Mr. Spurgeon to be a man of great talents, and is exposed to great

temptations.' At the time I felt indignant that my brother should be marked out as a greater sinner than others. But I have altered my opinion since then, not because I have changed my opinion as to Mr. Spurgeon, but because I more greatly value prayer. I do not know how much my honoured friend owes to the prayers that have been put up to God for him." The stone of the second house was laid by Mr. A. B. Goodall. As "Father" Olney, the senior deacon, was able to give reminiscences of the church extending over a period of sixty years, his address was of more than passing interest. He came to London in 1808; two years later he joined the congregation at Carter Lane, and he had witnessed the death of Dr. Rippon. This veteran had been a deacon since the infancy of Mr. Spurgeon. The tea which followed was an occasion long remembered. One friend lent a great steam-engine in which to boil the water, besides giving £5 to the general expenses. Mr. Spurgeon himself paid for the decorations. The age of wonders had evidently commenced as regarded the Orphanage commissariat department. "Upwards of a ton of bread and butter was cut up by a machine, and judging from some complainers, there were not a few horse-leeches' daughters who asked for more. The arrangements evidently occupied many hours, and we were not surprised to hear that the deacons had been engaged on the grounds from three o'clock in the morning, when the stars were shining, up to the hour of opening the grounds, in preparing for the visitors."

Mr. Aldis presided at the great open-air meeting of the evening, and Mr. J. T. Wigner presented Mr. Spurgeon with a bag containing two hundred new sovereigns, a cheque for £1,000, and an address engrossed on vellum. These came from 460 Baptist churches. In reply, Mr. Spurgeon said it was not often difficult for him to speak, but he experienced some difficulty on this occasion. After thanking every church and every individual, the President of the new institution went on to say:—

"Something has been said in the course of the day about the form the testimonial has taken. It could not have been a better one. If we make a testimonial to a soldier, it is generally a sword that he may use in his work; and I, as a soldier engaged in my work, will use the money you have now given me, which is the best possible sword, to do still more of that particular kind of work in which I am engaged. There is no earthly requirement that I myself personally need. God has blessed me with an abundance of everything that wealth can furnish for my own necessities, and therefore I am not hungry after more earthly goods for myself, but I am beyond measure greedy on behalf of God's cause. If I had received the gift from my friends at the Tabernacle I would not have been so much surprised, for I know their love for me. It does not come from them at all, but from the Baptist churches throughout the country. I did not know that they cared much for me. I have been reminded this day of times gone by when my room was better esteemed than my company. It has been my misfortune to be put into a peculiar position. I have often been suspected of sinister designs. A little time ago I was talking to a brother who honestly told me the reasons why he used to dislike me. He said he was afraid, for one reason, that I was going to start a new denomination. 'Well,' I replied, 'I could have done it had I liked—could I not?' 'Undoubtedly,' was the answer, 'and many would have followed you.' 'Well, but I did not do it.' The thought of doing such a thing might have been pleasing to human flesh, but I consider there are sects enough without making another. Then another reason why my friend had disliked me was because he was afraid I was going to eat the vitals out of the denomination. Now I have a band of young men around me of whom I am proud. They have built more chapels than the others have done. But the thought of starting a new denomination, if ever it entered my head, was resisted as a temptation at once. Well, let all these

things be bygones, and buried in oblivion. I am a Baptist by conviction, and I look upon the Baptist Church as the old Catholic Apostolic Church."

Mr. Spurgeon went on to say that he was not born in the Church of which he was a member. At an early age he marked out a course for himself; and as it had been necessary for men to rise up to strike out forms and ceremonies from other churches, so, it was hoped, that if ever Baptists were eaten up by forms and ceremonies, God would raise someone up to strike down mere routine. As Paul was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, so Spurgeon confessed to being a Baptist of the Baptists. But while he loved his own denomination with all his heart and soul and strength, as well as his neighbour as himself, he did not ignore others; he wished to hold out the right hand of fellowship to all. No man was to be accused of showing disrespect to women in general because he loved his own wife best. There was a great work before them as a denomination; they loved the work in which they were specially engaged; but still he thought there had been an excess of conscientiousness, which had degenerated into bickering. In speaking of the great work in the future, he referred again to the question of the day—the Irish Church, as a battle in which go-betweens would be swept away. A hand-to-hand fight with Romanism was coming on:—

"A person wrote to me the other day stating he was surprised that I, as a Baptist and Nonconformist, was on the side of the Roman Catholic3, in taking part in the disestablishment of the Irish Church. I wonder how long that man's ears must be. I wonder how it is that he failed to see that by the disestablishment of a Church that is the aider and abettor of Romanism, the general body of Protestants would be brought face to face with Roman Catholicism, on superior grounds of reason and right, and that Protestantism would be strengthened. But whilst it is our duty to oppose error, we have no right to commit an injustice. If I saw a man knocked down in the street and robbed, I would help him whether he was a Protestant or a Catholic; and as I believe that the Irish Church is an injustice to nine-tenths of the Irish people, so I would relieve them of that injustice; but Martin Luther himself did not love Protestantism and the doctrine of justification by faith more than I do. I hope, therefore, that as a body we shall keep together. We do not know what God has in store for us."

Then came some reminiscences of early days, which excited great interest and some merriment:—

"I am a Baptist from conviction, and became one through being sent to a Church of England school. In asking me my catechism they asked me the usual question, 'What is your name?' and I replied, 'Spurgeon.' When they asked me my Christian name I said I hadn't got one, for I was not a Christian. They told me I had the name my godfather and godmother gave me; but I replied I had no godfather nor godmother. They then said that I had not been baptised rightly; but I replied I was sure I had, as my grandfather christened mo in the big china basin in the back parlour, and as he had done lots before he must have known how to do it properly. I did not know at the time that there were any other people in the world who were Baptists besides myself, and it gave me great joy when I found others held similar opinions to those which my early thoughts ripened into. You must not be surprised, therefore, if I do fail to see the usefulness of those old-fashioned proprieties which have belonged to you, but have never grown up with me." The various agencies in connection with the Metropolitan Tabernacle continued to prosper. When the almshouses were built a day-school for boys was attached and proved an admirable success. The annual meeting of

the Colportage Association, which had now been on trial about two years, showed that that enterprise was destined to extend in England no less than in Scotland. Reports which came in from men educated in the College were also highly encouraging. On Monday, June 29, Spurgeon was the subject of a speech by Bishop Wilberforce in the House of Lords, and, as was to be expected, the Bishop's deliverance attracted general attention. The speaker had been greatly chagrined by reading the letter addressed to John Bright which Mr. Spurgeon had written on the disestablishment of the Irish Church. The Bishop spoke as follows, and his speech was repeatedly cheered, and at times provoked much laughter:—

"The argument of voluntaryism is a very favourite one; and a very remarkable statement has recently been made on this subject, to which I would wish to call your lordships' attention—made not by the noble duke, but by one to whom a great many look upon as an authority on this subject of endowment—I mean Mr. Spurgeon. Mr. Spurgeon has written this letter concerning it. I have the greatest sympathy for him—he had a sharp attack of rheumatic gout in the leg, and could not, therefore, attend the meeting, but he wrote this letter. He says:—'It is in no spirit of opposition to the Irish clergy'—no, my lords, nobody has any enmity to the Irish clergy when they propose to disendow them—everybody has the most wonderful feeling of interest in them, anxiety for their welfare, and so has Mr. Spurgeon. Your lordships will remember how Isaac Walton said they were to treat the frog—put it on the hook 'tenderly, as if they loved it.' But he says:—'"It is in no spirit of opposition to the Irish clergy that I would urge upon the House of Commons to carry out the proposed resolution, for I believe them as a body to be among the best part of the Episcopal clergy, and to hold evangelical truths most earnestly. But because they are the best of the clergy, they should be the first to be favoured with the great blessing of disestablishment. They will only be called to do what some of us have for years found a pleasure and advantage in doing—viz., to trust to the noble spirit of generosity which true religion is sure to evoke. They little know how grandly the giant of voluntaryism will draw the chariot when the pitiful State dwarf is dismissed.'

"Now, my lords, allow me to set before you the other side of the picture—not by another writer, but by the same writer, viewing the same question from another aspect. In 'an epistle addressed to the members of the baptised Churches of Jesus Christ,' Mr. Spurgeon thus writes:—'"Beloved Beethren,—An exceedingly great and bitter cry has gone up unto heaven concerning many of us. It is not a cry from the world which hates us, nor from our fellow-members whom we may have offended, but (alas, that it should be so!) it is wrung from hundreds of poor but faithful ministers of Christ Jesus who labour in our midst in word and doctrine, and are daily oppressed by the niggardliness of churls among us. Hundreds of our ministers would improve their circumstances if they were to follow the commonest handicrafts. The earnings of artisans of but ordinary skill are far above the stipends of those among us who are considered to be comfortably maintained. We are asked repeatedly to send students to spheres where £40 is mentioned as if it were a competence, if not more, and those who so write are not always farm labourers, but frequently tradesmen, who must know what penury £40 implies.' [Is that the provision the Irish clergy are to have?] 'I speak not without abundant cause. I am no retailer of baseless scandal. I am no advocate for an idle and ill-deserving ministry. I open my mouth for a really earnest, godly, laborious, gracious body of men, who are men of God, and approved of His Church. Are these for ever to be starved?' Imagine my right rev. brethren here having their stipends reduced to £40, and uttering an exceeding bitter cry. Now, my lords, it is because I do not wish to see the Irish clergy reduced to such a state that I

protest against their being left to this specious protection of voluntaryism." In making his speech, of which the above is an extract, Bishop Wilberforce played the mimic to some extent; and while affecting to imitate the wonderful voice of the great orator of the Tabernacle, he purposely represented it by a snuffle or nasal twang, which amused the peers as something to be identified with a conventicle. The reference to the Archbishop of Armagh was also thought to be out of taste. The Bishop's argument, of course, tended to show that ministerial poverty existed only outside of the Establishment. He, and those who thought with him, soon found out their mistake. As one wrote:—

"When we read the Bishop's quotations it struck us that we had seen proof of similar wretchedness to that Mr. Spurgeon complained of, but existing under Established endowments. Niggardliness of those who ought to be liberal no doubt often causes great suffering under voluntaryism, but it seems that unjust apportionment of endowments and the cruel selfishness of incumbents (a class of ecclesiastics we cannot find mention of in the writings of the Apostles) may inflict equal misery. We remembered having seen and commented on a pamphlet entitled, 'Startling Facts respecting the Poverty and Distress of Four Hundred Clergymen of the Church of England.'... We only wish the Bishop would read it in the House of Lords, for we believe that enormously wealthy body would not rest till they had done something to relieve the dire distress of worthy sufferers under the State endowment system." The comments of some of the daily papers were hardly more complimentary to the Bishop:—

"The Bishop's speeches are out of place in a deliberative assembly. When he is in his liveliest vein the House of Lords lays aside its courtly dignity for a moment, and gives itself up to be amused. Nor is the Bishop at all scrupulous whence the amusement comes. That he should put in contrast Mr. Spurgeon's praises of voluntaryism and Mr. Spurgeon's appeals against the deficiencies of the voluntary principle was perfectly fair, but that he should read them in a tone of solemn mockery was beneath the dignity of the House and utterly unworthy of the subject. It was even more: in that tone of mockery the Bishop was defiling the graves of his own ancestors, for Mr. Spurgeon is to-day the most prominent representative of that Clapham sect with which the name of Wilberforce is inextricably associated. That he should quote the declarations of a Roman Catholic dignitary was also legitimate, but that he should enunciate the letters of honourable distinction which followed the name of the ecclesiastic in a tone of theatrical contempt was an insult to the whole Catholic community and an outrage to the good manners and good feeling of every Protestant gentleman who heard him."

We find another paper condemning the had taste of Dr. Wilberforce in reading out to the peers, in a tone of sanctimonious caricature, Mr. Spurgeon's letter, in which the Irish clergy were congratulated on their near prospect of tasting of the benefits of the voluntary principle:—

"Mr. Buckstone, as Aminadab Sleek, could not have uttered the words with a more puritanic snuffle; but in spite of the art of the Episcopal comedian, the peers opposed to him cheered the best passages of Mr. Spurgeon's letter with evident sympathy, while those on his own side were ominously silent, and seemed totally unable to share his enjoyment or his own joke. Even less was the Bishop's success when he suggested the awful contingency of the Archbishop of Armagh being reduced to a pittance of £40 a year. To judge by the demeanour of the House, the actual £12,000 of the Archbishop flashed upon their lordships' minds at the moment as a rather more

absurd and rather less pleasant subject of contemplation than even the impoverishment which the witty speaker had awkwardly imagined." The Bishop had stimulated the controversy, and there were many who were ready to take it up. People in London had become excited, but probably it was in provincial towns that the fever reached its height. What took place in Shields may have been similar to what occurred in other places. At a lecture given by Mr. Miller of Huddersfield the hall was crowded; but among the audience were a number of Orangemen and others, who unsuccessfully endeavoured to prevent a petition to Parliament being adopted in favour of disestablishment. A lecturer on the other side was then engaged, and the town was placarded with a caricature of Spurgeon, his letter commencing "the giant Voluntaryism," and then the appeal on behalf of poor Baptist ministers which he had also published. Mr. W. Harrison, a Baptist minister of Shields, replied to this with some vigour; and such were the clamour and the misrepresentation on all sides, that it became necessary even for those who in general took little or no notice of attacks made upon them to defend themselves. In his sermon on Sunday morning, July 5, on Psa 67:6-7, Mr. Spurgeon made some references to Dr. Wilberforce's speech in the House of Lords:—

"It is not the instrumentality which we have to look to, but it is the power from Heaven which is given to the instrumentality that makes the Church irresistible. We heard it said the other day that the religion of Jesus Christ could not bo expected to prosper unless it had a fair start given to it; and, strange to say, that observation did not, as you might suppose, come from an infidel, but it absolutely came from a bishop. A fair start, indeed! Put up the religion of Jesus Christ anywhere, and it asks for nothing. It only wants its own inherent strength to be developed, and to be let alone by the kings and princes of this world. To be let alone, did I say? Yes. Let these kings and princes oppose it if they like; only let them withdraw from it that deadly thing, their patronage, and the truth of God will always prevail against every obstacle. We do not tremble, then, for the success of the Church of Christ, though the servants of God be poor, or comparatively weak in numbers, for we know that 'God will bless us;' and, if we be few, we remember that the twelve unlettered fishermen who first went out to plant the Church were fewer still, yet that they made old Rome to shake from end to end, and levelled colossal citadels even with the ground; and so shall it ever be with Christianity, if only God shall bless her with the ancient might that made her strong in days of old!"

It was thought that something else was still needed to correct any wrong impressions in the public mind, and hence Mr. Spurgeon wrote the following important letter:—

"To the Editor of 'The Times.'

"Sir,—I have asserted frequently the superiority of the voluntary principle to that of State support in the matter of religion, and I have also at other times lamented the poverty of many ministers whose stipends are subscribed upon the system which I prefer. The two things appear to me to be quite consistent, but several of the newspapers judge otherwise, and one or two of them have printed my two statements in parallel columns as if they contained a self-evident contradiction. The Bishop of Oxford was evidently much amused with the now well-worn paragraph, and being in a facetious vein, felt moved to read quotations from my two letters for the delectation of the peers of the realm. I am happy to have afforded some little mirth to the grave and reverend bishop, and would willingly share in it, but I am quite unable to see the point of the joke. Perhaps a parallel case may render my obtuseness less remarkable. If the Bishop of Oxford, after having in such a becoming manner, with such solid reasoning, defended the union of Church and State, should

nevertheless be found at some future day pleading for starving curates, or even preaching for the excellent society which relieves distressed clerks in holy orders with pecuniary grants and bundles of cast-off clothing, or if we should hear him deploring that a clergyman should, according to advertisement in The Rock, be subsisting upon buttermilk and potatoes, would his lordship be charged with inconsistency, and would it be commendable for some humorous member of the venerable bench, in tones of mimicry, to make him the subject of public ridicule? The case is precisely parallel to mine: but if there were any fun in it, it would surely lie in the folly of the person who should imagine the non-existent inconsistency.

"The poverty of some Dissenting ministers is only an argument against the voluntary principle as far as the extreme distress of a considerable number of the Anglican clergy is an argument against State support. The painful evil of clerical poverty exists under both forms of maintenance, and it ought not to be made the ground of mutual attack or recrimination, but should be deeply deplored and manfully grappled with. From reasons not essential to either system a great evil arises; a zealous emulation as to which shall soonest rid itself of the mischief would be most honourable, but to twit each other with our sorrows is as unwise as it is ungenerous.

"Every man who speaks freely what he believes, and follows truth with a confident unreserve, will be open to the charge of inconsistency, and yet there will be only an apparent ground for the accusation. Such, I am sure, is the fact in this case. If I advocate the voluntary system, must I shut my eyes to its failures, or be impeached for folly? Must I defend its working as absolute perfection, or else be grossly unreasonable in preferring it? If I point out its shortcomings in order to amend them, am I self-convicted of inconsistency? It may seem so to the Bishop of Oxford, but I claim the right to differ from him without being ridiculous. One illustration, and I will not further occupy your space. Suppose that two farms in Ireland are put in comparison. I declare my preference for number two, and yet regret that it is much depreciated in value by a piece of incorrigible bog. A gentleman, who vehemently advocates the superiority of farm number one, hearing my two statements, resolves to make me his laughing-stock at the next agricultural dinner, and, being in the full swing of his oratory, exclaims: 'This Mr. Spurgeon, to whom some people look up to so much, has spoken in a certain letter most glowingly of the farm which he is weak enough to admire, and yet I will read to you from a document in which he admits that there is a horrible and irreclaimable bog upon it. Ladies and gentlemen, the absurdity is manifest even to the blind; but what a prospect is before you if his judgment is followed! What say you to universal quagmires? How would you feel if your homesteads and estates were all turned into quivering morasses, and if the fine property of his lordship in the chair should be transformed into a vast slough of despond?' In some uncivilised rural nook there may be a benighted population sufficiently moonstruck to admire the logic and applaud the humour of such observations; but even with so congenial an audience the acclamations would soon be silenced when the conveniently forgetful orator was reminded that his own favourite farm, about which he could not utter sufficient laudation, was afflicted with a bog equally bottomless with that which he so much decried. It is probable that our imaginary orator would scarcely have sense enough to wish that he had not spoken; in this only does his case differ from that of Mr. Samuel Wilberforce.—Yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon."

"Clapham, July 3. When Mr. Spurgeon took the chair at the quarterly meeting of the London Baptist Association at Hampstead, on July 14, he again referred to this subject. Dr. Brock had been invited to a meeting for that evening on the Irish Church; and he, the pastor of the

Metropolitan Tabernacle, would be glad to be invited to a similar assembly, and there to meet "the Rev. Father in God, the Bishop of Oxford, with him to discuss the whole question." In the evening Mr. Spurgeon preached the Association sermon on "Spiritual Health."

Chapter 73: Spurgeon At Liverpool

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Spurgeon At Liverpool

Spurgeon depicted in The Daily News—A Day of Prayer—Stockwell Orphanage Bazaar—Visit to Liverpool—Opinion of The Porcupine—Sir James Simpson—Baptist Union.

A letter addressed to The Christian Visitor, St. John, New Brunswick, in the summer of 1868, and relating to the various sections of Baptists in Great Britain, may be given here:—

"Dear Sir,—You seem to imagine that the Baptists of England are rent by great internal schism, and have among them no brotherly love. Who gave such information I know not, but as far as I know it is utterly false—a most pernicious fiction, untrue from top to bottom. With regard to the vast majority of our churches, I venture to affirm that at no time since the Pentecostal era has there been such fervent brotherly love as reigns among us. The churches of Antinomian sentiment I cannot speak for, but these are mostly very weak and numerically insignificant; those churches who unite in the Baptist Union appear to me to be of one heart and of one soul, and each desires to promote the good of all. I was not aware that our strict communion brethren were divided among themselves. I thought them to be, as a body, exceedingly at peace, internally and externally. As for the open communion churches, I know of no divisions among them; certainly in London our union is as complete as can well be this side of heaven. I would have you, Mr. Editor, beware of random statements and rash generalisations, such as abound in most letters of regular correspondents to newspapers. Our churches in England are not what we wish them to be, but, thanks to eternal grace, we are growing, and are not at all behindhand in unity and co-operation.—Yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon."

"August 14, 1868.

"Hearing Mr. Spurgeon" was still a taking newspaper theme, and as the preacher was viewed from a number of different standpoints by different writers, the theme seldom failed to be interesting. On Sunday, August 30, a representative of The Daily News visited the Tabernacle, and hearing Mr. Spurgeon for the first time, he gave his impressions to the world through the popular Liberal journal, which, in 1868, first began to be published at a penny. There was no falling off in the crowd; for while about five hundred persons were waiting at the doors to be admitted, the chapel itself was so well filled when the visitor entered with a ticket a short time before the doors were opened, that he calculated there was not room for another hundred to find seats. Altogether the spectacle appeared to strike the roving journalist as unique, and he gives this description of the preliminary part of the service:—

"Such a sight, I believe, can be witnessed nowhere else than in England. I had been in my seat in front of the platform about two minutes when Mr. Spurgeon entered. The photographs of the shop windows had prepared me to expect to see a man of heavy, not to say coarse, countenance, but

the photographs do the original great injustice. Precisely at a quarter to eleven Mr. Spurgeon advanced to the railing of the platform and said, in a clear, soft voice, which filled the building without effort, 'Let us worship God in prayer.' Accustomed to the habit of worship in the Church of England, it was with regret I found that there was no provision for kneeling, and that that appropriate attitude had not been renounced because the congregation preferred to stand. The sight of six thousand people sitting during the worship of prayer is not pleasing. Mr. Spurgeon, however, stood. He does not pray so well as he preaches—his prayer was good so far as it went. It was very high and mystical, abounding with figurative expressions from the Hebrew poetry; but it was defective in the element which we all prize so much in the Litany—a tender, lowly, human sympathy. Mr. Spurgeon once referred to those present as a 'chosen people,' and there was too much of this exclusive feeling throughout the service. The confession of sin struck me as meagre and general. In one of the 'Tracts for the Times' it is said that the prayers of the Church of England are pitched in too low and plaintive a key, and it is hinted that there is a penal judgment on that Church. For the first of these opinions I think there is some foundation. The prayers of the Tabernacle, on the other hand, seemed to me over-confident. The singing is accomplished without instrumental aid, being conducted by a precentor, who stands beside Mr. Spurgeon. Of course, under such disadvantages only slow tunes can be sung; but the voices were kept together much better than might have been expected. No psalm was read, and only one lesson, a portion of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Mr. Spurgeon is a good reader, and it was satisfactory to hear him give the hymns out himself."

It was particularly noticed that the preacher conducted the whole of the service himself. The first part of the proceedings occupied just fifty-five minutes, and as that was also the length of the sermon, the hour and fifty minutes was about evenly divided. The text was 1Co 15:31, "I die daily." The critical hearer continues:—

"Having read his text, he advanced from the side table, where his Bible lay, to the rails, on which he leaned with both hands while uttering his first few sentences. He at once fixed the attention of the vast audience by connecting his text with common human experience, then set forth its original, heroic sense in the life of the Apostle, and afterwards announced that he should treat it as of general application. I did not think the sermon well organised. For instance, having announced that his subject would be the art of dying daily, he made certain preliminary requisites of that art the first division of his sermon before he explained what he understood by this daily dying. Probably, however, there were few in the building to whom this would be a serious objection. At all events, the people listened with breathless attention from first to last, a fact which I commend to the attention of those who are telling us that sermons and preaching are out of date." The visitor was not quite satisfied with the Tabernacle Gospel; but he would have been glad to listen to the preacher for twice as long as he did. Then came the question, "What were the elements of the preacher's popularity?" They were simple, and might exist in other preachers; it was the combination of the elements of success in Spurgeon which made him what he was. The delineation of the preacher's character is written with some force:—

"In the first place, he has a very definite and positive system of doctrine in which ho thoroughly believes. He does not tell his hearers what different views have been taken of this and that doctrine, and that on a balance of opinions he has come to such and such a conclusion. There is only one truth which all persons are concerned to know, and it is his duty to preach it. It is more

than his duty; it is evidently his delight. My experience is that the great majority of people like to take their religion on a strong assurance. In the second place, Mr. Spurgeon is evidently a happy man. He has good animal spirits to begin with. If at any time these have betrayed him into indecorum, certainly there was no tinge of it in his demeanour yesterday. The whole service was conducted most devoutly. Nevertheless, it is apparent that he is a happy man, and happiness is, thank God, contagious. In the third place, and most important of all, Mr. Spurgeon is a great master of the art of direct address. I have no doubt he considered the matter well before he abolished the use of a pulpit and substituted a platform. His sermon yesterday was delivered to the people, not merely before them. The use of notes was out of the question, unless he had held them in his hands. Every word was spoken as from man to man, and every word was to the point. There was no resort to expletive, no use of padding. Every sentence contributed something to the effect which was constantly in the contemplation of the preacher. No one, I think, could doubt that Mr. Spurgeon was expressing, in virtue of his ready command of language, thoughts which he had thoroughly worked out in his study. I can no more believe that yesterday's discourse was delivered memoriter than that he spoke on the inspiration of the occasion. To speak of the substance of the discourse might lead me on to debatable ground; I will only say, therefore, that his matter was as abundant as it was pertinent. He made considerable, but not excessive, use of figure, introduced frequent illustrations from legend, natural history, and fable, and quoted George Herbert and other poets. At the close of the service, which had lasted an hour and fifty-five minutes, I thought he seemed fatigued, as well he might be. On leaving the building, I found a box into which every worshipper is invited to drop a penny for the support of Mr. Spurgeon's College, which is maintained at an expenditure of £5,000 a year. A card over the box announced that on the previous Sunday £36 had been deposited in these receptacles." The Monday on which the Liberal newspaper gave its article on the preacher of the Tabernacle was also the day set apart by the churches of South London as a day of fasting and prayer. The chief meeting, which took place at Walworth Road Chapel, lasted from seven o'clock a.m. till six p.m., the arrangement being that there should be a President for each hour. During the second hour, or from eight till nine, Mr. Spurgeon presided, and some six or seven hundred persons were present. He remarked that the meetings which were then being held were an open declaration of their belief in the efficacy of prayer, and of its power in heaven. He trusted that no vain repetitions or lengthy sermonisings would mar their supplications, but that all would be brief and earnest. When he himself offered prayer, he gave expression to a strong desire that the world might not be permitted to think Christianity a worn-out thing of the past. He also prayed that if aught hindered the descent of the Holy Spirit on the churches and pastors, any of those with whom the fault lay might be severely punished. At this time Mr. Spurgeon was not only recognised as a great preacher, his advice on the art of preaching was becoming more and more welcome to all who were interested in the subject. The fame of the striking lectures which had been given to the students of the Pastors' College had got abroad, and the fact that a selection was to be published created widespread interest. On Monday evening, September 7, an address, accompanied by a purse containing £574, was presented to Mr. Charles Stovel, pastor of Commercial Street Chapel, and to this fund Mr. Spurgeon would seem to have been a contributor. He also wrote a letter to Mr. Stovel assuring him of profoundest respect. On the following day, in chilly September weather, a bazaar was opened at the Stockwell Orphanage in aid of the building-fund. The stalls presented a pretty and very inviting appearance. Mrs. Spurgeon's stall was the chief centre of attraction; the College and

the Sunday-school also had their stalls. The contributors were said to be of all classes, from the poorest. In the evening Mr. Spurgeon gave his lecture, "Sermons in Candles," in a tent to two thousand persons. Fresh matter and new illustrations were given, "in evidence," as one remarked, "that his own candle was not yet burnt out." On Tuesday, September 15, a memorable visit was paid to Liverpool, two services being conducted in Myrtle Street Chapel, of which the then celebrated Hugh Stowell Brown was pastor. It was said at the time that in accepting this invitation Mr. Spurgeon was simply moved by a desire to serve an old and much-esteemed friend. On the other hand, friends at Liverpool were quite as desirous of serving Mr. Spurgeon; and thus, on his arrival, they informed him that the whole of the collection would be given to the Stockwell Orphanage. As had been the case elsewhere, the demand for tickets was overwhelming; and as fair a division as possible was made among the members of various denominations. After the chapel was thronged there was still a great crowd without. The morning sermon, on Spiritual Health, was founded on the second verse of the Third Epistle of St. John; and in the opening, some remarks were made on the want of communion between religious bodies and individuals. In illustration, the preacher mentioned the experience of which we have already spoken. If a warmer and closer feeling of communion existed among congregations, if a man felt that he would be treated as a friend and not as a stranger, the preacher thought that the Church would be greatly benefited, and the interests of true religion materially advanced. In reference to the prosperity referred to by the Apostle, it was remarked that many thought ministers very unbusinesslike men, who did not want others to prosper. That was a mistake; they wished men to prosper. It was to be desired that Christian and charitable men should be successful in the affairs of this life, for then they would have greater store from which to distribute to the poor and needy. But the remarkable part of the text was this—John wished that Gaius might prosper as his soul prospered. Gaius must have been a very remarkable man. Turning over the list of his acquaintance, he could not recall such a man to mind. Why, if some of them prospered as their souls prospered they would soon be bankrupt, utterly ruined; colossal fortunes would melt away; and many who are now rich would speedily be poor indeed if they prospered no better than their souls. The terrible results which would afflict humanity if we were in health only as the soul prospered were briefly depicted in forcible and eloquent terms; and the preacher then passed on to notice, firstly, some of the signs of spiritual sickness; secondly, some of the cures for the ailment; and thirdly, the necessity of seeking for spiritual prosperity. The first symptom of spiritual sickness was a chill in the blood. There was not a more grievous symptom than this. Some people lived continually in a chill. If you took them by the hand it fell into yours like a dead fish. Everything they did was without fire or force. But the proper temperature for a Christian was red-hot; anything below that was a falling off from the true state in which a Christian should live. The high duties of the Church were not to be touched with cold and clammy hands. The preacher went on to speak of that contraction of the heart which was also a symptom of spiritual unhealthiness; and those who suffered from it commonly showed an intense love for those who were affected in like manner. This symptom might exist in people who had the truth as well as in those who had it not. He had seen it in different congregations, who were jealous lest one should gain at the expense of the other, totally forgetting that the gain of one was the gain of the whole. This contraction of the heart, however, he trusted that they were getting rid of. Truth was not sold only at one stall in the market; there were others which had a supply of the good stock. He trusted that we should in future see less of the intolerance which produced contraction of the heart. The third symptom of spiritual sickness was

loss of appetite. This was a common complaint. At first people went to church and were satisfied with simple arrangements, but by-and-bye they became dissatisfied. They wanted seats with nice easy cushions, and wished the preacher to cull tit-bits for their especial entertainment. They sighed for dainty morsels of spiritual edification, and insisted that the dish should be made spicy. Then they became more dissatisfied still, and degenerated into spiritual vagrants, wandering from place to place in search of the elegance and dainties which they could not obtain in their old church or chapel. This want of appetite for the plain truths of Christianity was very, very common, and had been the ruin of many who might have proved useful in the Church. If they had a spiritual tonic they would not sit and consider the elegance of the church or criticise the elocution of the preacher. Such a tonic would be one of the best blessings that God could send to men.

It was then shown that religious declension often came as a consequence of the neglect of prayer. Another bad symptom was "palsy of the hand and arm," e.g.:—

"A man will often say, 'I have done my turn; let others do their turn.' How false is this view of man's obligations. If the sun and the moon and the rain were to suspend their operations simply because they have been in action so long, what a poor world this would be. And if Christ were to say, 'I have done my share,' and the Spirit of God, 'I have done my part,' what would be the result? Never let a man think that he has even begun to arrive at a period when he can leave off. Ho must work to the very last; burn till he is burnt to the snuff—nothing wasted. It is a bad sign when a man's fingers do not move well. I have seen instances in which a man has got something, say money, in his hand, and the fingers have become so contracted that it almost requires a crowbar to open them. You may smile at this, but the Spirit of God grieves." In prescribing a remedy, Mr. Spurgeon showed that a man in sickness had to attend to his diet. Much of the spiritual sickness of the age came as a result of "the slops and air-bubbles" on which people fed, instead of living on sound Gospel. But even good food alone would not do without good air: they must breathe the atmosphere of Christ. They also wanted good exercise, and that could be had by seeking out the distressed and the lost and relieving their necessities. In the evening the entrances to the chapel were besieged by a great crowd anxious to gain admittance. A contemporary account says: "At fifteen minutes to eight o'clock a tremendous rush was made towards the principal entrance of the building, every part of which was then well filled, and a living stream crowded into the aisles, rendering it necessary for personal safety to close the doors, to the great disappointment of some, who expressed their indignation by loudly knocking at the doors at intervals during the service." The subject of the evening was founded on St. John 20:25, "We have seen the Lord," when some characteristic references to different kinds of preaching were made. At these services a sum of £250 was collected for the Orphanage.

Hugh Stowell Brown, for whom these services were undertaken, was about ten years the senior of Mr. Spurgeon, and he died February 24, 1886. He was highly valued by the people of Liverpool; and throughout the country he carried a good reputation as a preacher, being peculiarly appreciated as a lecturer to young men and the working classes. On the occasion of his visit to Liverpool, a political, social, and satirical journal, published in the city, had something to say about Spurgeon's success:—

"The glib way of accounting for Mr. Spurgeon's success is, of course, to blame the public taste. The public prefers Mr. Spurgeon to somebody whose preaching is more intellectual and refined,

simply because the public has neither intellectuality nor refinement. The success of Mr. Spurgeon, it is sometimes affirmed, is neither more nor less than a development of the mediocrity of the present generation; and we suppose we must, on the other hand, assume that the failure of some parsons to fill their churches or chapels is a proof of the vastness of their intellectual capacities." That was apparently a comfortable reflection, but it failed to do away with the difficulties which half-filled places of worship presented. A preacher was a messenger to the people, and if he failed his failure was a great fact for him to consider. If the public did not appreciate him it might be questioned whether the public taste was at fault. The writer continued:—

"The public makes mistakes of this kind; it is true; but then it does not take long to find them out, and when it does, it is very prompt at correcting them. When a man has for a number of years secured the attention of nearly 6,000 persons every week, when wherever he goes his audience is only limited by the size of the building he speaks in, when his sermons are read with avidity all over England, America, and Australia, and when this state of things not only lasts but increases, why it looks a little like impudence to say, 'Oh, that is all because the public knows no better.' As a rule, the public measures justly the abilities of every public speaker, and especially a preacher. Thoughtful and eloquent discourses are appreciated by it, and by none more than the very class whose alleged indifference to religion gives some people so much concern. But thought and eloquence will never be accepted as a substitute for the two most prominent characteristics of Mr. Spurgeon's preaching. We mean earnestness and affection. These shine out in every word he says so strongly that he exercises an influence to which mere eloquence, powerful as it is, must yield the palm. Judging from Mr. Spurgeon, we should say that, given these two characteristics, along with fluency of speech and a cultivated mind, and you have the materials for a successful preacher.

"Were all preachers possessed of these essentials, there would be no outcry about empty churches and chapels. Essays and orations are very well in their way, but to fall in with them when one is in search of warm-hearted, earnest, simple speech, is like meeting a statue where we expected to find a living man. We point to that which, in our opinion, is Mr. Spurgeon's most trenchant weapon, because we believe that, although the present age has many faults, callous indifference to religious truth is not among them. On the contrary, men's minds have lately been stirred by religious questions as they have not been for years, and we believe there never was a time more favourable for successful preaching. If modern preaching does not gain the ear of the people, then look to the preaching, for it is certain that wherever men find a teacher filled with a spirit of earnestness, and doing his work with affectionate, self-sacrificing zeal, to him they will flock, and be they rich or be they poor, they will be charmed by his influence and conquered by his power." In the autumn of this year Spurgeon was brought into close contact with the late eminent physician and discoverer of chloroform, Sir James Y. Simpson. The distinguished surgeon and the great preacher—the former being a member of the Free Church—had become acquainted about four years previously at the house of their common friend, Mr. William Dickson, of York Place, Edinburgh. In that hospitable house the two friends had been accustomed to meet at such times as Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon had visited the northern capital. "Not a little similar in type, physically as well as mentally," remarks one friend, "an affectionate friendship was quickly the result, and both seemed greatly to enjoy their brief subsequent opportunities of intercourse."

When, in the year 1867, the celebrated physician heard of the illness of Mrs. Spurgeon and of her prolonged suffering, he offered his professional services, and did so through Mr. William Dickson. "But remember, if I go it is as a friend and not as a doctor," said Sir James emphatically. The offer was of course accepted with gladness and gratitude. On September 27 Mr. Spurgeon wrote thus to Mr. William Dickson:—

"I am no small trouble to you, but what can I do?... My dear wife grows worse.... I wrote to Sir James about a week ago.... You will do me a service incalculable and never to be forgotten if you can see our kind friend and get him to appoint a time." This note was sent on October 7:—

"My Dear Friend,—Let me live to the age of Methuselah, I shall not forget your goodness. The Lord reward you, I cannot. This is to bear one another's burdens, and to fulfil the law of Christ."

Finally, after Sir James Simpson had operated on the patient, Mr Dickson received this note:—

"Clapham, Tuesday, 1 a.m.

"My Very Dear Friend,—I am writing far into the night to tell friends how my dear wife has sped. That dear angel of mercy, Sir James Simpson, has been very successful, as usual, and the operation is well over; patient very patient, and in good spirits. If you know 10,000 eloquent men in Scotland I would give them work for the next hundred years—viz., to praise the Lord for sending to us such a man, so skilful and so noble a doctor." The Baptist Union held its autumnal meetings at Bristol, Monday, October 12, being the first day. It was thought that something might be done to improve the stipends of the denominational pastors throughout the country, and Mr. Charles Williams, of Southampton, opened a discussion on a proposed Sustentation Fund. "Taking the whole of the denomination," said Mr. Williams, "I believe it would be found that one-fifth of our English ministers are in receipt of more than £150; another fifth from £150 to £100; and about three-fifths average, I should think, from £70 to £80 a year. The practical question before us is, Should, and will, one-fifth of our churches assist their poorer yet sister churches in providing a sufficient maintenance for their pastors?" There was a long discussion, and Dr. Angus moved an amendment to the effect that the time had come to take some practical steps to assist Baptist churches in providing a more adequate maintenance for their ministers. Mr. Spurgeon was less sanguine than some others of anything being done in the way of establishing a Sustentation Fund. He spoke of having for years assisted the Particular Baptist Fund; and if they were allowed to go on with their work he would vote for the Union doing what it liked. He would not stand in the way; but at the same time would not promise any large help, because the Tabernacle was already doing what was possible for the fund actually in existence. Mr. Spurgeon went on to say that he should be delighted to find that they were able to raise the salaries at once to £150, which would not make their ministers rich then; but looking through the "Handbook" he could not discover that Mr.

Williams's statistics were quite correct. He did not think that there were more than one hundred and fifty ministers in England who had £150 and upwards, and he did not think that out of them there were more than eighty who could, and would, subscribe to the Sustentation Fund. He thought that, looking at the facts, it would be only a very small amount that they would be likely to get.

Some of the meetings were held at Colston Hall, and the programme included a sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on Thursday evening, October 15. So eager were the Bristol people to hear the great

London preacher, that a formidable crush was anticipated; and Mr. Spurgeon was heartily cheered when, in order to gratify friends, he announced that he would preach at nine in the morning as well as in the evening. A large number of tickets for this service were distributed at the soirée given on the evening before, and were accepted with an eagerness which proved that the popularity of the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle increased rather than diminished. After he had preached to a full congregation in the morning, the crowd was sufficiently great at night to make up two other large audiences, to which others ministered. It was commonly believed by many in London at this time that Spurgeon's powers, mighty as they had long been, were still growing.

Chapter 74: Aggressive Denominational Work

Chapter 74.

Aggressive Denominational Work An Injured Vicar—New Chapels—Addresses by Mr. Spurgeon—Children at the Tabernacle—Letter in The Daily News—Colportage—Literary Work.

The controversy concerning the Irish Church continued to instil a good deal of bitterness into everyday religious life. Perhaps there was too much hard hitting on both sides; but when the air was cleared, and the shouts of battle were hushed, those who had previously been friends for the most part became friends again. Probably little things, which were afterwards easily, forgotten, were more irritating at the time than the differences of opinion on the great points of the controversy. For example, a man was found giving away one of Spurgeon's anti-Ritualistic tracts outside the church of an Evangelical vicar, and the latter wrote to the author as an injured man:—

"I am sure you did not send that man to my church; but I must take it for granted that you either wrote yourself the words of the leaflet or that they had your sanction, for they are reprinted with your name. Allow me, then, to ask you, in a Christian and serious way, Do you really impute to the Church of England the Popery exhibited by those Ritualistic clergymen whom the sketch represents? Do you, in heart and conscience, believe that the Church teaches what they teach, and encourages what they practise? Do you mean to affirm that the Romanising clergy and the Church of England are one?"

Mr. Spurgeon replied to this with characteristic warmth, pointing out that both Ritualistics and Evangelicals had part of the Prayer Book, but that neither had all of it. "You, personally," he said to the Evangelical vicar, "have no more right to be in the Church of England than I have. You, and such as you, I regard as Dissenters who have missed their way. The Ritualists are Romanists who see so much in your semi-Reformed Church which is to their taste that they feel at home in it. How you can ask me whether I identify the Ritualists with your Church is a marvel to me. Of course I do. They are the most active and energetic part of your body." The vicar bravely defended himself and those who thought with him. As he viewed the matter, the true Church of England had nothing in common with the Ritualists. His letter to Mr. Spurgeon concluded with this piece of plain speaking:—

"Judge, then, righteously and speak charitably. I know too well my duty to my God to leave the Church of England in the hands of the Ritualists by withdrawing from her pale. I am a rightful son, and so are all those who you would draw, or rather 'drive' (as you say), into the ranks of dissent. But allow me the freedom of opinion and action which I gladly concede to yon. History has taught us a lesson concerning the law of voluntaryism over Established churches; and I wish neither the priestly oppression of Laud in the days of Charles, nor the tyranny of Liberalism in the latter days of the Commonwealth, to come again."

Friday might have been called Mr. Spurgeon's students' day, for his lectures at the Pastors' College were given on Friday afternoons. On the evening of Friday, October 23, he responded to

an invitation from the Principal and students of Hackney College to drink tea and spend the evening with them. In the address which followed, the pastor spoke with all the enthusiasm which seemed to fire him when young men in preparation for the ministry were his audience. A conversation followed, and then family worship closed the proceedings, which must have been stimulating all round. The success of the newly organised London Baptist Association was seen in the erection of new chapels. A notable addition to the list was now being made—the Downs Chapel at Hackney. On the wet afternoon of November 3, the memorial-stone was laid by Dr. Landels, as President for the year; and when the company had adjourned to the Wesleyan Chapel, Mr. Spurgeon gave an address of a most catholic kind. Indeed, the catholic act of lending the chapel seems to have been inspiring. He hoped the day would soon be gone when they would be afraid to say what they believed before those who differed from them. When any regiment should meet, and one of the officers should speak of the fame of it or the peculiarities of it, any other regiment would not be jealous when they heard such words, because they all belonged to the same army. And it was so with religious bodies. Though belonging to different sections of the Church, they were all enlisted under the same King. They, as Baptists, recognised themselves as being the true Apostolic Catholic Church. Reference was made to the old days of persecution; but Baptists had become an increasing body; there were more of their denomination in London at that time than there were in all England a century before. They held that Christ's Church was a spiritual kingdom, to be ruled and governed by a spiritual Head, and that there was no power within a Church that could ordain doctrine or establish ceremonies. They repudiated all human authority. Nothing was true to them because Calvin had said it, however much they might respect him, or because Arminius had said it. They only respected what the great Head of the Church, Christ Jesus, said, and what they found in God's Holy Word. They repudiated the Pope of Rome as the head of their Church; they never submitted themselves in religious belief to any monarch, though none in England were more loyal than they. He hoped that this principle would spread in this country. Of course, some reference was made to the great controversy of the day, and to the peculiar views of the Baptists:—

"As Baptists, we have been much divided in past days through an excess of conscientiousness. From this we have been redeemed. I can honestly say that there are no ministers under heaven who respect one another, and have cause to respect one another, more than our Baptist brethren in London. The more I associate with them the more I feel that I am honoured by the association. It seems right that we should have a practical object in all this union. And what better object can we have than that of erecting new chapels? Hence the chapel at Holloway, hence the chapel at Grove Road, Victoria Park, and the one to be built in our neighbourhood. Our dear friends at Clapton have done well to associate together for this purpose. They are members of other churches, and would be losses to those churches; but I hope that the losses will be well made up. The time was when churches were conservative; but in the Church of God we must not think of receiving without giving out. I think it has been a great disgrace to some of our churches, that they have not built other places of worship to supply the needs of their districts. We should be willing to deny ourselves in this matter. I believe in the recuperative power of the Churches of Christ, especially in London. The liberal Church, like the liberal soul, would be made fat. It might be inexpedient in some small towns to build a Baptist chapel opposite an Independent or Wesleyan chapel. Strong Baptist as I am, I think I should consider well before doing that; but it is not so in this immense London, where there is no fear of providing too many houses for God."

About a week later we find Mr. Spurgeon at a similar meeting on account of the present chapel at Spencer Street, Goswell Road, and he not only encouraged Mr. Gast and his friends with his words, he laid a cheque for £100 on the stone. In regard to a hymn which had been sung, in which the expression, "A sanctuary of God," was used, Mr. Spurgeon said that the sanctuary of God was in Christ. They did not build places of worship because of some æsthetic power in architecture to assist devotion. The fine arts only assisted fancy, not pure devotion. A Christian's faith should be independent of such aids. With faith they could worship in the open air or in a barn just as well as in the grandest cathedral. Chapels were built because they were a necessity, and he wished the climate were other than it was. "What finer place for worship than the hillside of Palestine—in some such spots as our Lord preached, and drew a lesson from the sower who went forth to sow. Besides, chapels are useful as rallying-points where we can plant our standard. The palace at Versailles is dedicated to 'All the glories of France;' I think we should dedicate our house to all the glories of Christ." A good deal more was said which was calculated to encourage both pastor and people, the extreme difficulty of maintaining a congregation near the City being emphasised. It was thought difficulties ought to stimulate to work, especially when it was being given out that the voluntary principle, in densely populated places, was a failure. After remarking that such a reproach was to be avoided, Mr. Spurgeon went on to say some things which he believed concerning the working classes. He believed that in such a locality as their own they would be able to maintain one of the largest churches. He believed that a population composed almost exclusively of those who were obliged to toil for their bread was one of the best scenes for the labours of a sincere and earnest Christian minister. He believed the form of church government adopted by the Baptists was greatly in their favour, and he found, from his own experience, that if ministers only went the right way about it they could accomplish great results amongst a working population. He believed that working men in London formed the finest possible raw material for a minister to work upon. He believed that if spoken to in a proper spirit they received the truth with gladness, and that they were always anxious to serve those who were desirous of helping them, and who did not treat them as if they were an inferior class of beings. The last thing a working man liked was to be patronised. He trusted that those who undertook the duty of the ministry would take the velvet out of their mouths and address themselves in a manly and earnest manner to the work they had to perform. He had no doubt if they did so their exertions would be rewarded with success almost beyond their hopes. In November, an American evangelist obtained permission to hold a series of meetings for children in the Tabernacle. The teachers in the Sunday-school appear to have been so far captivated by the evangelist's methods as to desire that he should have a trial. Accordingly, a meeting of the teachers and others took place, and arrangements were made for monster gatherings of young people in the chapel. Mr. Spurgeon himself did not attend any of the meetings; he had nothing to do with the arrangements, and it was only at the urgent request of friends interested in the Sunday-school that he consented to sanction the experiment. At the same time, on Sunday morning, November 8, he gave what looked like a preface to the American visitor's services by preaching on the conversion of children, from Gen 42:22, "Do not sin against the child." The text was shown to be a warning suited to all—to Christian parents, teachers in the Sabbath-school, and even the preacher himself. He went on to remark that preaching was often too obscure for children—the words were too long; the sentences too involved; the matter too mysterious. He held that sacred simplicity should be so cultivated by the ambassadors of Christ, that lads and lasses should hear intelligently under a good shepherd, and

the least lamb should be able to find food. But the text also bore upon the Church of God. The Church could offend against a child by not believing in the conversion of children at all. He was persuaded there were hundreds of Christians who in their hearts altogether mistrusted the worth of regeneration, unless the person born again was over sixteen or eighteen years of age. The first meeting took place on the afternoon of the day on which Mr. Spurgeon gave his sermon; and during the week much disapproval was expressed in regard to the methods adopted. The Freeman said, "If common report of the manner in which the inquirers' meetings have been conducted be true, we should scarcely think Mr. Spurgeon would approve of them." A correspondent of The Daily News approved of the ordinary service, but did not approve of the "Revival" tactics which followed the address, and which, according to his description, were not of a kind likely to leave permanent good results. This passage from the letter may be given:—

"Repeated reference had been made by the preacher to the number of children who had been 'brought to Jesus' at the conclusion of the previous meetings, and he implored those present to do likewise. 'Those who love Jesus, hold up their hands,' said the preacher; and many hands were raised. 'Those who wish to come to Jesus, hold up their hands,' met with a like response. 'Would you like the ministers, students, and teachers on the platform to talk and pray with you?' In reply to this interrogatory more hands were held up, and the preacher, increasing in fervour, turned to those around him, and cried out in excited tones, 'Look at the thousand (?) hands held up! The children wish you to go down and distribute yourselves amongst them. Friends in the gallery, don't sit there, but come down amongst these children, who are asking you to pray for them.' The platform and part of the gallery were vacated, and presently the children in the area were broken up into a hundred or more classes, presided over by a young man or woman, indiscriminately. What followed I shall never forget. Sir, I have served two apprenticeships, at least, as Sunday-school teacher and superintendent, and I love children with a fervour which their simplicity and weakness command from all worthy the name of men. I have laboured for many a long day, and far into the night, to lead them to Him who is ready to bless all who come to Him, and I am grateful to anyone, of whatever party or creed, who is honestly engaged in this holy work; but I can scarcely trust myself to speak of those who inflicted upon unoffending children such persistent cruelty as I witnessed at the Tabernacle on Tuesday night. The children's feelings were worked upon by the zealous persons who had responded to the call of the preacher until they cried; and then, sobbing and excited, they were taken to the inquisitor-in-chief to be dealt with in an adjoining room, which was filled, he said, with young women. I do not envy the man a popularity which is obtained by exciting the delicate. sensitiveness of children, and who can find satisfaction in beholding them with reddened eyes and tear-bedewed cheeks. The sight was enough to make a strong man weep."

Metropolitan Tabernacle-Exterior

Metropolitan Tabernacle-Interior This account may have been exaggerated in some degree, and Mr. Spurgeon himself declared it to be a misrepresentation. At the same time, the methods of the American visitor were not altogether approved by the congregation, and there were no doubt some grounds for complaint. In such cases, the opposition press seized the opportunity of declaiming against the pastor of the Tabernacle, instead of confining their remarks to the subject in hand.

During the year 1868 the Colportage Association made steady progress, though not so fast as some of its best friends desired, in their eagerness to rival what had been done by the Book Society of Scotland, which was then employing one hundred and sixty agents. Of course, one of the greatest obstacles to the sale of even the cheapest books was the extreme poverty of the peasants in rural districts. As, however, the work was supposed to be partly of a missionary character, the managers did not look altogether to mere sales for encouragement. The visits of the men to the poor and oftentimes neglected people, their cottage, open-air, and even chapel services, made them welcome in all parts of the country; and those who were advocates of colportage thought that an average of £40 a year, which was needed to maintain an agent in his sphere, was a small cost for such efficient home missionary service. The reports of their adventures which the pioneers in the service brought home were suggestive of the state of mind of people of various social grades, and were in some instances rather diverting. Such entries as these were found in the men's diaries: "One man accused me of insulting him because I left the tract, 'Young man, who is the fool?' at his house, and threatens violence if I call again." "The clergyman is not favourable." "At L— I had an interview with the clergyman, who is much offended with my visits." "I called at a house, and it happened to be the clergyman's; he purchased a Bible and several texts." "I sold a few books to a drunken squire." "I called on the squire again, and he bought a few more books." "The squire had another deal." Thus, although the visits were chiefly to the poor, all social grades came in for attention, and by some of the well-to-do the itinerant booksellers were heartily welcomed. At this time, both Mr. Spurgeon and his brother were ardent advocates of temperance, in the strict sense of the word, without being teetotallers. At times, therefore, one or the other would say something which tended to irritate the more extreme section of total abstinence advocates. It was believed by the pastor that asceticism, in dealing with the drink question, would not in the long run advance the cause of true temperance; and he was as free in expressing his opinions as members of the uncompromising section were in denouncing them. Still, he advocated united action on the part of teetotallers and moderate drinkers in a crusade against drunkenness; and hence practically agreed with the twofold basis of the Church of England Temperance Society.

Among the more eccentric methods of seconding Mr. Spurgeon's efforts to make known the Gospel was that of a gentleman, unknown to the preacher, who actually defrayed the cost of inserting the sermons as advertisements in the newspapers of Australia. Such a method was of course enormously costly; and whether it was altogether to be commended will probably appear doubtful. Mr. Spurgeon always spoke in warm terms of the gentleman who found the money; but it was not the kind of thing he would have done himself. Several years ago something similar was done in London by one who advertised for funds to meet his expenses; but I believe that in that instance the pieces were the advertiser's own production.

Then there were friends who were very anxious concerning Spurgeon's reputation when stories more or less absurd gained currency. They were more anxious than the pastor was himself; for he scarcely thought he needed to trouble to take notice of them. All popular preachers have a number of stories told about them which are entirely fictitious; and some of those which were from time to time associated with Spurgeon had generations before been told of Rowland Hill and others. The evening classes at the Tabernacle continued to prosper as a nursery for the College. On December 11 we find the pastor presiding at one of the annual gatherings, which appears to have

been more than usually enthusiastic. A purse containing £15 was presented on behalf of the College.

Mr. Spurgeon took more than a passing interest at the end of the year 1868 in the celebration of the jubilee of Charlotte Chapel, Hose Street, by the Baptists of Edinburgh. He was not able to attend himself, on account of time and distance; but the heartiness with which the work of the denomination was carried on in the Scottish capital gave him genuine satisfaction. At many other meetings which came off towards the close of the year, accounts were rendered which cheered and encouraged those chiefly concerned. The men who had gone out from the College were found to be doing well; and so greatly appreciated was Mr. J. A. Spurgeon in his efforts to serve the students, that at this time the young men subscribed among themselves to present him with a testimonial as an expression of their gratitude. The interest which Mr. Spurgeon felt in the Costers' Mission at Golden Lane was shown by his receiving subscriptions on behalf of the work, and acknowledging them in The Sword and the Trowel. Thus, to the boundaries of the City in one direction, and to the borders of Southwark and beyond on the other, the influence of the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and of those associated with him in Christian service, was found to extend. The poor at home were never neglected while enthusiasm was being awakened for the heathen abroad. On the last Sunday of 1808, he preached on "Joyful Transformations," Isa 42:16, "I will make darkness light before them," etc.; and that discourse completed the fourteenth volume of his published sermons. He had progressed as far as Psalms 36 with "The Treasury of David." "John Ploughman's Talk" was also in progress in the magazine, which was at this time being enriched with some of its editor's most enduring productions.

Chapter 75: Spurgeon and the Children

Chapter 75.

Spurgeon And The Children

Sunday-schools at the Tabernacle—The College—"John Ploughman's Talk"—At Oxford—A First Interview—The Annual Sapper—The Voluntary Principle.

The work of 1869 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle opened with promise. The subject of the morning sermon on the first Sunday of the New Year was "Jesus Christ immutable." The "esteemed and venerable vicar of a Surrey parish," who for many successive years had supplied the text for Mr. Spurgeon's New Year's sermon, on this occasion sent Heb 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." It seems that the custom was for the text to be enclosed in a hamper filled with seasonable fare, that being the Churchman's method of expressing esteem for his Nonconformist friend. He appears to have been one who was not to be alienated either by the Baptismal Regeneration controversy or that which now raged concerning the disestablishment of the Irish Church. Exactly eleven years before, or on Sunday, January 3, 1858, Mr. Spurgeon had already, of his own accord, preached from that same text at New Park Street Chapel. The afternoon of this same Sunday was devoted to children, thousands of whom, as members of the Tabernacle and surrounding Sunday-schools, attended a monster service, the attraction being an address by Mr. Spurgeon. The invitations to the other schools were sent out by the secretary; at three o'clock, when the Tabernacle school occupied the area, and other schools the places apportioned to them in the galleries, the spectacle was a striking one; and stimulated by the sight, Mr. Spurgeon seemed to rise above his ordinary level. The hymns were printed on separate leaflets, and the singing of the first, "We bring no glittering treasures," was something long to be remembered. Prayer had preceded the hymn, and when the singing concluded, the young people were asked to join with their hearts, though not with their voices, while the psalm of gratitude was read, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." The speaker gained the attention of the youthful audience and retained it until the end. One who was present remarks: "During the few minutes of prayer in the middle of the service the silence was almost as great as in an ordinary adult congregation. Towards the close of the service, however, it was amusingly noticeable how the anecdotes were the grand specifics against restlessness and uneasiness." The subject was, "Children of God." It was first shown how they became such children by being saved from sin and its consequences by Christ, and by being adopted by the Father into His family. Then followed something about the way in which they could be recognised by what they did, as well as by what they did not do. It was then explained what were their privileges and what were their duties. The main points were well illustrated by anecdotes, so that the boys and girls may have gone away with clearer notions of the Gospel than they had previously possessed. Some who were present at this service may possibly read this account as middle-aged men and women; and they cannot do so without having pleasant memories of a great occasion. On Tuesday evening, January 5, the public once more crowded the Tabernacle, and so

again testified to the popularity of the College and its work. As Vice-President, Mr. James Spurgeon explained the work in progress, and then the pastor himself interested the audience with his statistics. With what extreme satisfaction he referred to the 285 students who had been admitted to the institution since its commencement, a number, he remarked, which "is equal to what some colleges have received during a period of fifty years." Nor was that all; for no less than 460 young men had received instruction in the evening classes, and some of those had been received into colleges of other denominations. Some students who were at Hackney College had spoken highly of the benefits they had received in the Tabernacle classes. There were 167 settled pastors who had gone forth from the Pastors' College, and 11 only had died or left the work. Their men had already formed 43 distinct new churches, and few could estimate the toil which that represented. Mr. Spurgeon was not only satisfied, he questioned whether many missionary societies could boast of so much success during the whole period of their existence; for in addition to the formation of new churches, 22 new chapels had been erected, while further efforts were being made to establish 11 congregations in as many destitute districts. The number of the students in course of training had risen to 82, and 174 attended the evening classes. Mr. Rogers, who was now seventy years old, gave one of his bright little addresses; after which came Mr. Spurgeon's lecture, illustrated with dissolving views, "My Rambles over the Hills of Surrey." The surprise of the evening was the presentation of a chased silver coffeepot to the Vice-President, Mr. James A. Spurgeon. The annual account of the church, rendered about this time, showed that, exclusive of pew-rents, the contributions raised for various purposes in the year amounted to £20,000. The money placed in the weekly offering boxes reached a total of £2,000, and this went to the College, for which a sum of £4,300 was subscribed. The collections at the Lord's Supper for poor members reached a total of £770; £1,000 was raised for Sunday and ragged-school work; the Chapel-building Fund lent £1,760; the new almshouses cost £6,600; and a total of £7,000 was allocated to the Stockwell Orphanage. The London Baptist Association had its annual gatherings at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on Tuesday, January 12, when Mr. Spurgeon presided at the morning, afternoon, and evening meetings. It was the custom to entertain the members at dinner, and on this occasion a sumptuous repast was provided. In the course of the day a paper was read by Mr. J. A. Spurgeon on "The Discipline of the Church at the Tabernacle." There was then some discussion going on concerning "The Destiny of the Lost according to Scripture;" and hence, a paper by Dr. Angus on "The Eternity of the Punishment of the Wicked" was considered to be timely; and the reading of that paper is said to have "produced a most solemn impression." A congregation of 5,000 assembled at the evening gathering in the Tabernacle. There were then 102 congregations in the Association. The church membership showed a total of 23,468; while 25,503 Sunday-school scholars were taught by 2,170 teachers. At times Mr. Spurgeon would receive money anonymously for various works; and occasionally sums would be placed in his hands by friends who wished to remain unknown. Early in 1869 it was reported that someone had volunteered to erect a chapel, schools, and almshouses in connection with the Metropolitan Tabernacle, but I am not aware that the enterprise was ever carried out.

One of the members of his church, for whom Mr. Spurgeon entertained high regard for her work's sake, and especially for the sake of the work carried on by her husband at Golden Lane, died about the middle of January, 1869. This was the young wife of Mr. W. J. Orsman. She passed away quite unexpectedly, leaving a daughter a few hours old. Mrs. Orsman's family had been associated with the congregation at Bishopsgate Chapel for a lengthened period; and as a

Christian her life had been a thoroughly practical one. A number of the poor people from Golden Lane, including many children from the ragged-school classes, followed her remains to their last resting-place in Abney Park Cemetery. Mr. Spurgeon conducted the service; and a contemporary account tells us that the pastor, "with much emotion, referred to her good works, commended her sorrowing husband and three little ones to the tender sympathies of the Lord's people, and earnestly addressed the people who crowded the chapel on the solemn realities of eternity."

About this time, Mr. Spurgeon, with many others, signed an address to his old friend the Hon. B. W. Noel, on his retirement from the pastorate of John Street Chapel, Bedford Bow. The address was presented on behalf of the Baptist Union, and was signed by the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle as Vice-President of the London Baptist Association. One passage in the address well expressed the popular preacher's bearing towards Mr. Noel: "We look on your relinquishment—on the ground of conscientious conviction, and in behalf of evangelical truths and holy fellowship—of the position you held in the Established Church, with an admiration which is shared by thousands who differ from us on many questions—an admiration which has been deepened by the unfaltering consistency and power with which you have maintained the principles you then avowed." The references made about this time to the circulation of the printed sermons show that they were ever making new friends in all parts of the world, e.g.:—

"Probably no sermons ever had such wide circulation as those of Mr. Spurgeon. We are frequently hearing of them in correspondence from all parts of the globe where any religious literature is found. A lady at Nismes testifies that they are distributed and read amongst the nominal Protestant towns and villages in Provence and Languedoc; indeed, from Iceland, from the Equator, and all round the world, they are to be found. Their natural style and easy flow of thought render them, it is said, peculiarly easy of translation; their cordial humanity, as well as their constant Gospel, gives them a welcome to all hearts and minds. The ethnologists are vanquished by this universal and identical response to an appeal made to mankind at large. The advocates of the plurality of races are staggered by this proof that 'God hath made of one blood all nations,' and the philosophers who differentiate tribes in regard to structure and faculties are confounded by the thrill of common kinship which this exhibition of the Gospel elicits from all human nature alike." The American newspapers, in many instances, also reprinted the sermons published in London, and occasionally an article from the magazine would be circulated as a tract.

Early in this year appeared what was destined to become Mr. Spurgeon's most widely circulated book—"John Ploughman's Talk." This "Plain Advice for Plain People," as the sub-title described it, had been given anonymously in The Sword and the Trowel, and though many may have guessed that the papers were by the editor, it was not really generally known until the book actually appeared. One reviewer correctly described the work when he said, "The language is homely, since the advice is intended for homely people. The style is humorous and satirical, and the papers abound with proverbs, many of which have become obsolete, and some of which are evidently derived from foreign sources." Tens of thousands of the book were speedily sold. The reviews were, on the whole, complimentary in a high degree; and among the leading London journals which gave notices was one which had made itself singular by its persistent attacks on the preacher's style and methods. Take this passage:—

"His 'John Ploughman's Talk' confirms our views of what goes to make up a popular preacher. As is the book so is the man. Mr. Spurgeon, we believe, exaggerates and intensifies the popular style. He deals in broad sayings, in plain speaking, in strong, vigorous, unqualified expressions. That is what an effective sermon should be, and is the essence of a proverb. A preacher cannot waste—if it is wasting—his time in looking out for counter-views, in making allowance for qualifications. He scorns limitations and distinctions. The proverb and the preacher are here at one. Hence it is that people preach best in their youth, and that many a good preacher gets afraid of the pulpit, and in mature age suspects his old telling talk, and the confident, decisive, and therefore attractive matter and manner of his earlier years, as a larger experience of men and things makes him reflective, cautious, and, as his hearers say, timid, and uncertain, and hesitating. A man with ripe views, or rather whose views are getting constantly modified and cheeked as he sees more of life, cannot preach well. It requires a certain narrow-mindedness to preach what is called effectively. Youth is the season for vigorous language and earnest convictions, and for confidence and decision. And as it is with intellectual, so it is with æsthetical, qualities. A formed judgment revolts at the crudities and unarguing assumptions, and, in all senses of the word, the presumptions of the earlier stages of intellectual growth, and revolts also at an over-confident and blustering manner. A man must have something, perhaps much, of the feminine nature to preach well. A woman of good feelings and intentions feels it to be a moral duty to express exactly what is in her mind—what are her convictions—only because they are her sincere and honest convictions. So must the preacher, if he is to preach well—that is, to preach sermons that will tell. His concern, he thinks, is not so much with what may be said on the other side, but, because a thing is in him, to out with it, as he would say. This is Mr. Spurgeon's manner. It is in his book as in his sermons. It is simply unfaithful to suppose that there are two sides to any question, and to be in earnest is only to be quite certain of your own line, and immeasurably scornful of everything else. A preacher, to be very popular with congregations, such as most congregations are, must be dictatorial, magisterial, contemptuous, violent, and addicted to strong language. "Whether these qualities are faults or excellence, far be it from us to say; but they are Mr. Spurgeon's, and he is a popular preacher; and he has published a book full of abrupt, unproved, and unargumentative assertions. And proverbial philosophy, as it is oddly called, exactly because there is no philosophy in it, consists of assumptions of this coarse and impetuous, but telling, character." The interest which Mr. Spurgeon manifested in the University towns was shown by his going down to Oxford early in. March to preach at the reopening of the old chapel of which a man locally well known in his day—Mr. Bulteel—was formerly the minister. The chapel had been purchased for the use of the Baptist denomination, and the pastor was Mr. D. Paterson, a student of the Pastors' College, who had already done some good service in the neighbourhood of London. Such a sphere was a difficult one for a young preacher to occupy; but in the President's opinion that made the post a still more honourable one. It was also about this time that efforts were first made to get funds for the erection of the East London Tabernacle for Mr. Archibald G. Brown—the largest building ever put up in connection with the Pastors' College.

It would afford some entertainment to take notice of the different estimates of Spurgeon which at this time were given by persons who viewed the popular divine from a number of independent standpoints. The weekly oracle of Southampton Street looked at the great preacher and the work in progress at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in a manner peculiarly its own. So was it also with The Church Times, which, after all, to judge by some of its reviews, and the estimate given at his

death, had a good opinion of Spurgeon at heart. Still, we find the Ritualistic organ speaking of the Baptist pastor as "that small Brummagem metal transpontine Popeling, Mr. Spurgeon." This same Popeling gave various indications of possessing "a clerical mind of the most portentous dimensions," however; "though it must be confessed that amongst his less lucky brethren the phenomenon does not flourish. It would certainly be a strange mind indeed," it was added, "in which the discipline of 'Lord Deacons' left many traces of clericalism." The College had now become such a respectable institution that it was considered to be an honour to be associated with its students. Occasionally, those who had been trained in its classes, and those who had not, became mixed up together. To correct misapprehension, the President wrote this letter, from which names are here omitted in case any of those referred to should be still living:—

"To the Editors of 'The Freeman'

"Sirs,—I write, as President of the Pastors' College, to disown a few of those names which are made in various public prints to claim the shelter of that institution. As we have no wish to receive honours to which we have no title, or to bear the responsibility of characters with which we are unconnected, we take this public method of saying that the following gentlemen are not indebted to us for their training:—"Mr.——, of Pinner, said to be of Tabernacle College in The Baptist Messenger for March, has no other relation to us than that his application for admission was declined.

"Mr.——, of Stratford, said to be formerly of the Metropolitan Tabernacle College, was, we believe, in the ministry before the College was founded, and, we are sure, is quite surprised to find himself written down as one of our alumni.

"Of Mr.——, of Spalding, twice assigned to us in the 'Handbook,' we are quite ignorant.

"Mr.——, mentioned in the 'Handbook' as of Great Ellingham, is a most respected brother, who attended a few of our classes, but he never was admitted to the College, although he probably would have been received among us had not Providence opened a field of labour for him. It is not accurate to class him among our students.

"Of Mr.——, mentioned in the 'Handbook' as without charge, we have no information.

"We doubt not that these are mere mistakes, but think it important to rectify them.

"C. H. Spurgeon.

"Newington, S.E., March 6, 1869." The date at which we have now arrived is, to myself, one of the landmarks of life. There are certain words used by Boswell concerning his hero which would exactly apply to myself in the spring of 1869—"This is to me a memorable year; for in it I had the happiness to obtain the acquaintance of that extraordinary man whose memoirs I am now writing—an acquaintance which I shall ever esteem as one of the most fortunate circumstances of my life." The time was March, 1869, instead of May, 1763; the place was the Metropolitan Tabernacle instead of Tom Davies' shop by Covent Garden; and the chief actor was Spurgeon instead of Johnson.

I had heard Mr. Spurgeon preach from time to time in his early days—at New Park Street, at the Music Hall, and at the Metropolitan Tabernacle; but I had never spoken to him. I first became

directly acquainted with the great preacher in 1868, when to a beginner in literature, and to one who was heartily in sympathy with its editor, the recently established magazine, The Sword and the Trowel, seemed to offer a desirable opening. I was then employed in investigating the history of the ancient Nonconformist meetinghouses of London; and having sufficient matter for two articles concerning William Kiffen, the first pastor of Devonshire Square Chapel, the contribution was sent to Mr. Spurgeon, and at once accepted. As a divine, a hero of the plague time, and a sufferer in the persecution which preceded the Revolution, the Puritan preacher and merchant was a man entirely after Mr. Spurgeon's own heart. The appreciative letter sent was at that time worth more to me than the honorarium which followed. The editor seemed to have a way, which was peculiarly his own, of encouraging those who were working hard in a direction which he approved. An article was next sent on the early life of Dr. Doddridge; but that divine, and even Watts, apart from their hymns, were not in very high favour with the young editor. In comparison with Whitefield and Wesley, he put them down as comparatively small men. Some time afterwards, two articles on Richard Baxter were sent; and the first of these came back in proof almost immediately. It was in connection with this that my first interview with Mr. Spurgeon took place.

I happened to call at the Tabernacle on a certain afternoon in March, 1869, and on opening the door of the secretary's room there sat the preacher himself, and before him, on the table, were a number of Sunday-school books, which he appeared to be examining before their admission into the library. When a stranger appeared at the door, Mr. Blackshaw's attention was directed to the intruder; but when the secretary mentioned my name Mr. Spurgeon at once became very affable, and led the way upstairs into the minister's vestry. It was then getting towards evening, and tea, with its accompaniments for one, was already placed on the table. Filling the single tea-cup and handing it to me, the pastor drank his own from a tumbler which stood near, thus, according to his way, saving the attendant any further trouble. He then talked about literary work and its prospects, and commissioned an article on another subject which he mentioned, and which he had hoped to be able to write himself. This was not for the magazine, but had reference to the Stockwell Orphanage, and was intended for separate publication. From that time Mr. Spurgeon continued to be my steadfast friend. The annual supper on behalf of the College, at which a sum of £1,170 was collected, took place on Wednesday, March 26, Mr. W. Fowler, M.P., presiding. The attendance was not so large as on some previous occasions, but the interest in the work carried on was unabated. In returning thanks for the support accorded through another year, Mr. Spurgeon gave this general account of what was being done, and of what had been already accomplished:—

"The work of training young ministers has, through our College, been carried on during another year beneath the wings of Providence and under the smile of grace. Young men have offered themselves in abundance, and many of them of a superior order of grace and talent. All our needs have been supplied by the Lord, who is our bountiful treasurer, as constantly as faith has made drafts upon His bank. The gold and the silver have been received more largely than in any previous year, and peace and spiritual energy have been very abundantly enjoyed. Our experience leads us to cling more closely than ever to the principle of faith and prayer, as far better than paid collectors and machinery. The number of the men has been, during the latter half of the year, greatly decreased, and we abstained from receiving fresh brethren, because it seemed to us preferable to introduce new blood by bringing in a considerable band of new men at one time. We are now looking forward to a large accession in the first week of April. For some

months during the year there were no applications for preachers made by the churches, and our men turned their attention to founding new churches, with the result that the Kingdom of the Lord was increased. The applications of churches are now coming in, the cessation being merely temporary; and there can be no doubt that the College, at its fullest number, is needed to supply the demands of our denomination. It will be remembered that a very large proportion of our brethren have created their own spheres, and others have accepted pastorates where the prospects were such as to repel all others, and, by God's grace, in many instances they have made the wilderness to blossom as the rose. The need of Gospel preachers increases every day. The field is boundless, and still the labourers are few. This College is our life-work, and we therefore feel as if we owed to every donor a weight of personal obligation, which we now acknowledge with many a prayer to God for each one. Since the College commenced, two hundred and eighty men have been received for training in its regular classes, and at least five hundred have had instruction in the evening classes. One hundred and eighty-six students have gone from us to settle in the ministry, of whom one hundred and seventy-seven still remain in the work, the rest having either died, been laid aside by illness, or relinquished the work from other causes. Forty-four distinct new churches have been formed by the agency of our College. Thirty new chapels have been erected as the result of our agency. In London, at the present moment, we are making efforts to establish churches in eleven destitute districts. There are sixty-four students in the College at this moment, and one hundred and fifty under tuition in the evening classes." In the course of the evening, Mr. Spurgeon went on to say that the year had been one of greater responsibility than he had ever known, on account of the addition of the Stockwell Orphanage to their other burdens; but, at the same time, he was glad to say that he had never been less concerned about money. Through the liberality of friends, funds had been received more largely than in any previous year, although only such means to attract money had been used as were consistent with the most perfect Christian willinghood. The speeches which followed showed that the speakers were hopeful as regarded the future. Mr. J. A. Spurgeon, as Vice-President, claimed for the College that it solved the question, How to make the Gospel acceptable to the working classes. The veteran Principal, George Rogers, now seventy years of age, showed that harmony existed between the students and their tutors. The chairman spoke as a sympathetic Quaker, who represented the University town in which Mr. Spurgeon had first undertaken Christian work. Then, after several representative students had said a word, the President went on to remark that he had never known a student to decline doing any work, however arduous and unpromising, that he had suggested. Often they would go to places with no guaranteed income except what he might be enabled to give them for a time; and they would open new rooms and gather congregations, and found churches, which in a short time were able to support the minister. They had thus formed their own spheres of labour for themselves, and had lived well in them, and found enough for an ox where some might not have had enough for a goose. He combated the notion which had been much talked about recently, that there were too many ministers in the denomination. The moment a denomination talked in that way, and ceased to be aggressive, it must decline. He held that they ought always to be striving to advance, and never to be satisfied with what they had done. The general prosperity of the church and congregation at the Tabernacle was such that we find thirty-two persons were baptised in a month. On the first Sunday of March, the friends who gathered around the communion-table spontaneously collected £100 as a thank-offering "for God's care of the church." This money was invested for the benefit of those who inhabited the new

alms-houses near the Elephant and Castle. One cause of gratitude may have been the partial recovery of Mrs. Spurgeon from what it was at one time feared might possibly prove a fatal illness. Early in the year the pastor had the happiness of once more seeing his wife among the great congregation at the Tabernacle.

Spurgeon and the voluntary principle continued to be a congenial theme with many writers; and one Evangelical clergyman was found quoting the popular fallacy that while building suburban churches, Nonconformists left the masses of the City to take care of themselves. The answer was, that voluntaryism had done wonders in destitute districts; and prosperous mission-stations in Golden Lane and St. Giles's were pointed out as proof that the poor were not neglected by those who removed to the suburbs.

Chapter 76: President of the London Baptist Association

Chapter 76.

President Of The London Baptist Association

New Chapels—Sustentation Fund—Sunday Opening of Museums and Picture Galleries—At Liverpool—Religious Tracts—Infant Salvation—At Aylesbury—Victoria Park—The College.

In 1869, Mr. Spurgeon was President for the year of the London Baptist Association. This honourable position involved the responsibility of ensuring the erection of a chapel for the use of the Baptist denomination in some needy district. At this juncture, however, a friend offered £500 on condition that the Association gave £1,500, so that Mr. Spurgeon thought that he would be able to commemorate his year of office by building two chapels instead of one. At the Spring meeting in Walworth Road Chapel, on April 13, he intimated that an eligible plot of ground had been purchased of the Government for the erection of a chapel at Battersea. In addressing the ministers and delegates present, Mr. Spurgeon, as President, made some references to the general outlook of the Baptist body. He said that their position as a denomination in London was not altogether ill, nor was it altogether well. There were some two hundred and seventy Baptist churches in the metropolis, about sixty or seventy of which were much higher in doctrine and lower in usefulness than they would like to accept as a representation of their position. Some of the churches were extremely weak, and struggling for existence. Their united membership could not exceed thirty thousand, and probably it would fall somewhat under that number. The number of baptised believers in the London churches was about proportionate to the number of those in the country, and it was a cause for regret that it should be so small, inasmuch as there was greater scope for the denomination in the metropolis than in the provinces. They were free from the influences of the country priests and the tyranny of squires and country landlords; so that success was easier of attainment in the metropolis than in many parts of the country. He thought, therefore, their increase should be much larger than it was. He was inclined to think that their Wesleyan brethren could labour more successfully amongst a population with but slender education; and that the middle classes seemed the best to appreciate the views which distinguished the Baptist denomination. He considered that they had, on the whole, a fine opportunity before them. Their fathers did not cultivate the field as they should have done, and it was for them to do more than they for the spread of their principles. He believed they occupied a great vantage ground at the present time. People had a strong desire to hear the Gospel preached, and the times were peculiarly favourable to religious thinking.

Some references were made to individual piety; and the pastor was sanguine enough to think that the great truth which distinguished the Baptist denomination was destined to become a leading question of the day. He thought that eventually people would inquire more into that truth, and believe in it more fully; and then, of course, other bodies would become absorbed into their own, and there would be only two sections left—the Baptists and the Romanists. As it was, their opportunity lay in zeal and union. There should be perfect unity in each church, and churches

should be united with each other; the church officers should be in earnest about the spiritual health and prosperity of each member, and should attend the weekly services of the church. Ministers and deacons should do their best to increase and foster the spirit of prayer in their churches. Each minister should find work for his people to do, and should not think of attempting to do it all himself. Work was the secret of the church's increase. They should also urge upon their people greater generosity in the support of the cause of Christ; and he himself considered that the system of weekly offerings should be adopted almost universally. They, as ministers, must do their best to extend and to fill the churches. In cases where the chapel was not full, could they not fill it by preaching sometimes in the open air instead of to empty pews? Could they not sometimes have theatre services, and vacate their chapels for short periods to preach in music halls? All that was possible should be done to bring people within hearing of the Gospel; and it also seemed as though the time were coming when more stir might well be made in regard to Baptist principles. It was thought that there would certainly be a gain if opponents were only provoked to defend their cause. The need of enlisting the young, especially, in Christian work, was dwelt upon; and in passing, Mr. Spurgeon mentioned that in the aggregate a debt of £40,000 burdened the Baptist churches of London.

Some difficulty was found in selecting a master for the Stockwell Orphanage; and at last, when one was chosen, he disappointed the President and the managers by declining to serve. Just at that time, Mr. Charlesworth, who had for some time assisted Mr. Newman Hall at Surrey Chapel, happened to call upon Mr. Spurgeon, and expressed his willingness to undertake the office. Mr. Charlesworth appeared to be naturally drawn towards the work, and he has held the head-mastership from that day till the present.

Some effort continued to be made at this time to improve the condition of the Baptist denomination by the formation of a sustentation fund. At one of the Baptist Union meetings, Mr. Charles "Williams, of Southampton, moved that "the whole matter relating to such fund should be undertaken by an independent Board." The scheme did not make headway, and the question arose whether, in the event of such a fund being founded, the Union should have any control over it, or whether the managers should be an independent body. In the conversation which followed, many doctors of divinity took part; and Mr. Spurgeon said that he had always held a theory—which would no doubt find acceptance with all present—that all doctors were inspired with wisdom and could not err. At the same time, he did not see any difference between a Board and a committee, excepting that a committee had no heart and a Board had still less. Why appoint a committee at all? If they gave up the whole subject, confessing their inability to deal with it as a Union, why not say so, and leave the matter to such a body? It would be better to appoint themselves, unless they, as a Union, could appoint men who were infallible. As it seemed evident that the Union would not be able unanimously to arrive at any practical plan, Mr. Spurgeon moved an amendment, which was seconded and carried, to the effect that the matter should be undertaken by an independent Board. At the Union conference on April 29, Mr. Bailhache, of Islington, read a paper on "Church Membership," and an interesting discussion followed. The author of the paper clearly expressed his views, and to him there appeared to be a broad distinction between the Church and the world. Mr. Bigwood, however, held that modern churches were probably very unlike those of the New Testament, and he thought it inexpedient to adopt tests which had the effect of keeping people back from entering the Church. Such views hardly commended themselves to Mr.

Spurgeon. He insisted that there was the same authority for requiring baptism as there was for expecting repentance and faith. Where, in the New Testament, was there a solitary instance of a person entering the Church who declined to be baptised? With regard to the proposition that persons were admitted into the Church with a view to salvation, it was negatived by the fact that the Church was to be a building of living stones. There was no rubric for the building-up of dead stones in order that they might be quickened. The Church was compared to a vine, and all the branches appeared to be the outgrowth of the inner life of the vine, or else they were liable to be removed by the pruning-knife. There was no instance of engrafting a dead branch with the view of its receiving life. He did not wish to lessen the distance between the Church and the world, but to increase it, and therefore he would plead for a different means of entrance into the Church from that which Mr. Bigwood adopted. He had refused many persons admission, and he must say that if he had never found a particle of chaff flying off from his wheat, he should think his fan was not of particularly great use. He did not think ministers were themselves exempt from Church discipline. There were some cases of unworthy men being elected who would never have been chosen if there had been a reference to the churches under whose authority they ought to have been. There ought to be a constant revision of the Church roll. He did not like to make any rule as to the time to be allowed to non-attendant members; every case ought to be taken upon its own. merits. Some members might be away for twelve months, but the absence of others from communion ought not to be tolerated for three months. He did not hold that our present tests were at all too stringent. Mr. Spurgeon took care to explain, however, that he objected to persons being brought before a Church meeting to be questioned by all who were present. He also mentioned that, since coming to London, he had received eight thousand persons into Church fellowship; but he had never met with such delicate cases as some which had been mentioned during the discussion.

Among the questions which also came up before the members of the Union was that of the proposed opening of museums and picture galleries on Sundays. It was moved that a petition be presented to Parliament against the proposed innovation; but this was met by an amendment, because the subject was "a very complex one, and required to be treated with considerable care, and fully discussed before the Union could see its way to any formal deliverance of opinion." When Mr. Spurgeon showed that by passing an amendment the members would virtually repudiate the petition and give a decision on the subject, there were cries of "No, no;" but, nevertheless, it was insisted that such would be the interpretation which people would put upon their action. He added, that he went very far, and to the extreme length of believing that a Government was instituted for governmental purposes only, and not for the maintenance of religion of any sort; but there was another truth which stood as a correlative. He held that a Government and every man, he he who he might, was responsible to the law of God, and he objected to the Government involving him in an act of Sabbath breaking, which it would do by opening his museum.

Though unable to be present at the presentation, Mr. Spurgeon at this time acted as treasurer of a fund which was presented to Mr. Samuel Green on his retirement from active ministerial service. The presentation took place at the Baptist Mission House on May 17, the amount raised being £420. On Wednesday, May 19, Mr. Spurgeon was at Liverpool as the guest of the Lancashire and Cheshire Baptist Association; and his sermon in Myrtle Street Chapel on Christian Enthusiasm produced a profound impression. The collection at the close on behalf of the County Mission amounted to over £80, and then followed a dinner at which three hundred persons sat down. At

the evening meeting of the County Mission he was the principal speaker; and in reference to a remark made by one present on the excellence of Lancashire, he said he should have thought more of the county if it had returned Mr. Gladstone to Parliament. The loud applause which greeted this remark showed the extreme popularity of the great statesman among Baptists. Then the speaker conveyed the brotherly love of his Association in London; and went on to say that if the Association of the North were to prosper it would have to be, as far as possible, a real and practical thing. They might rest assured that almost all societies that were shams would go to pieces, and if they could show no actual work done by them as a fraternity they would be called to the bar of the public opinion of the Church, weighed in the balance, found wanting, and come to an inglorious end. This was true more and more in the present age, for this age was something like a bull in a crockery shop, turning itself and smashing everything, no matter how beautiful in style, that was breakable. Only that which was eternal and true would remain, on which account the work of winning souls would stand the test, if nothing else would. The work of the London Baptist Association was referred to, and that body was said to be strong for usefulness because the members were united. Friends in Lancashire were then assured that if they left off their useful work they would go to pieces, and deserve to do so:—

"One of our objects should be to promote thorough and hearty Christian union among the churches. There is plenty of nominal union, but I fear there is as yet nothing to spare in respect of real heart-union among Christians. Our London Association has been of the greatest imaginable benefit in promoting acquaintance and confidence amongst the brethren, in place of petty jealousies or disputes, which so often prove on calm examination to be bottomless, simply sufficing to make one wonder how there can be people with minds so little as to make so much of nothing at all. There is no time in these days for pettifogging quarrels. If our friends do not think so much or so highly of us individually as we think is proper and justifiable, let us begin to think less of ourselves than, judging by the existence of such an envious feeling, we have done previously. Our growth depends on our adopting to the fullest possible degree an aggressive policy, and in this connection I remind you that the average of Baptists to the total population is less here than in London. The great mass of the artisans here are not to be led by the nose by squire or priest. Let those be taught the equality, liberty, and fraternity of the Holy Scriptures, for that, depend upon it, is the weapon with which to win. There is such a chance for Baptists in this county that one might be inclined to run away from any other district to share in the conflict and, I trust, in the subsequent victory."

Village stations were advocated, so also was the work of the evangelist, which in those days was not so common as in our own. Then service by young men, children's services, the revival of colportage, were referred to in turn. The speaker also advocated the practice of his own favourite service of open-air preaching. "If the preachers cannot get the people together by wearing black coats, then let them wear red coats," he said, "or do whatever else within the bounds of honesty and morality by which they can win listeners and reach hearts. If the people will not come to the chapels, let earnest preachers make their sonorous clamour fill the streets," it was added. "Let them be, in this respect, humble but zealous imitators of their blessed Master, and preach more in the highways." The wide diffusion of Gospel and denominational tracts was strongly insisted upon. Of what kind were the tracts to be, however?—

"Not common ones; for really the most of them nowadays might almost be prescribed by physicians as soporifics. They have too much of the sedative character. In illustration of this I may repeat the story I have heard of a man who was said to have been found in a state of coma through reading a modern tract. The man had to be rubbed and have brandy and water administered to him. Furthermore, the tract had, it is said, to be carefully removed about half a mile distant before the man recovered; but I will not vouch for the accuracy of all this. What I recommend is, that we ought to issue tracts upon our own distinctive principles, pointedly "written, and they would be certain to be read. It may not be a strange thing for me to say that I became a Baptist, not through anybody explaining to me the doctrine of baptism, but through reading that old standard Baptist work commonly called the New Testament. But to the present moment, it remains a mystery to me how it was that during the fifteen years before I became a Baptist never did a Baptist tract or book cross my track. I do not know how it was that so numerous a body of people, conscientiously convinced of the truth that was in them, could consent to let their printed testimony be on the whole as if it were not at all—for one faith it was plain enough, but for one baptism it was exceedingly dim. We ought to have plenty of little handbooks and plenty of tracts—if we are wrong, then let us give up the wrong; bub if we are right, let us not be ashamed to teach what we hold. We are first of all Christians with our distinctive views—we rejoice whenever Christ is preached; we are glad when the Gospel sounds with a silver trumpet to every ear; but let us keep up our testimony of the Gospel by all means, and let us become more and more clearly evangelical. The world needs us as Baptists and Christians, and there are some things we can do that no other denomination will do. I am a sectarian; I am not a believer in the modern Diana of unity, which some people cry up so loudly. I believe denominationalism, instead of being a blot, is one of the beauties of our Christianity, just as I believe the separate existence of the twelve tribes was by no means any dishonour to Israel, but that they altogether helped to swell the patriarchal pomp. If Christians could be fused and moulded into one denomination this night I would not lift up my finger to do it. Never was the world so dark as when there was only one form of ecclesiastical organisation, and I am afraid that the temptation to be unjust would be quite as great again if some ecclesiastical union could be forced upon us. Besides, I am afraid there are truths that would then get into the background, if there was not some body of men to maintain them. I believe that the Church of God and the world at large need the Baptists just now, and have always needed them. When did they begin as a denomination? When Christ went down to the Jordan, and John baptised Him in its waters. Protestants, Wesleyans, Independents, Catholics—all modern sects—have sprung up in their day, and the Baptists are glad to see them prosper; but we ourselves are the old patriarchal church derived from the Apostles." A compliment was then paid to John Bright; it was such a great thing to he a man who saw the world gradually coming to his opinions; and it was pretty much the same with those Anabaptists who were formerly scoffed at and hunted down. The truths they held were becoming recognised. Above all, they were to take heed that they never grew respectable; for a denomination which became respectable was very near its funeral sermon. The poor were a boon, a source of strength to the Church, so that the strength of a congregation was not to be calculated by the number of Aldermen and Common-Councilmen who attended in their carriages. The poor had to have the Gospel preached to them; and it was with the weapons of the Gospel and the devotion of holy living that they would win fresh ground for Christ. By this time the influence of the Pastors' College had extended even to the Australasian Colonies. Mr. Ness, who had acted as assistant at the Metropolitan Tabernacle,

having through ill-health resigned, proceeded to Melbourne and there founded a college, which Mr. Spurgeon regarded as a branch of his own, so that he made a grant of £100 to its funds.

It was now proposed to erect three chapels during Mr. Spurgeon's year of office as President of the London Baptist Association, and the first of these, at West Green, Tottenham, was opened on May 25, the President himself conducting the service. The building was situated in an improving neighbourhood, and was designed to accommodate four hundred persons. It had been put up some years previously, but having undergone some improvements and alterations, the chapel was well adapted for its purpose. After Mr. Spurgeon's sermon, there was dinner in a marquee, the great preacher presiding, and some will remember how genially he proposed the health of the Queen. Mr. Jesse Hobson had been the chief agent in procuring this building, and he was now suitably complimented; but, as the chairman pointed out, the enterprise could not have become successful apart from the aid of the Association. He believed that the Association was doing an important work in the metropolis, where the need for places of worship was so pressing. He was glad the present movement was in no way organised in opposition to other churches in the neighbourhood, for he had no sympathy with any efforts that were made to obtain congregations out of the churches of other denominations. At the same time, in so thickly populated a place as London, he thought they were none of them the worse for having plenty of other chapels in their neighbourhood. He believed it produced a healthy and mutual rivalry among the denominations. They were each so absorbed in their own views and principles that it did them good sometimes to be brought into contact with those who differed from them. Publishers in Paternoster Row did not find it mutually destructive to have their businesses in one street, and he did not think there would be any harm if they saw a street occupied on each side of the way with chapels belonging to the different denominations, and extending for a mile or so in length.

About this time Mr. Spurgeon embraced an opportunity which offered itself of expressing his views on the subject of infant salvation. Mr. Linscott, a member of the Bible Defence Association, was engaged in a discussion with a Mr. Antill, when the latter made a statement to the effect that the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle had said, "There are infants in hell a span long." Mr. Linscott disbelieved the assertion, and on asking for the truth, he received the following answer:—

"Newington, S.E., June 12, 1869.

"Dear Sir,—I have never at any time in my life said, believed, or imagined that any infant, under any circumstances, would be cast into hell. I have always believed in the salvation of all infants, and I intensely detest the opinions which your opponent dared to attribute to me. I do not believe that on this earth there is a professing Christian holding the damnation of infants, or if there be, he must be insane, or utterly ignorant of Christianity. I am obliged by this opportunity of denying the calumny, although the author of it will probably find no difficulty in inventing some other fiction, to be affirmed as unblushingly as the present one. He who doubts God's Word is naturally much at home in slandering the Lord's servants.—Yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon." On June 19 Mr. Spurgeon completed the thirty-fifth year of his age, and the day preceding was observed at the Stockwell Orphanage as a birthday celebration. The weather, which had been cold and wet, favoured the festival, and people were attracted in large numbers. There were crowded meetings in the afternoon, and some inconvenience was experienced on account of the company being so much larger than was expected. A wet day had been predicted, and it turned out a fine one; and this

provoked Mr. Spurgeon to express his wonder that "the twopenny prophets" who were continually predicting wonders in heaven and earth did not give attention to the weather. An attempt was made at holding an open-air meeting, but after the President had given his speech, the large assembly gladly divided into two companies, each finding shelter in a separate building. The proceeds of the day amounted to £680. A few days later the services he undertook at Aylesbury were illustrative of what Spurgeon was continually doing as his ordinary week-day work, so long as health and strength allowed. The sermons were on behalf of the new Baptist church, and were given in the Corn Exchange. The pleasant little town presented a crowded appearance such as might have been characteristic of a fair-day, ministers, as well as the principal inhabitants of the surrounding district, being attracted in large numbers. A company of eight hundred persons sat down to tea in the butchers' market adjoining the Corn Exchange; and what struck some as a novel feature was the large number of poor persons who were drawn together.

Mr. Spurgeon appears to have been quite busy in attending the opening or the founding of new chapels during the early part of this year. On June 22 he laid the foundation-stone of the present chapel at Grove Road, Victoria Park, in the presence of a thousand persons. It was a peculiarly happy day; for the preacher not only looked upon his own aggressive work as President of the London Baptist Association, he was also witness to the success of one of the Pastors' College men in a sphere in which others had successively failed. The congregation had been in existence for some years, but it had dwindled and had shown no signs of prosperity until Mr. G. D. Evans had undertaken the pastorate. The new chapel, in the Italian style, was for eight hundred persons, and the cost was under £5,000. After laying the stone of the building, Mr. Spurgeon made some remarks on "Holy Places":—

"I wish we did not need any places for worship, but that we could preach as the disciples did in Palestine or at the seaside, for then would those who never go to places of worship have the Word of God sounding in their ears like a silver bell. The more the Church in England keeps to open-air preaching the better; and the more it confines itself to what are superstitiously called 'holy places,' the more will it weaken itself amongst the masses of society. I do not know what may be the views of some of my brethren in the ministry around me: I do not attach any holiness to a place because it is given up to worship; I conceive all places to be holy where men meet for a holy purpose, and any places unholy where men may be found teaching conspiracy against God. I do not believe we are building a sanctuary. Under the old law, the temple was holy in a typical sense, but from the day the Lord ascended up to Heaven He made all places free to worship in; and now

'Where'er we seek Him, He is found, And every place is hallowed ground.'

I confess to looking with considerable suspicion upon those who oppose the delivery of secular lectures—provided they are for the good of the people—in a place of worship."

It was explained that one reason why churches were formed was for their testimony, to which sufficient importance did not seem to be attached. The Gospel was needed by all classes; and out of the population of London few had the Gospel preached to them. There were thousands in the metropolis who knew no more about the Gospel than they did about the Great Cham of Tartary. All classes seemed to be about equally badly off; it was not the poor alone who, through being degraded, needed to be lifted up. "I regret to say it, but it is a fact that the rich prove as immoral as the poor; and if the poor man sometimes becomes a blackleg, I have my example in the upper

classes. The revelations of the bankruptcy and other courts have lately taught people that many of the right honourables were right abominables; and the manner in which some of the members of the legislative assembly have broken their pledges proves that the high places are as much addicted to sin as the lowest dens and kens of London." How to get at so vast a population did not plainly appear, but all were urged to use such weapons as they were able to wield in the war against sin. The young men educated in the College who were undertaking such aggressive Christian work as the church at Victoria Park represented attracted considerable notice on both sides of the Atlantic, and they, as well as their methods and characteristics, were freely criticised from various standpoints. About this time an article on the subject appeared in The New York Examiner, and as the production of one who had made special inquiries in England, the estimate was apparently that of an impartial American. After showing who the students were, how they were supported and taught, etc., the American said in conclusion:—

"No mere array of facts, however, enables one to form an ample and satisfactory judgment in respect to an institution like that here described. Failing to see the men, I instituted inquiries. It is, in the first place, a good deal to say that the scheme has Mr. Spurgeon's own full confidence. He is not the man to spend his strength on unavailing labours. But I sought equally the views of brethren not connected in any wise with the Tabernacle. The opinions expressed to me were somewhat various, according to the points of view from which they were taken; but, except in one or two instances, they were not widely apart. The sum of the testimony was in favour of the College, and the objections urged were such as we should urge on this side of the Atlantic with even greater emphasis. The evangelical spirit, the godly earnestness of the young men, and the usefulness of their labours of winning souls to Christ and gathering churches, were fully recognised and applauded. On these points I recall no exceptions to the common verdict. I think the esprit de corps by which they are distinguished sometimes takes forms which are not agreeable to outside brethren, and that while their intense zeal is recognised as the instrument of large immediate results, they are, in instances more or less frequent, regarded as open to the criticism of lacking the intellectual discipline and culture necessary for sustained and permanent usefulness on the same fields. In other words, such of them as these are better evangelists than pastors, better fitted for itinerant than for fixed service. Instances of this kind were named to me as bringing local discredit upon the whole system—a result equally natural and illogical.

"Sufficient time has not yet elapsed for judgments to be regarded as final. Most of the men are still young—few or none have reached the full maturity of their powers. It is the belief, however, of Mr. Rogers, though I doubt whether it is greatly his ambition, that preachers and theologians destined to eminence and permanent fame will ultimately rise out of this mass of young men, as they have always arisen out of the mass of the Dissenting ministry of England."

It was never Mr. Spurgeon's ambition to train theologians; he merely wanted effective popular preachers

Chapter 77: An Attack of Smallpox

Chapter 77.

An Attack Of Small-Pox

Illness—Missionaries—Lecture on Bells—The St. James's Magazine on Spurgeon—Illness—"The Treasury of David "—Death of "Father" Olney.

According to a confession he once made to me in the study at Helensburgh House, Mr. Spurgeon considered himself to be a fortunate man in the conventional sense; but at the same time he considered himself to be unfortunate in not having those privileges which are commonplaces in the lives of less eminent persons. What a beautiful garden the study windows looked out upon; but what, a drawback it was hardly ever to have half an hour to spare to walk round it, and enjoy its beauties in detail. The pressure seemed to become more and more overwhelming; and it became more and more evident that the cause of the ailments which now became more frequent and more painful was mental rather than physical. In the middle of September he was laid aside by a sharp attack of neuralgia. He preached on Sunday, the 12th of the month, but was laid aside in the week. He was not able to appear on the following Sunday, and on October 7 he was unable to keep an engagement at Leicester. Change of air and scene was sought at Brighton, and, writing from there, he said that he would be unable to attend the Baptist Union meetings at Leicester. The gout in the head, attended with great pain, was of a dangerous form.

There was this year an animated discussion in regard to the Baptist Foreign Mission and its agents which created some interest. Speaking at the annual meeting of the Society at Exeter Hall, Dr. Landels exposed the defects of the system of sending out only married men, who often involved the committee in great expense, in some instances before they had done any service. He advocated sending out unmarried men in the first instance, and resolved to agitate until some reform was effected. A number of letters were written, and the opinion seems to have been that Dr. Landels was setting up a standard of heroism he would not himself care to exemplify. Mr. Spurgeon wrote thus to the editors of The Freeman:—"Dear Sirs,—Last week I commenced a letter to you upon the missionary question now under debate, but was unable to complete it owing to extreme indisposition. I am barely able to write now but I feel as if I could not stay my pen. The tone of much of the correspondence in your journal concerning the matter in hand is deeply to be regretted. Are we such babes in grace that we cannot consult as to how to do the Lord's work without falling into the use of personalities, insinuations, and bitternesses? Better things are to be believed of us, and henceforth it behoves us to lay aside these marks of spiritual weakness and speak the truth, and hear the truth spoken, without irritation. Our brethren who have conducted the discussion are such gracious men that they have but to will it and another spirit will rule the hour.

"I feel bound in duty to say that Mr. Landels seems to me to be far more worthy of our thanks than of our suspicions. He expressed himself manfully upon a delicate subject, knowing that many would differ from him; this alone secures him honour among Baptists. The brave shall never lack

defenders in our ranks while the traditions of our heroic fathers survive among us. Had Mr. Landels been wrong throughout, his daring should have secured him chivalrous treatment from his opponents, and, together with his past character, it should have screened him from the faintest suspicion of the mean-spiritedness which has been insinuated. For one, I must confess I listened to his speech with reverent awe, delighting in the man to whom it was given to speak in such a manner—not envying his gift of eloquent utterance, but marvelling much thereat, and rejoicing to see it enforcing such Apostolic teaching with such sanctified fervour. I am sure the speaker did not mean to hint an unkind thing of a single worker in our foreign field. He always speaks more severely than he precisely means. There are no lurking bitternesses in him. Had he meant sarcasm he could have dealt it out plainly and vigorously, for the man has no lack of power or courage to lash, out if he feels that God's work demands it of him.

"I am prepared to stand by him in this missionary controversy in evil report and good report. The resolutions of the committee have my heartiest sympathy. I trust the attempt to overthrow them will be an utter failure. If they are rescinded, my faith in the society's future will be at the lowest ebb. If changes so slightly affecting the bulk of the society's work, so pressingly requested by brethren to whom the opinion of their necessity amounts to a solemn conviction, are to be dismissed with outcries of denunciation, what wonder if, disheartened with our rigid conservatism, our zealous friends should try their schemes alone and so weaken a society already none too strong. Let none be driven from us because we cannot afford space for their convictions; rather let the society which led the van in the mission enterprise itself count it her glory to adapt herself to the conscientious views of her supporters, that so by the aid of their differing light she may find out the more excellent way.—Yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon.

"Brighton, September 21."

There were now about one hundred boys in the Stockwell Orphanage, with the prospect of the number being doubled within a very short time. At Michaelmas there was another festival at the institution, the chief attractions being the singing of the children and the playing of a company of accomplished hand-bell ringers. The schoolroom was decorated as for a holiday, a large congregation was attracted, and there was, besides, what at first looked like a most eccentric collection of bells, of various sizes, shapes, and ages, these being designed to illustrate the lecture on Bells which the President had undertaken to give. At the time, and in connection with this occasion, the Baptist Metropolitan, as he was called, was contrasted with the Romish Metropolitan, much to the advantage of the former. "Bell, book, and candle," in connection with Rome, were associated with cursing; but Bells, the Book, and Candles—the latter having reference to Sermons in Candles—in the case of Spurgeon, became a means of blessing. "No mere report would convey an adequate idea of the interest which Mr. Spurgeon contrived to throw around a subject to which probably few among his hearers had given much attention," remarked one who was present. It was added that the President had "a gift, common to few, which enables him continually to relieve the monotony of a subject by startling divergences, which keep alive the listening powers of his hearers without any lowering of his standard as a teacher, or the suggestion of a doubt as to his oneness of character when devout thoughts find expression in words full of solemnity."

It was quite true that the audience were invited into little-frequented paths, while conjectures which they little expected to hear were started. For example, when lying in his cradle, did Cain amuse himself with coral bells? Was the flock of sheep which Jacob tended headed by a bell-wether? Did the sheep and camels of Job carry such tinkling bells as had been heard on the platform? Was it probable that bells had been invented by Noah; and did the phrase "eight bells" at sea originate from there having been eight persons in the Ark? Then, did the patriarch ring a bell during the Mood when the beasts were about to be fed, after the manner of a modern circus?

More trustworthy information about bells in general was that they were first used in a.d. 400 as calls to divine worship, soon after which date they became associated with superstitious practices. "St. Dunstan was distinguished for his ability as a bell-maker," it was also remarked; "and he may be imagined to have been engaged in this employment when with red-hot tongs he is said to have taken the devil by the nose as a lesson to us that we should keep our hearts in a red-hot condition, and be ready to attack the adversary of souls whenever he makes his appearance." It was shown that the music of bells had been associated with the Sabbath; and the Curfew was regarded as a necessary precaution rather than as an example of Norman tyranny. Bells had been rung to clear the air of devils, or to drive away lightning; but when that had recently been done during a thunderstorm in France, the only tower struck was one in which the bells were ringing. In drawing some useful lessons from his subject, Mr. Spurgeon went on to say that bells were floated amid dangerous rocks to give notice by ringing in the storm; and so God in His providence had fixed storm-bells which, if listened to, would warn travellers, by decay of health, fortune, or character, against those hidden rocks upon which many yearly perished in terrible shipwreck. Ministers needed to be like bells: they must be cast in the furnace by the great Master Maker; but they were of no real use until God rang them. Pastors had been known to preach what deacons told them to preach; but they might as well have no tongue at all as be thus muffled. Nor were they to resemble cracked bells—cracked in reputation. They should be like bells warning wayfarers of approaching storms, guiding travellers to a safe refuge, inviting to a marriage feast souls married to Christ, and they should not mind being kept to work. "The motto inscribed on one bell I feel inclined to take as my own," said Mr. Spurgeon, with characteristic emphasis—"'Pull on, brave boys, I am, metal to the backbone. I'll be hanged before I crack!'" Just as some bells had been known to wear out their steeples, ministers should be content to wear out their bodies in their Master's service. The third division of the lecture was a little sermon on the word Bells, the heads being the constituent letters, e.g.:—

"B, Biblical, suggests that the bells associate with the pomegranates which were on the high priest's garments, and teaches that the Christian's life should sound forth a confession of Christ, and be fruitful for His glory; while the bells on the horses should teach that the commonest things of life should be consecrated to God's service. E, Emblematical, teaches negatively that we should not be like sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, but positively our life ought to ring out with a clear note God's praise. "We must ring regularly, continuously, harmoniously, and joyously. Some Christians pull such a long face that you can only read on their countenance misery unto the Lord, but I do not understand preparing for everlasting happiness by plunging ourselves into incessant misery. L, Literally, we ought to make all our lives holiness to the Lord; we ought to engage in nothing in which we would not be found employed when the Lord comes. Let holiness to the Lord characterise our time—measuring bells, our wedding bells, our visiting bells (not, as too often now,

the silliest and vainest gossip), our shop bells (let them always ring out, 'we give no short weight here!'), our table bells, our joy bells, and our sorrowful bells." At this time a popular shilling monthly magazine gave an article on the Tabernacle and its pastor which at least showed that interest in Spurgeon and his work extended to all classes, while prejudices which formerly existed were gradually being broken down. The following passages may be quoted as still showing how the preacher appeared to outsiders who were not too prejudiced to give him credit for being what he was:—

"The sermon is, however, the great feature of the service at the Tabernacle, and it is his preaching which has made Mr. Spurgeon famous. The vast audience settles down to a breathless silence before he gives out his text, and expectation and interest are visibly written upon the faces of all.... The writer, for his part, must declare that he went to listen to Mr. Spurgeon as strongly prejudiced against him as anyone could well have been; but that after hearing him preach at least half a dozen times, and after reading more than a score of his printed sermons, he finds his old prejudices entirely destroyed. In their place he is free to confess that he entertains a very lively admiration of the popular preacher's simplicity and earnestness.... His sermons are like his prayers, entirely extempore. The preacher stands in front of his platform, pocket Bible in his hand, and pours out in that wonderful voice of his a discourse which is always telling, and which would be really eloquent were a little more pains taken with its composition. To literary merit, however, Mr. Spurgeon does not apparently aspire, nor does he ever seek to indulge in rhetorical fireworks above the heads of his congregation. On the contrary, his first object appears to be to talk in the simplest manner to each person before him.... When you analyse his sermons you marvel at the effect they have produced; but when you listen to them as a whole, rolled forth by that magnificent voice, and evidently coming straight from the heart of a man terribly in earliest, you cease to wonder at their success. This man, the most popular preacher of his generation, is also the most simple preacher to whom we have ever listened.... His extraordinary earnestness and his own unmistakable faith in the truth of all that he teaches commend his preaching to the common mind. And it cannot be denied that it is a style of preaching which is likely to do great good. The harlot, the drunkard, the profligate, are the persons to whom he addresses himself. The wisdom of the world, its pride, its intellect, its refinement, he holds in contempt. It is its sin and misery which seem to have the sole attraction for him; and he calls upon the perishing to flee from the wrath to come with all the fiery earnestness of a Whitefield or a Wesley.... No one who has heard Mr. Spurgeon can deny that a great political leader was lost to the country when he became a Baptist minister.... He has, however, taken another path in life. In all sincerity we believe that he has done well to do so. The Church of England may regret that such a man as this remains persistently without her pale, and that from the faults of his early training he is her consistent foe.... He is, in the course which he has taken, following in the footsteps of Him who came to call sinners, not the righteous, to repentance—Him of whom it was said, as it may with truth be said of the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, that 'the common people heard him gladly.'" In the course of a sermon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle at the end of October, Mr. Spurgeon particularly referred to the work of the Church in general, especially to that of the Church of England. It was shown that in proportion as the Church realised her mission the less would be her desire to seek mere honour and self-aggrandisement. Could it be imagined that churches existed for ministers or clergymen? If such were the case, the sooner the whole thing was abolished the better. Churches of any class were not made that men of ready speech might stand up on Sunday and talk, and so win daily

bread from their admirers. Nay, there was another end and aim apart from this. These places of worship were not built that the various congregations might sit comfortably and hear something that should make them pass away their Sundays with pleasure. A church in London which was not doing good in the slums and dens and kennels of London was a church which had no reason to justify its longer existing. A church which did not exist to reclaim heathenism, to fight with evil, to destroy error, to put down falsehood—a church which did not exist to take the side of the poor, to denounce injustice, and to hold up righteousness—was a church which had no right to be. Let her have her bishops and her preachers, and let them be supported, let all things be done decently and in order; but let the end be looked to—the conversion of the wandering, the teaching of the ignorant, the help of the poor, the maintenance of the right, and the putting down of the wrong. All ought to take their share in battling with the evils which afflicted humanity. Though reforms of all kinds should be carried out, the first thing was to get at the hearts and consciences of men. The preacher went on to show that the mission of the Church was not alone to those who would treat them kindly, generously, and affectionately, but its great errand was to the harlot, to the thief, to the swearer, to the drunkard, to the most depraved and debauched. If no one else cared for these, the Church always must; and if there were any who were first in their prayers, it should be those who, alas! were last in their thoughts. The ignorant should be diligently cared for. It was not enough for the preacher to preach so that those instructed from their youth could understand him; he must think of those to whom the commonest phrases of evangelical truth were as meaningless as the jargon of an unknown tongue; he must also preach so as to reach the meanest comprehension; and if the ignorant came not to hear him he must use such means as best he could to induce them—nay, compel them—to hear the good news. The Gospel was meant for those who most persecuted religion; it aimed its arrows of love against the hearts of its foes. The Church needed to be hopeful, for her sphere was more hopeful than it had ever been before. If ignorance were a plea with God, they had only to look at the millions of heathen and at the hundreds of thousands in London to whom the truths of the Gospel were the greatest novelties. Under such conditions the Church should never stay her hand from doing good. If the Lord were coming to-morrow it was no reason why Christian people should subside into mere talkers and readers, meeting together for mutual comfort and forgetting the myriads of perishing souls. If it were true that this world was going to pieces in a fortnight, and that Louis Napoleon was the Apocalyptic Beast, he cared not a fig; it made no difference to his duty, and did not change his service. They must not live to themselves; the mere accumulation of money, the bringing up of their children, the building of houses, the earning of their daily bread—all this they could do; but there must be a greater object—the beginning to live for the benefit of others.

Mr. Spurgeon preached in the Tabernacle on Sunday, November 7, but during that week he became unwell, and was found to be suffering from an attack of small-pox. Friends were reassured by the report that the disease was of a mild type; but unhappily the sufferer was in a more than usually weak condition. Large congregations assembled at the Tabernacle on Sunday, November 14, to hear Mr. Augustus Rees, an ex-clergyman of the Established Church. Towards the end of the month the reports were still favourable; but better than medicine in their reviving effect was one donation of £500 and then another of £1,000 for the Orphanage, which came just at this time. The latter was accompanied by the following letter:—

"London.

"Dear Sir,—I have had a sum of money in my possession for some charitable purpose, but could not quite decide the object. I have lately noticed in the papers the death of a gentleman... leaving various large sums to some of the best of our institutions, but not a drop of the golden shower has fallen upon Stockwell Orphanage. Under these circumstances I have enclosed it to you for that rising charity, with the hope that it may be followed with many others from those who can give. Trusting that the Lord will give you health and strength to carry on your work, and finally take you and me to Himself through the merits of the Redeemer,—I am, yours etc., "J. K." The report gained currency early in December that Mr. Spurgeon had sufficiently recovered to leave London for Paris; but unhappily that was not the fact, as gout, which followed small-pox, had the effect of keeping him a prisoner in his own house. It was hoped that he would preach on the Sunday before Christmas Day; but he was not able to do so until the Sunday after. He had been absent from the Tabernacle for six Sundays; and when he returned the pastor expressed much gratitude for his recovery, and gave a sermon on "Christ the Rise and Fall of Many," to an overflowing congregation.

It was about the time that he was recovering from the attack of small-pox that Mr. Spurgeon gave to the world the first volume of his "Treasury of David." The work is worthy of its author; but we should make a mistake if we supposed that in these comments we had all of the best things that Spurgeon was capable of saying on the Psalms. The truth is that for many years previously the young preacher's comments on these inspired utterances had attracted great notice, and I have no doubt that many expositions given in the course of the ordinary ministry, which were spoken without being taken down, were equal, and in some instances may have even been superior, to the printed passages. So far as I can judge, it was quite consistent with Spurgeon's temperament to say finer things when stimulated by the sight of the expectant faces of the Tabernacle congregation than when he sat down, pen in hand, to write. At the same time, in "The Treasury of David" the reader sees the author at his best. The comments are for devotional reading, while the illustrative passages on each Psalm, gathered from authors of all ages, form an encyclopædia of illustration which is perhaps unique of its kind. In this department assistance was rendered by Mr. J. L. Keys as amanuensis, besides others, and without such aid the work could never have been done by so busy a man. In reviewing Volume I., the denominational organ said:—

"The plan of the volume is very simple and clear. We have first Mr. Spurgeon's own comments on each Psalm, verse by verse, full of raciness and unction. Then follow extracts from various writers—nearly five hundred of them—largely Puritanical, though by no means exclusively so. These extracts form a regular catena of comments; and for Puritan writers the catena is very complete. After these comments come 'Hints to the Village Preacher,' as Mr. Spurgeon calls them; and lastly, appended to each Psalm is a list of works, expository and homiletical.... The extracts will have great value for all readers, especially for those who have few books. It is impossible to look over a single page without finding something, and often much, to suggest or to illustrate truth, and the very variety is stimulating and healthful. Mr. Spurgeon's own comments are worthy of their company, and give a degree of life and of present interest to the whole which add very much to the value of the book. Some will value the extracts chiefly for the sake of the original comment; all who value the extracts for their own sake will value them the more for the comments. For spiritual insight and force the original comments have special interest.

"Mr. Spurgeon is careful to note that he does not endorse all he quotes, either the scholarship or the orthodoxy, and must not be held answerable for all that is written. This warning is fairly given, though for the most part it is not needed. The only suggestion we should make is that the learning and the natural history be carefully watched. The old writers were rather apt to get lessons from false etymologies, and to illustrate spiritual truths from supposed facts of natural history of which the Creator knew nothing. The spiritual lessons are often ingenious and substantially true; but the natural history or the derivation is false; and when the modern preacher comes to repeat them, the younger hearers who know better think the theology no sounder than the science, and get mischief from the teaching. Such instances are rare in this volume, but we have noticed a few."

One day, soon after the volume appeared, I entered the study at Helensburgh House, and was gratified to find how pleased the author was with the reception which an appreciative public had accorded to his work. "Here it is," he said, taking up the volume which was the production of his genius and industry, while he looked at it as fondly as he might have done at a favourite child. He remarked that works of that kind were usually issued in small editions; and he was naturally gratified at his book becoming actually popular. The volume, bearing the author's autograph, is now among my valued possessions.

It was at the close of the year 1869 that the pastor and congregation at the Tabernacle lost by death the services of the senior deacon, Mr. Thomas Olney. In the early days of the great building "Father" Olney, as he was called, was a familiar figure at the back of the preacher, and he frequently accompanied Mr. Spurgeon on his preaching tours. Mr. Olney was a native of Tring, Hertfordshire, and was born in 1790. At an early age he was apprenticed to a London mercer, and from the first he became connected with the congregation under Dr. Rippon at Carter Lane, and remained a consistent and honoured member of the Church for sixty years. He became deacon in 1838 and treasurer in 1855. His faith and humility were quite childlike, and he was a true friend of the poor. He had the happiness of seeing his sons walk in the pathway of religion he had chosen for himself; and his grandsons now reflect honour on the family name.

Chapter 78: At Work Again

Chapter 78.

At Work Again

Re-appearance at the Tabernacle—Americans and the Evangelical Alliance—Spurgeon's Letter—The College, Spurgeon, and "Unorthodox London"—Death of Judge Payne—Annual Supper—Excursion to Scotland.

On the last Sunday of the year, being the day after Christmas Day, Mr. Spurgeon was again in his pulpit at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and preached with all his old power to very large congregations. On the first Sunday of 1870 the morning discourse was "Assured Security in Christ," the text being 2Ti 1:12—"I know whom I have believed," etc. At this time the friends of Spurgeon in the New World were again found indulging the hope that the great English preacher would make a visit to their country. The Examiner and Chronicle of New York had given out that it was not unlikely the voice of the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle would be heard at a notable gathering of the Evangelical Alliance which was to come off in the greatest city of the Republic. To have allowed such a misunderstanding to become common might have caused some mischief, as well as great inconvenience, to large numbers of friends. The following letter was, therefore, sent to New York:—

"Clapham, January 7, 1870.

"To the Editor of 'The Examiner and Chronicle.'

"My Dear Sir,—I observe in your paper a statement that my attendance at the New York Evangelical Alliance meeting was not improbable, and I have observed in other papers remarks to the same effect. Will you, therefore—to save many correspondents further trouble in requesting me to preach, lecture, etc.—kindly give publicity to one or two words from me? I never had even the remotest intention of being present at the aforesaid meeting, and in no form or fashion led a single person to imagine that I should be there. My health is most precarious, and my home-labour is incessant. I am chained to the oar. I cannot leave home, not even to see the thousands of beloved and honoured brethren in America, with whom my heart is warmly united. Moreover, if I could overcome these difficulties I should still be unable to attend an Evangelical Alliance meeting; not because I would not, but because they have thrust me out privily and uncondemned, and I cannot return to the Society unless it repudiates the deed. The secretary wrote me, requesting me to withdraw on account of my sermon on 'Baptismal Regeneration,' and more especially certain remarks in it upon the Evangelical clergy. Of course I did at once withdraw. I have been told by members of its Council that the letter was unofficial, and that they regret, etc.; but there the matter rests. I am under the ban of the Evangelical Alliance, and should not venture to appear at any gathering connected with it, lest my freedom of speech should again be distasteful. There should be an Evangelical Union wide enough even to tolerate such an offender as I am—for I trust I am one of Christ's—and its meetings should be so arranged as not to occasion difficulties with those

holding your views upon communion. There could be no objection to those persons holding a united Communion Service who might choose to do so, but there can be no great benefit in such a service being officially arranged by the Society. However, I have no right to give advice, as I am not allowed to be a sharer in the matter.

"Permit me to assure Baptist friends in America that I am not at all the enemy of their strict fellowship which they seem to think me to be. If they would let me follow my own convictions of duty, they would not find me interfering with them. I do not think you are right; but I set very small store by the question, and have neither written nor spoken on the point—as though it were one great end of my existence to fight with the strict brethren! I wish we all had more light, more life, and more love. If I found myself erring against either of these three principles in joining in communion with my brethren, I should be alarmed; but I do not find it so. That, however, you will probably set down to my deficiency in the first, which will be the kindest interpretation. Wishing success to all brethren labouring for Christ,—I am, Dear Sir, yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon."

On Tuesday, January 11, the pastor and his people entertained the members of the London Baptist Association at the Tabernacle, when an encouraging report was presented. Mr. Spurgeon was one of the speakers, and he undertook to distribute a portion of the collection made at the dinner-table on behalf of poor ministers. At the annual meeting of the College, on January 26, the President was in excellent spirits on account of the success of the year. He was able to tell of thirty-six students who had settled during the year, and, among them, Mr. J. Magee had accepted a professorship at Nashville, Tennessee. There already existed two hundred and twenty settled pastors who had been educated in the College, while fifty new churches had been formed, and thirty new chapels erected. "We do not always get men fitted for the work, and some who appear so at first prove otherwise," remarked Mr. Spurgeon. "We make mistakes. Unless we had the infallibility of the Pope, we are sure to make mistakes; and I suppose if we had we should make more mistakes still. We should probably rely on our own wisdom, and that would turn out evil." The President then referred to the way in which he spoke to the students when they were first taken in hand. "I give them warning that if ever they have known what work was before, whether as brickmakers or tailors, they have yet to know what work is when they come here. Making all deductions that can be made in honesty and by prejudice, there is not to be found any society under heaven that has accomplished such a work as this is, with, the means entrusted to us. We have only to hear of these settlements to know that the hand of God is with us." The conclusion was that the fifty churches which had been added to the denomination were fifty more than would have existed but for the College, the indirect influence of which was also great. The weekly offering, which had been started in the interest of the College, had realised £1,869 in 1869, so that it would probably reach a total of £1,870 in 1870, without any great extra effort. The great attraction of this occasion was the President's lecture on "Bells."

It was a rare thing for Mr. Spurgeon to send a correction to a newspaper, but at this date he addressed the following to the denominational organ:—"Mr. Editor,—You were so very kind as to tell your readers that the little book of my Talk had sold till it had reached nineteen thousand. Now, that was an exaggeration the wrong way upwards, for the public have bought ninety thousand, and the printers are getting out the hundredth thousand. I am just a little proud of this: as the peacock said when he spread out his tail; so please excuse this short note, just to set you right in your counting.

"I hope your Freeman is getting on, for a sound paper is a great blessing to the country, and Baptists ought to be ashamed of themselves if they don't keep you going at a growing rate. I would say more, but I have no end of sheep and lambs to see to at this season, for I have to take my turn as a shepherd as well as a ploughman. I am glad to do anything for my Master; and if I get half a smile from Him I am as merry as a lark.—Yours, always plodding, "John Ploughman.

"February 5."

A series of articles on "Unorthodox London" was now appearing in The Daily Telegraph. The general title adopted by the writer at first sight appeared to be inappropriate or misleading; but the explanation given was more satisfactory: "It is at the point where religious systems, avoiding the trammels of the Establishment, strike the limits of doctrinal orthodoxy that they become important agencies for leavening the masses." The sketch of Mr. Spurgeon and the Tabernacle as a working hive was true in the main. Spurgeon was recognised as a great preacher, but his oratorical powers were thought to be less striking than his great personal influence and the various beneficent agencies which had the Tabernacle for their head-quarters. Take this passage:—

"Never did I witness a happier sight than that which greeted me inside the walls of Mr. Spurgeon's Orphanage at Stockwell, in contrast to the dull, dark February morning outside. Here some one hundred and thirty-five boys are boarded, clothed, and taught. They are lodged—not in large, uncomfortable corridors and halls, but in separate houses, presided over by matrons—each a little home in itself. Nothing can exceed the comfort of all arrangements in this Orphanage. It was 'visiting' day when I was there; but even the attractions of widowed mothers and indulgent relations were not sufficient to distract the attention of chubby juveniles from Mr. Spurgeon, whom they hailed with the greatest enthusiasm, unmingled with the smallest awe. From the Orphanage I passed to the Almshouses and Schools at Newington, close to the Elephant and Castle Station of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway. In these schools, again, I was struck with the perfect order which reigned. One hundred and thirty boys moved like one compact mass, and sang their part songs most creditably. Thence I passed to the Tabernacle itself. Now, I fancy most persons have the idea that this is simply a 'preaching shop' closed, and doing nothing from Sunday to Sunday. Never was there a greater mistake. It is a perfect hive of busy workers from seven every morning until night. The rooms behind and under this vast edifice are appropriated to the use of the Pastors' College, where young men are trained for the ministry without expense. They are boarded singly, also free, with families residing in the neighbourhood—a plan adopted partly to avoid the temptation of 'collegiate' life, and also to fit the young men for the humble positions in life most of them are destined to occupy. Here, again, dropping in quite unexpectedly, we found everyone at his post, and the whole complicated machinery working without a hitch. In one room we opened the door on some thirty or forty young men celebrating the Lord's Supper. In another we found an aged lady, with some twenty grown-up girls around her, conducting a Bible-class. In the spacious rooms below, tables were being laid for about one thousand six hundred for tea, as the Annual Church Meeting was to be held in the evening. A secretary, with two clerks under him, besides Mr. Spurgeon's private secretary, form the staff required for conducting the correspondence. Nor was this all. In another room was a man up to his eyes in books, whose business it was to manage the 'colportage;' whilst in yet another was a sort of local Mudie's, where boxes of books are packed and sent to former students, now pastors of outlying chapels, and by them circulated from one to the other. Over all this labyrinth I was conducted in the most cheery

way by the Atlas who bears on his single pair of shoulders the whole mass; and this is the man whom we are too apt to regard as merely the preacher on Sundays! 'Mr. Spurgeon,' I could not help saying, 'you are a regular Pope!' 'Yes,' he replied, 'though without claiming infallibility. This is indeed a democracy, with a very large infusion of a constitutional monarchy in it.'

"Then, again, with regard to the discipline of this body, which we are apt to underrate. Certainly no system of direction that ever was organised could equal the hold which, by means of his elders and deacons, this pastor has over his flock. 'I have four thousand two hundred members on my Church books,' said he, 'and if one of them got tipsy I should know it before the week was out.' The records of admission to the Church, of 'dismission' to other Churches and reception from them, are kept with the precision of a merchant's books; whilst each member of the Church has a set of twelve communion tickets, all ready perforated, with dates printed, one of which he or she is bound to tear off and put in the plate each month, to attest presence at 'the ordinance.' The punishment, in case of neglect or of moral failings, is censure and excommunication."

Mr. Spurgeon was visited at Helensburgh House, and the journalist was surprised to find him so modest, unassuming, and genial in private life:—

"He pointed me to his book-shelves, where were his sermons translated into French, German, Swedish, Italian, Dutch—to say nothing of endless American editions. Many of these foreign versions were produced without the publishers even sending him a copy and were picked up casually by him in his travels. One edition, in large readable German type, he bought at the Leipzic Book Fair. This is enough to turn a man's head, but he speaks of himself in the most modest terms as 'no scholar.'" A service at the Tabernacle produced correspondingly favourable impressions:—

"It was a sound, practical discourse, of upwards of an hour in length, delivered without note of any kind, with all the preacher's old earnestness, but without a single trace of his former eccentricity. There was not a single 'Spurgeonism' from beginning to end—or, at least, the only approach thereto was an assurance that we 'couldn't go to heaven on a feather bed.' Remembering what Mr. Spurgeon was when he came to London, seventeen years ago, a boy of nineteen, one cannot but congratulate him on the change; while the vast building, with all its varied works—happily compared by himself to the cathedral in ancient times—bears witness to the sterling stuff there was in the man below all his eccentricity. What particularly struck me was his constant and copious reference to such authorities as Augustine, Chrysostom, and Gregory of Nazianzen. He also retains all his old fertility of illustration."

Towards the end of March an old friend passed away in the person of Judge Payne, of the Middlesex Sessions, who died rather suddenly, in his seventy-third year. He was a man for whom the pastor and many others at the Tabernacle entertained a sincere regard as a Christian and a philanthropist. As a pioneer in the great ragged-school crusade, Mr. Payne was second only to Lord Shaftesbury himself; and often, indeed, had his quaint jingles and rhyming "tail-pieces" stimulated interest in all kinds of good work. At the annual supper on behalf of the Pastors' College, held on March 30, a sum of £1,300 was subscribed to the funds of the institution. The attendance was as large and as enthusiastic as ever, and Mr. Spurgeon again told the story—of which he seemed never to tire—of how the work commenced, and how it had been continued. He confessed that he had commenced the work because his views of the Gospel, and of the manner in which men should be trained for it, differed from those which were generally held. The Calvinism

taught seemed also to be of doubtful quality, and the religious fervour of the students to be far behind their literary attainments. The College funds were sometimes used in keeping men in certain spheres until a congregation was collected. The failures had been very few; and it was shown that some of the most important congregations in England and Scotland were presided over by men who had been trained in the College. One friend had encouraged the work by giving large sums for chapel building. The interest which Mr. Spurgeon ever felt in the young found various modes of expression; and the favour he showed to the Band of Hope movement proved him to be an ardent friend of true temperance—though he was not then a teetotaller. On April 19 his surprising popularity was again demonstrated when the Tabernacle was densely crowded by those who paid from sixpence to half-a-crown for admission to hear the pastor's lecture on "Bells," the illustrative music being rung by the Poland Street Handbell Ringers. Mr. Thomas Hughes, M.P., was in the chair, and after being introduced as "Tom Brown," he said he had for years looked with delight on the work carried on at the Tabernacle. The entertainment lasted from seven o'clock until half-past nine; and at the close Mr. Spurgeon remarked that it was important occasionally to contribute to the innocent mirth of the people; at the same time expressing his belief that it was the right thing for the temperance cause to be shadowed by the Church of God.

One of the principal addresses given during the spring meetings of 1870 was on "Scripture Translation," at the annual gathering of the Bible Translation Society, at Kingsgate Street Chapel, on April 24. The work of the Society is carried on in India, and on this occasion Dr. Underhill gave an account of what had been done. A passage or two from Mr. Spurgeon's address will show how highly he valued the work of the Society:—

"It is altogether too late in the day to talk about the necessity of translating the Scriptures; but it may not, perhaps, be too late to say how wise it is on God's part thai the Bible wants translating. Ever since that unfortunate building speculation of our early ancestors, when the confusion of tongues came upon them, there has been a necessity, if the "Word of God is to be understood, that it should be translated. Great advantages have come of this. We should be thankful that we have the Word of God in the originals in dead languages; otherwise, through the lapse of time, the words must have undergone some degree of change, and we should not have been able at this time, perhaps, to fix their meaning at all. It is a mercy that the translation of the Septuagint was undertaken, because perhaps one day the Septuagint will be seen to be the true interpreter of the Greek of the New Testament. Nowadays it is often tried to prove the meaning of a word in the New Testament from its use in the classics; but that would be found very often to land us in very serious difficulties. Whereas it seems to me that these men have been moved to prepare that version (which is the only authorised version that I know of, since our Lord Himself distinctly quoted it, and therefore authorised it) to give us a specimen of what Hebraic Greek is, in order that we may know how to read the Septuagint; for, of course, no language which man could employ could adequately express the meaning of the Holy Spirit. There must be terms adopted, as we have been told just now—terms a little wrenched from their original meaning, in order that the mind of the Spirit may be conveyed to us. So we have a translation which helps us to the understanding of one of the originals; and the Septuagint comes in to help us in the understanding of the Greek Testament."

It was held to have been an advantage rather than otherwise that missionaries in foreign countries had had to begin by sitting down to translate the Bible. They had thus been close observers, and there seemed to be no way of studying Scripture so good as translating it. The version made by

Mr. Carter in Ceylon was pronounced an invaluable one; but while the work was in progress the translator "brought out certain novelties—certain new thoughts and suggestions that could never have occurred to him if he had not studied the language of the people of Ceylon." Thus, in a sense, translations were expositions. There was necessarily somewhat of the individuality of the translator in every version. After a few words on the extreme value of a knowledge of Greek, the pastor went on to show the need of correct translations:—

"I thank God that Babel ever occurred, because I am sure that in the long run, by forcing our missionaries to search the Scriptures and bring out the real shades of meaning, it really contributes to our knowledge of the Word of God. But there is one thing that I may say about translations: whatever they are, I insist upon it that they should be correct. I feel a loathing in my soul to the expression of that sentiment, because it seems to me to be one that ought never to be expressed. Yet there are some who think we might tolerate a mischievous teaching of a so-called God's Word if we could thereby circulate it. There are some of the excellent of the earth who think Baptists altogether wrong in the belief that before circulating the Bible we must endeavour to see that it is as accurate as it could possibly be. Then, if we say a word in favour of those versions that were faulty in years past—faulty through lack of scholarship and other causes—then at once we are charged with being inconsistent. Yet I see not the inconsistency at all. We are not responsible for what was done years ago; we are not responsible for things which are now facts, and which are past recall. But I am sure if we were to send out the Word of God to any missionary with the injunction, 'Mind you translate the Word of God in accordance with the views of the Particular Baptists;' 'Mind you put in no views with regard to the Millennium but those which will consort with the views of the secretaries of the Baptist Mission;' 'Mind you put in nothing at all in your translation but what may accord with Strict Communion views;' or, 'Mind you consult Dr. Steane as to what is orthodox'—there would be raised throughout all Christendom a universal hiss, an exclamation of horror. We should feel it to be a most disgraceful thing." The crotchets of the various members of a committee were not to be respected. If the Word of God trod on anyone's toes, their toes must be moved, because the Word itself was not to be altered. Thus years ago things were not actually left out, but terms were left untranslated. What had the ordinance of baptism done that it was for ever to be shut up in Greek? In translating anyone's work the responsibility rested upon them of giving the author's true meaning; and in quoting Scripture, a solemn awe should rest upon them to compel their giving the true meaning. The address concluded:—

"I dare not—I would not if I dare—send out into circulation a single copy of God's Word which I did not believe to be honest to the Master's meaning. Wo should look to this more clearly. The more we look to it—notwithstanding all the high and good names that might stand on the opposite side of the question—the more it is self-evident that to give God's Word in its purity must be right. We want no names whatever; the matter strikes our consciences. We cannot help doing otherwise than what we are doing. We seem to be shut up to that course; we must follow it. Paul told us that every work of ours will be tried by fire. Let us build, then, as rapidly as we please; if there is aught of error in it, the fire will be sure to find it out. We may talk of scattering fifty millions of the Bible, but if we knew there was an error in it, the fire would find that error out, and a great proportion of the work we built would be consumed like wood, hay, and stubble. Only truth will stand, and only the work that is done by truth will bear the test of ages. I believe a version, with but few copies

scattered, that contained God's Word given in honesty and purity would be more likely to have a blessing that should make it immortal than another copy which was circulated by millions if dishonestly made, or which, out of prudence, covered up any part of the truth. After all, good works ought never to be measured by quantity, but by quality. There may be little done by us, but great things may come of it. There may be fifty thousand Bibles in a district, and yet within a few years all might be forgotten. There may be but one Bible there, and that may as yet be unread; but the time will come when it shall be brought out to light, and from its solitary page there shall go forth lightning flashes of the truth, and the idols will be utterly abolished by its power. We must never, because our strength happens to be little, or because our funds happen to be low, be dispirited; we must never make contrasts with others, and compare ourselves among ourselves; but taking our stand upon this firm belief, that to give the Word of God is the right thing to do; and to translate it honestly, translate it entirely, and translate it to the full, and through and through, even if some passages should seem to fall against our preconceived ideas—that is to follow the path of right, which God will bless and which God will own in the long run."

During its spring session the Baptist Union met as usual at Walworth Road Chapel, and the members were again handsomely entertained at the Tabernacle. Mr. W. Robinson, the veteran pastor from Cambridge, said he was glad to meet Mr. Spurgeon in that building, which he regarded as one of the wonders of the world. He went on to say that, as pastor of the church in Cambridge, he had the honour of dismissing Mr. Spurgeon to bis work in London, and he was well acquainted with the preacher's earlier and remarkable work in that county. After dinner reference was made to the Evangelical Alliance and the letter of its secretary, in which Mr. Spurgeon was requested to withdraw from the membership. One speaker held that the action of the officer was illegal. Mr. Spurgeon said he was quite satisfied with the Alliance ignoring the action of their secretary, although it might be a fortunate thing that the secretary did as he did, as he, perhaps, saved others the trouble. He then added that he could not go to New York himself, as he was bound to his work in London. Each man should go to the New World on his own responsibility. Amid roars of laughter it was then suggested that one who was named should cross the Atlantic to represent the Strict Baptists, while another should go to represent the open communion friends. They were not to go in the same vessel, however, and the open communion brother was to return in an orange-box with a suitable inscription.

It was ray happiness at this time to have Mr. Spurgeon for a personal friend; and as an occasional contributor to The Sword and the Trowel I now and then had the privilege of an interview with the editor in his vestry at the Tabernacle, One evening after the over-night service I received an invitation to breakfast at Helensburgh House on the following morning; and that was the first time that I saw the great preacher at home. He was to me at this time a character of surpassing interest, and any details about his personal history or service in London were always eagerly welcomed. It was at this date that he told Mr. (now Dr.) Peter Bayne, who made some direct inquiries on the subject, that he began to preach in 1850, that he had preached one thousand sermons by the time that he was twenty-one, while six thousand more had been given in the fourteen years and some months following. It also appeared that the sermons, as published weekly, had steadily grown in public favour. The sale almost at once went up to ten thousand a week; but in five years that was doubled, and after ten years an average sale of twenty-five thousand was maintained. In, addition to this, there were individual sermons which commanded

quite a phenomenal popularity; the one on "Baptismal Regeneration," for example, having attained a circulation of nearly two hundred thousand by Midsummer, 1870. It was also calculated that, exclusive of those which appeared in newspapers and magazines, fourteen million numbers had been issued at the date first named. The American agents had disposed of over three hundred thousand volumes. The translators of Spurgeon were also already very busy. One volume in Welsh had been issued, and three in German. A society at Toulouse and another at Geneva had between them published six volumes in French; while Sweden had three volumes, Holland had two, and Italy one. More out-of-the-way languages, such as Gaelic, Tamul, and that of the natives of New Zealand, had also their translations. In an able article, published in America at this time, Mr. Bayne ventured the opinion that no man who had ever lived had so influenced the human race by means of sermons. These references were made to the growth of the preacher:—

"I have endeavoured to characterise Mr. Spurgeon's style of preaching as it was in the commencement of his career in London. In the matter of his preaching there has been no change, but the manner of it has considerably altered. The best evidence which can be adduced of the sterling intellectual stuff there is in Spurgeon is that all the work he has done has never exhausted him; all the applause he has received has never turned his head. He has gone on improving every year. His sermons have for many years ceased to exhibit any trace of that extravagance of idea and tawdry showiness of style which, in the early period, occasionally characterised them. He has risen to a higher kind of eloquence, to that, namely, which depends on a chain of reasoning knit in iron links and made red-hot by fervency of passion. Such was the eloquence of Demosthenes and probably of Pericles. The gaudy rhetoric which might dazzle a mob was not the instrument with which to lead the haughty and highly-educated men of Athens. Such was the eloquence of Henry Brougham, who in sheer intensity of power, was, perhaps, the first of modern orators. The style of Mr. Spurgeon is now characterised by lucid simplicity and masculine strength. It is not bald, but still less is it meretricious. It is a stream of compact, nervous, glowing speech, intensely clear, and well freighted with meaning. In his earlier period Mr. Spurgeon could not safely have been recommended as a model to young men; but no one who wishes to speak or to write manly, expressive, idiomatic, and perspicuous English will now err in studying his sermons."

After referring to the preacher's published works, and to the ardour with which he had devoted himself to the College, Mr. Bayne referred to the Evangelical Alliance disagreement, to a proposed visit to America, which was now again being debated, and to some other things:—

"It has often been a subject of astonishment to me that Mr. Spurgeon, the greatest man, probably, who has belonged to the Baptist Church in England since the days of Bunyan, and beyond question one of the most remarkable men of genius in his own profession in Europe, should never have visited that country in which is the largest Baptist church in the world—to wit, the United States. He is willing to go, for, great as are his powers, physical and intellectual, the tremendous expenditure of nervous energy to which he has been exposed has told upon his strength, and he has need of rest. But he will not go merely in order to give himself comparative repose. He must be assured that if he comes among them the Americans will do something for his darling objects—his College and his Orphanage. To these, he tells me, his American friends have never contributed a cent, and he thinks they ought to. I cannot say I regret that he is not to visit America in connection with the Evangelical Alliance. It is far better that he should stand on his own feet. He is a man of iron will and importunate self-assertion, and the thorny angularities of his character make him a

dangerous member of any happy family of religionists agreeing to put their peculiarities provisionally in abeyance. I have mistaken the character of Americans if they would not give him a hearty reception. They like to see a strong, original, racy, rough-hewn man, though he gives himself out for what he is, and never stoops to coax and flatter. Spurgeon's nature is not eclectic. What he believes he believes decisively, and proclaims vehemently, with peremptory rejection of other views. Herein is his strength; herein also is the limitation of his strength. His conception of Christianity is identical with that of the Puritans and Covenanters, and he will not hear of accommodations to the spirit of the nineteenth century. He looks with coldness upon the Biblical criticism and theological erudition of modern times; he is suspicious of professors' exegetical apparatus, and thinks that if their students are supplied by them in the universities and colleges with a modicum of human learning, they are apt to pay infinitely too high a price for it in losing their simple devotedness and their fervour in preaching the Gospel. In all this he has clearly his grasp on a great truth—to wit, that Christianity is not a thing to be argued about, but to be lived; its home not in the halls of academies, but by the hearths and in the hearts of nations. But it is also a truth that spiritual civilisation and intellectual civilisation ought to go hand in hand, and that if they do not go hand in hand religion will sink either into a superstitious sacerdotalism or a childish pietism. Take him for all in all, Mr. Spurgeon is one of the most characteristic and remarkable John Bulls produced in the present century—a credit to Old England—one in whom all Englishmen take a certain pride—one who, though he is not yet forty years old, has made his mark ineffaceably in the history of his country." The visit to the United States was not destined to be undertaken, but how eager a number of leading men in the Republic were to welcome the great preacher is shown by a passage which appeared in The Watchman and Reflector during the spring of 1870:—

"If Charles H. Spurgeon were to visit America, as multitudes hope he will, he would receive a welcome from the denomination to which he especially belongs that would gratify even his warmest admirers. With Mr. Spurgeon actually present among us, we should like to see the man or the paper that would then denounce his church as a 'nondescript organisation,' a 'hybrid concern,' uttering in theory hypocritical words of delusion, etc. Further, it may not be doubted as to who would then exhibit toward the distinguished London preacher the most consideration, who would be foremost among his 'personal friends,' or who would evince the most pride in him as a bright ornament of the great Baptist denomination. By the way, the fact of Mr. Spurgeon's being open communion—in which The Watchman differs from him as widely as any—does not, we infer, damage his sermons in papers which rely largely on these to build themselves up, and which take particular pains (even at the expense of a perpetually false witness against others) to make it appear that they alone are 'sound' on the communion question." By the death of Sir James Simpson during the spring of this year Mr. Spurgeon lost a much-valued friend. The preacher never forgot the service which the distinguished surgeon had rendered less than two years before when, at a most anxious crisis, he operated upon Mrs. Spurgeon at Clapham.

About this same time a leading Church of England newspaper gave out that an endowment was being raised for the Pastors' College. "Benevolent persons are assisting Mr. Spurgeon to raise an endowment for his institution for training young men for the ministry," it was said; and the argument used was that if Nonconformists thus sought endowments for educational purposes, there was also need for university "endowments given to the National Church" to be held in perpetuity. The Pastors' College had no endowment, nor was any such fund ever contemplated,

so that the supporters of that institution had never—as was thought they might have done—"probably conceived that they have been subscribing to a permanent work, to be maintained on its existing footing so long as the world lasts." The excursion into Scotland during May appears to have been in all respects pleasant and successful; and in various addresses Mr. Spurgeon seems to have warmly advocated the union of the free churches. The programme included an address before the United Presbyterian Synod at Edinburgh on "Wednesday, May 11, and services at Dundee on the two following days, including the opening of the M'Cheyne Memorial Church. Services were also arranged for at Cupar-Fife on the 15th, at Dingwall on the 17th, and at Invergordon on the 18th. The services at Cupar were on a Sunday, the congregation being accommodated in the Corn Exchange in the morning and in the parish church in the evening. The admission was by free ticket, to avoid excessive crowding. The seats at the former service were, for the most part, reserved for persons from a distance—Kirkcaldy, and other places in Fife—the people of Cupar being content to hear the great preacher in the evening. The collections were for the Stockwell Orphanage, and amounted to about £100. The people were not satisfied until they had a promise of another visit at no distant date. The address on Christian Work which Mr. Spurgeon gave at a missionary breakfast meeting of the Foreign Mission Committee of the United Presbyterian Church was one of his most telling efforts. It was widely circulated as a tract of sixteen pages; and when I was in Edinburgh in 1873 the stereotype plates were presented to me. The address was included in the volume of Mr. Spurgeon's speeches which I published in 1878. Two or three passages may be given, such as will show Mr. Spurgeon to have been in his happiest mood. In showing that the people should always help the minister, he said:—

"Sometimes, as the President of a college, I have letters sent to me, asking for ministers, in something like these terms:—'Dear Sir,—Our chapel is very empty; our last minister was a very excellent man, but an unpopular preacher'—(I may say, by way of parenthesis, that I suppose he was one of those men who would make good martyrs—so dry that they would burn well)—'and our congregation is very small; can you kindly send us a minister who will fill the chapel?' On one occasion I replied that I had not a minister large enough to fill a chapel. Of course, there came an explanation that they did not expect him to fill it corporeally, but to fill it by bringing others to listen to him, and retaining them as seat-holders. Then I wrote, and to gain this opportunity ray first joke was perpetrated, reminding the friends that it was quite enough for a pastor to fill the pulpit well, and that the filling of the pews depended very much upon the zeal, the earnestness, and the diligence of those with whom he commenced his ministry; if they would support him by their earnest co-operation, the meeting-house would soon be full."

He then gave a reminiscence of the way in which he was helped himself during the early days in London:—

"I remember when I came first to London preaching to eighty or ninety in a large chapel; but my little congregation thought well of me, and induced others to come and fill the place. I always impute my early success to my warm-hearted people, for they were so earnest and enthusiastic in their loving appreciation of 'the young man from the country' that they were never tired of sounding his praises. If you, any of you, are mourning over empty pews in your places of worship, I would urge you to praise up your minister. There can be no difficulty in discovering some points in which your pastor excels; dwell upon these excellences, and not upon his failures." By some references to the great American naturalist Mr. Spurgeon showed in his very happiest style what can be done

by enthusiasm—a noble word, as he declared, and expressive of a characteristic which all preachers ought to possess:—

"You may, perhaps, have read the life of Audubon, the celebrated American naturalist. He spent the major part of his life in preparing a very valuable work on the birds of America. He tracked these birds into their remotest haunts, painted them from nature, lived in the cane-brakes, swamps, and prairies—even among the red men, exposed to all kinds of dangers—and all simply to become a complete ornithologist. When he was in Paris, collecting subscriptions for his new work, his diary was full of wretchedness—there was nothing in Paris for him; and the only bright dream that he had was when he saw the stock-pigeons building their nests in the garden of the Tuileries. The broad streets, the magnificent palaces, the pictures of the Louvre, these were all nothing to him—the stock-pigeons everything. He came to London, and he was equally dull there. Not a single incident shows a comfortable frame of mind, till he sees one day a flock of wild geese passing over the city. He wrote in London a paper on birds; and he says, 'While I am writing I think I hear the rustle of the wings of pigeons in the backwoods of America.' The man's soul was full of birds, nothing but birds; and of course he became a great naturalist. He lived and he was willing to die for birds. We need to muster a band of ministers who live only for Christ, and desire nothing but opportunities for promoting His glory—opportunities for spreading His truth—opportunities for winning by power those whom Jesus has redeemed by His precious blood. Men of one idea—these are they that shall do exploits in the camp of Israel." This Scottish tour, which some may probably have mistaken for a holiday, necessitated the pastor's absence from his pulpit at the Tabernacle during three Sundays. On the morning of June 5 he was again in his place, when the subject of the sermon was "Bands of Love" (Hos 11:4).

Chapter 79: At Cheshunt College

Chapter 79.

At Cheshunt College

Education and the Bible—Spurgeon presides at a Working-Men's Meeting—Cheshunt College Centenary—Invited to the United States—Help sent to Paris—At Cambridge—At Liverpool—Chapel Debts.

It was in 1870 that my volume on "Ancient Meeting-Houses" and that on the "Metropolitan Tabernacle" were in course of preparation. Mr. Spurgeon generously agreed to read the latter, and, having done so, offered to purchase the MS.; but as neither side would name a price, the work was ultimately transferred to Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster. The pastor even volunteered to write an Introduction—a kind of service to which he had in general an aversion hard to be overcome. The letter was as follows:—

"Clapham, February 5.

"My Dear Mr. Pike,—I have read through your MS. with much interest. It is rather a history of the Southwark churches than of the Metropolitan Tabernacle Church, and does not, to my mind, pursue its story with the continuity needful for perspicuity. It was evidently not quite intended for what it now is. Instead, however, of giving detailed notes I thought of proposing to you the following query—Will you sell me the MS. that I may mould it into any shape which I may select, duly, at the same time, acknowledging my indebtedness to you?

"I am afraid the publication would not bo so likely to pay you as it would be to pay me. Much of the matter is foreign to our church; but the cutting out could be filled up with other matter. If to this query your reply is 'Yes'—well, then, mention your price, and I will give it if I can.—Yours very truly, "C. H. Spurgeon." At this time the education question was one of the chief topics of the day; and, in taking his part in the controversy, Mr. Spurgeon was on the side of those who insisted that the Bible should be read in the schools. I well remember meeting him on a fine spring morning near the Bank of England; his invitation to take a seat in the brougham was accepted, and while passing through the crowded streets he at once entered into the topic with great animation. He could not bring himself round to believe that it would ever do to exclude the Bible altogether from the schools. His argument was that the State, as such, ought not to patronise or persecute religion; but that was quite another thing from saying, as some did, that the State had nothing to do with religion. If man was under law to God, nations were not free from Divine control. The secular rule of a Government, like that of a railway, owed allegiance to the law of God. The closing of public-houses on Sundays showed that the Government acknowledged religion. Education without religion meant teachers without religion, and what good results could be expected from such agents?

Holding the sentiments he did on this great question, Mr. Spurgeon presided at a crowded meeting at Exeter Hall, the speakers being working men, and the main part of the audience being of that class. Ten minutes was the time allowed to each speaker, and when the resolution was put that the Bible be read in the proposed new schools, it was carried with enthusiasm, the dissentients being not more than twenty. The Stockwell Orphanage had now one hundred and fifty inmates, and the pressing need which existed for such an institution was shown by a thousand applications for admission which the trustees had in hand. The need of an infirmary was being felt; and in aid of the building fund of this house a bazaar was held on June 21, and in the evening the President gave a lecture on "Sermons in Stones." On the following day the Earl of Shaftesbury presided at the annual meeting, when he characterised the institution as representing "a blessed and holy work, reflecting great honour upon all concerned in it." One lady who visited the bazaar gave a donation of £400, to be divided between the College and the Orphanage. The thorough catholicity of the managers in selecting candidates became at once apparent. Children of parents belonging to all sects, or to no sects at all, were admitted; but while the majority were pleased at such liberality, there was a minority who showed a fanatical bigotry in the matter which proved them, to be quite devoid of Christian spirit. The centenary of the college at Cheshunt was celebrated by the erection of some additional buildings, all being in memory of the pious founder, Lady Huntingdon, who established the college at Trevecca in Wales in or about the year 1767. The countess died in June, 1791, and the theological seminary, in which she had shown such keen interest, was then removed to Cheshunt. The custom has long been to hold an anniversary in the pleasant grounds of the college at Midsummer, some leading man being the preacher for the day. In 1871 Mr. Spurgeon took the service, and he also gave an address after the memorial-stone of the new buildings had been laid by the Earl of Shaftesbury. Between the nobleman and the Baptist preacher the closest friendship existed; and their correspondence was carried on as between fellow-Christians, and with a freedom on Mr. Spurgeon's part which is not usually characteristic of a commoner when corresponding with a peer. In the opening of his speech at Cheshunt Mr. Spurgeon referred to the Earl in cordial terms, which illustrate what I once heard him say in private, to the effect that Lord Shaftesbury was a much better man even than he had supposed him to be:—

"The more I know of that good man, the more I feel that his coming into association with various Christians is not a mere formal act, but that his heart is really with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ. Those of us who often come into contact with him admire the depth and earnestness of his piety. No doubt he is thoroughly a member of the Church of England; but he is much more a member of the Church of Christ. For myself, I am glad to come here, though, of course, I never worship God with a liturgy, and certainly never shall. Yet if you have grace enough to do it—and I should say it takes a good deal—I am glad that you are able." In showing the importance of a college, the example of Christ in gathering men around Him to teach was referred to, the Apostles having been virtually students, and they having in turn found out others. The speaker then came to later times and to the Reformation:—

"Among the Vaudois churches every pastor was wont to be accompanied in his mountain journeys by some stalwart young man, who could assist, perhaps, in the difficulties of climbing, and who, in return, received from him paternal instruction in the management of a church, in the Word of God, in the mode of attractive and useful speaking, and so on. They always provided for a succession in

their ministry. We talk of Luther and Calvin in the days of the Reformation, but we must remember that these men became what they were largely through their power to stamp their image and superscriptions upon other men with whom they came in contact. If you went to Würtemberg, it was not Luther only that you saw, but Luther's college, the men around him—the students all being formed into young Luthers under his direction. It was the same at Geneva. How much Scotland owes to the fact that Calvin could instruct John Knox! How much have other nations derived from the little republic of Switzerland on account of Calvin having the clear common-sense to perceive that one man could not hope to affect a whole nation except by multiplying himself, and spreading his views by writing them upon the fleshy tablets of the hearts of young and earnest men! The churches seem to have forgotten this. The Countess of Huntingdon did not forget it. As soon as she perceived that the masses needed to be leavened with the Gospel, she saw at once that there must be an institution for the further training of these young men who had begun to speak. It is nothing but sanctified common-sense that leads the Church to the formation of a college. The Church ought to make the college the first object of its care. Whatever is forgotten in the prayer-meeting, the students of our colleges ought not to be forgotten."

There seemed to be even more need to pray for students than for ministers. References were made to the Liturgy, to bishops, and to the money needed in the case of Cheshunt College. Then came more remarks about college education in general, which are still of value:—

"I should not like to make any observation that would seem to imply any reflection upon the education that is given here. I will only say that I have noticed in some colleges that they teach every mortal thing except the one thing that the young men want to know. I remember hearing a clergyman from Cambridge say, 'I do not know how many hundreds of pounds my father has spent upon me—he knew I was going to be a clergyman. I do not know how many hours I spent in classes, and I learnt everything except what would bo of use to me now.' Now that struck me as being very nearly accurate in many respects with regard to many other places. Of course, classical and mathematical information, Biblical lore, and so on, must be had; they all serve a very admirable purpose in the formation and training of the mind, but we must have more than that—there must be opportunities for doing good. It is a great thing when a college is in connection with a church, where there are instances of church discipline and church government coming under consideration. I have met with young students coming from colleges who did not know how to write a letter of dismission or an application for dismission, the commonest details of church government being altogether unknown. Such simple details as those ought certainly to be known, and there should be instruction given as to the arrangement of church meetings, how to deal with candidates, how to talk with young converts, and so on. What we want to produce in the College is a preacher as well as a scholar—a scholar by all means, but a preacher certainly. Plenty of opportunities are needed for public speaking. Frequent discussions and opportunities of speaking and breaking down are great blessings to a young man. I do not think anything of a young man unless he has, at some time or other, made a mess of a speech and felt it. It is by failures, which show his deficiencies, that he is likely to attain excellency. To learn to preach, you must preach; to learn to speak, you must speak; and to be often on one's legs is the best mode of acquiring proficiency and ease." The remainder of the address contained much which was calculated to be of service to the students, reference being made to their peculiar temptations and to the methods by which alone success was to be attained. In wishing Dr. Reynolds success in his arduous task,

Mr. Spurgeon showed that the management of a college needed more discretion than most men could boast of, and tutors had especial need to draw upon infinite wisdom. Then came a graceful allusion to the Countess of Huntingdon's heraldic motto—In Veritate Victoria. "It is in the truth that victory lies. In the long run it will beat policy; truth will beat superstition and overcome error."

Mr. Spurgeon was able to attend the quarterly meeting of the London Baptist Association on July 12 at Brockley Road Chapel, New Cross. These were social occasions, which were also of a partially festive character, although the business of the Association was always heartily entered into. Thus "a sumptuous dinner with a service of fruit" was given on this occasion; and the hospitality was suitably acknowledged by the pastor of the Tabernacle. The most striking address of the evening was by Mr. M'Cree, Dr. Brock's assistant in St. Giles's, or in the vicinity of Bloomsbury Chapel, who has now passed away. His speech bristled "with appalling facts concerning the moral condition of the metropolis."

It appears that at this date Mr. Spurgeon had practically abandoned the idea of ever visiting the United States, although there were many friends in the Republic who still clung to the hope that the English preacher might even yet one day set foot in their country. Probably stimulated by some false report, certain smart Transatlantic entrepreneurs wrote to Mr. Spurgeon in the summer, inviting him to undertake a lecturing tour during the next season. The application drew forth this reply:—"Gentlemen,—I am much obliged by your very courteous letter, but you are under a mistake. I am not a lecturer. I now and then give a lecture for some good object; but I do not do it well, and, moreover, have no ambition in that line. I am very glad to preach, but not if there is any charge at the door. Moreover, I have no kind of idea of visiting the States."

Nothing seemed to please Mr. Spurgeon so well as being able to think that all continued to go well at the Tabernacle when he was himself unavoidably absent. If at times this might amount to a pleasant delusion, it was a delusion which the pastor was well content to be the subject of, and it was not advisable to interfere with it unless you wished to get sharply reproved. The Americans were at all times interested in all that pertained to the great London congregation and its pastor; and it was at least a variation when one of their papers—The Observer—depicted the scene at the Metropolitan Tabernacle when Spurgeon was not there. The sermon, from an unknown preacher, was "a plain, earnest Gospel exhortation":—

"There were no marks of genius about it, no attempts at eloquence; nothing to distinguish it from the ordinary preachers of London and elsewhere, except, perhaps, that it was not delivered from a pulpit at all, but from a platform, and entirely without notes. Yet this commonplace discourse, because it was the Gospel, was listened to from beginning to end—and it was nearly an hour long—if not with profound interest, certainly with reverent attention. There was no coughing, shuffling, yawning, or sleeping that we could discover. Silence reigned, but not somnolence. Not only was the preacher not Mr. Spurgeon, but he was not to be compared with him in any way. Yet because this man was a messenger of God to their souls, sent there by His providence, they heard him to the close, without any symptom of disgust or weariness. Nothing in their attitude of manner reminded him unpleasantly that they were thinking all the while of their absent pastor, and wishing him to bring his unwelcome service to a speedy conclusion. In reflecting upon this conduct of Mr. Spurgeon's people, and contrasting it with the contrary demeanour of some fashionable congregations we had seen in our day, we came to the conclusion that they had either been taught

by their pastor or had acquired for themselves an unusual amount of the essence of Christianity—true politeness." This was the time of the war between France and Germany, which ended in the collapse of Napoleon III. and his exile in England. In the early part of September Paris was becoming closely besieged by the Germans, and large numbers were more or less straitened for the means of livelihood. M. Lepoids, pastor of the Baptist Church in the French capital, sent an appeal to a friend in England, with the special request that what he had written might be communicated to Dr. Brock and Mr. Spurgeon:—

"We cannot say, dearest brothers, that we are actually in destitution at present—blessed bo God, the greater number of us still have bread; but our dear brethren who are workmen begin to be without work, and, besides, even if they had work they could not do it; for we all belong to the National Guard, and are therefore obliged to drill nearly every day, and soon, perhaps, shall have to mount the ramparts." A committee was formed for mutual assistance. Mr. Spurgeon became at once so interested in the besieged Baptist residents of Paris that on September 14, or two days after M. Lepoids' letter had been written, he sat down in his vestry at the Tabernacle and wrote the following:—

"To the Baptist Churches of England.

"Brethren,—Here is an appeal from our own brethren in the faith; let it not be made in vain. Through my beloved friend, Mr. Tritton, and with his help, I have forwarded this day £70 to M. Lepoids. Will not others at once enable me to send more before the gate is shut? Let it be understood that if peace be soon made, and the money be not required for the sustenance of our poor brethren, it shall be expended in building them the chapel which has been so long projected. Baptists to the rescue! Every man with a head and a purse should send his portion instanter.—Your brother, "C. H. Spurgeon."

On Sunday, September 18, the subject was mentioned at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. A letter of thanks had been received—one of the last letters, it was supposed, which were likely to come out of Paris for some time. The afflicted congregation showed the utmost gratitude for the help sent over. The Baptist Union commenced its autumnal meetings at Cambridge on September 19, and the chairman was Mr. W. Robinson, pastor of the St. Andrew's Street congregation, with which Spurgeon had been associated in early days. We can well believe that it was a rare delight to Spurgeon thus to revisit the scenes of his youth; and he seemed to be fired by all his old enthusiasm when he preached to 10,000 in the open air on Parker's Piece. My friend Mr. Cuff supplies this reminiscence:—"I heard Mr. Spurgeon preach in the open air at Cambridge at the meeting of the Baptist Union in 1870. The place of the service was Parker's Piece. The pulpit was a waggon. The crowd was enormous, and stretched out far and wide from the waggon, which was the centre. The text was 'Preaching peace by Jesus Christ.' The crowd wept and laughed by turns as the marvellous pathos and eloquence of the preacher poured itself out on us all. I remember helping to guard him through the throng to the house of his host. The people were so mad to shake hands with him, and get a word from him, that we joined hands and made a circle, while the dear man walked in it. Every now and then some old friend of early days got near. He was at once recognised by Mr. Spurgeon, and, of course, he must be shaken by the hand. This went on till we had more trouble with the preacher than the crowd. At length he was safe inside the door of the garden of his friend. That visit to Cambridge by the great preacher will never be forgotten. He was

the best open-air preacher I ever heard; but then he was out of sight the best anywhere and everywhere."

All classes being represented, this congregation was, perhaps, as remarkable as any which had ever been gathered together in the university town. "The rich and the poor met together," says one account, "and there, too, were hundreds who probably would have refused, through pride or shame, to enter a meeting-house." The sermon was pre-eminently a message to the multitude—"Preaching peace by Jesus Christ: he is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36). The preacher loved the open air; and at a subsequent indoor meeting he urged the ministers to take to a practice which would promote their health and strengthen the voice, while they would find multitudes of illustrations all around ready to their hands. At the Home Mission meeting Mr. Spurgeon referred to the Emerald Isle in a very equivocal manner. With regard to Ireland, the centuries of wrong which had been done to that country called not merely for weeks and years, but centuries of right doing. Let them give Ireland the Gospel of Christ. In urging the county association to look after the matter of Home Missions, he went on to express the belief that those villages at home which they had neglected contained the greatest bigots to be found. There were some places in Scotland which were fiercely Catholic, because they had been left outside the agencies that were brought into existence at the Reformation. There were some parishes in England where Swedenborgians, Mormons, and the Peculiar People flourished; but these were places which had been neglected by Baptist preachers and Dissenters generally.

He was, of course, the chief attraction at the public meeting at the Guildhall on the evening of September 21. He gave an ample address, speaking specially to such as were outside of the Church. He then offered some good advice to young ministers about hard work and the way to do it:—

"I recommend every young minister to make his pulpit his first business. The pulpit is the Thermopylæ of Christendom. Your people may grumble that you don't go about and drink as many cups of tea at their houses as they would like. If you give them good food on the Sabbath they will put up with a great deal. If the Sabbath joint is only a grim scrag of mutton with plenty of divisions and nothing to divide, you will soon discover, whatever else you may do, that your people will not be satisfied. In the next place, do not neglect visitation. It is true that I cannot visit my four thousand three hundred and fifty members. If I were endowed with as many heads as a hydra, and bodies also multiplied, I could not do it. But my visitation is done by the elders. One young pastor lately said to me, 'I have no time to visit.' 'Goodness gracious!' said I, 'what have you got to do?' 'I have got my sermons to get up!' 'Your sermons? Well, I suppose you are never in bed after six in the morning? From six to nine you have three hours—six times three are eighteen—that is, two clear days in the week of nine hours each. That ought to be enough for your sermons—all before breakfast.' Now I do not say that everybody must get up so early in the morning, but I say that we must make long days. A Puritan once got up at five o'clock and went into his study, and, hearing a blacksmith's hammer going, fell upon his knees and said, 'O God, have mercy upon me! Does this man get up to serve his master before I rise to serve mine?' Our days are so few that we must make them long ones and take time by the forelock."

Having said this to pastors, he added something for those who made up the congregations:—

"It is a remarkable fact that ministers of the Gospel are not able to live on much less than other people. They cannot make a shilling go as far as other people can make a sovereign. Some of them try very hard, but they do not succeed. 'Will our churches see to the better maintenance of our ministers?' said a member once to a minister who wanted a little more salary as his family increased. 'I did not know that you preached for money.' 'No, I don't,' said the minister. 'I thought you preached for souls.' 'So I do; but I could not live on souls, and if I could it would take a good many the size of yours to make a meal.' Feed your ministers if you expect them to feed you." The deacons present also had a good word spoken to them:—

"It has been reported that I once said that a deacon is worse than the devil, because if you resist the devil he will flee from you, but if you resist a deacon he will fly at you. Now I never said that—not because it is not true of some deacons, but because it never happened to be true in my case. I have always been blessed with the best of deacons. I believe they are the strength of our churches, and I don't know what wo should do without them. But, brethren, how much more you might do than you are doing! Do take the oversight of the church with your pastor in all love and earnestness, as though you were as naturally called to the work as a mother is called to nurse her child; be like spiritual Uhlans—go about investigating the country, and do your work actively and energetically." In urging the importance of prayer-meetings, and giving some advice as to the way in which they should he conducted, he gave one of his telling anecdotes. He also advised all to avoid getting into ruts, and to use their houses as much as possible for services and classes:—

"There was a good woman in the backwoods of America who wanted the use of a school-house. The man to whom she had to apply for it was a sceptic; and, before going to him, she asked God that she might have the school-house. She then asked the man, and he said, 'No, the schoolhouse was built for secular learning; we want none of your Bible nonsense.' 'Well,' said the woman, 'I didn't ask you first; I asked a Higher One than you, and I believe I shall have what I want, because I mean to pray for it till I do. For, do you know, when I pray with all my heart there is something that always gives way; sometimes it is a man's health, sometimes his life, sometimes his heart—but always something; and I am quite certain, when I get the full strain of prayer on, something or other will snap.' And something or other did snap; for though the man refused to hear the woman then, on turning the matter over in his mind he really thought he had not done the right thing, and he sent word to her that she might have the school-house. My friends, though we may not always see the hand of God in answer to prayer, the answer does come, often without our noticing. Prayer must and will succeed. But, remember, when you have prayed for a thing you have not to act as if you had prayed for it. The farmer who has prayed for a harvest doesn't lock up all his ploughs or refuse to sow his wheat; he performs all his agricultural operations, and then he expects an answer to his prayer. Some say God will do His own work. So He does, but He works by His own people. 'But God will have His own.' So He will; but He will never have you. Nobody who talks like that is one of God's own. A Christian man is made a little sensible. If a man prays that he may have sufficient to maintain his children, and then crosses his legs and smokes his pipe, and does not go to work, his children cannot be supported. God hears prayers when we set to work in the spirit of faith, expecting that a blessing will come." With a view of introducing a new phase into the open church movement in Liverpool, Mr. W. P. Lockhart set about founding the Toxteth Tabernacle, the memorial-stone of which was laid by Mr. Spurgeon during the month of September in this year. The building, with rooms for schools and classes underneath, was to cost

something like £6,000. Mr. Lockhart had commenced evangelistic work in Liverpool some ten years before; and, being successful, his attention was directed to the thickly populated district of Toxteth Park. In point of fact, Mr. Lockhart had organised a comprehensive Home Mission, with a number of branches and agencies which were kept in working order by persons who had volunteered their services as assistants. Mr. Spurgeon set a high value on his friend's work, as was proved by his going down to Liverpool to lay the stone. In the short address given on this occasion the London preacher showed in a striking manner how his sanctified genius enabled him at any time to adapt himself at once to surrounding circumstances—e.g.:—

"To-day we lay the first stone of a barn in which my beloved friend, the sower, will, I hope, find room for the harvest that God will give him. I believe much of Christian effort has failed to produce permanent manifest results for the want of the in-gathering which ought always to follow the sowing. This day we lay the first stone of a barrack in which Christian soldiers shall be drilled for battle, in which they shall be gathered together to be trained for spiritual conflict; and God grant they may be brave soldiers—good men and true. May they have the red cross on the white ground, which means war against war, war against oppression, war against sin, war against misery, war for God and His Christ in every place! I wish our friends, therefore, God-speed in the erection of this place; and I earnestly beg the men of Liverpool who make the money to give the money that is required for it. This is for the working classes who work for you. The least you can do for them is to provide them with the means of grace."

It was proposed to found a society to promote the erection of ministers' houses; and the scheme being approved by the ministers who constituted the Pastors' College Conference, Mr. Spurgeon promised to become one of the trustees when the association was properly formed. I am not aware, however, that anything was ever done. New chapels, rather than manses for their pastors to live in, appeared to be rising up in various directions. Mr. Spurgeon laid the memorial-stone of a chapel schoolroom for his brother at Croydon on September 15, and on October 3 he attended with the Lord Mayor at a similar ceremony at Devonshire Square Chapel, Stoke Newington Road, the collection, amounting to £150, being given to the Stockwell Orphanage. On October 11 the London Baptist Association held its quarterly meeting at Upper Holloway Chapel, when, after a paper by the present Dr. Clifford on "The Secret of a Joyful Ministry," Mr. Spurgeon intimated that, with a view to relieve the London churches of some of the chapel debts, he had arranged to lecture and to preach in various places during the month of November. He only hoped that he should have strength to go through the long list of engagements.

Such was the ardour with which he entered into the enterprise of reducing chapel debts that five hundred circulars of invitation were sent out for a conference, to be held at the Tabernacle on October 21. He occupied the chair, and in the course of a statement remarked that, in some of the cases now laid before the brethren, the speedy payment of some part of the debt was essential to the very existence of the churches. Their ministers were on the brink of starvation because the debt deprived the churches of the ability to give them a decent maintenance. At this time the London churches required a sum of nearly £50,000 to free them from debt; and by his lectures and sermons Mr. Spurgeon modestly hoped to raise £1,000. One friend offered £1,000 on condition that the whole was raised within a year; but it was hoped that that offer would be amended, because it was hardly reasonable to expect that so large an amount could be raised in so short a time.

Chapter 80: National Education

Chapter 80.

National Education

Day of Prayer—Spurgeon's Letter in The Daily News—Mr. G.. M. Murphy—Chapel Debts-Bazaars—Christmas Day—"Apostate Churches"—New Year's Address—The College.

Monday, November 7, was the day set apart by the London Baptist Association for special prayer on behalf of the churches of London; and, accordingly, in the course of his Sunday morning sermon, Mr. Spurgeon said something about "Modern Phases of Belief," the text being St. Luk 11:11-13 : "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father," etc. Though his faith in the final triumph of the cause of Christ was never shaken, the preacher's survey of the Church in general was not that of an optimist:—

"To-morrow is the day of prayer, and I hope you may be all with one accord in one place in prayer, and I humbly suggest to you as one topic of prayer that we should all pray throughout that day and onward that God will give to the churches more and more of the Holy Spirit. Just now I do not know how you feel, but I sometimes feel very great alarm. The Church of England seems to be eaten through and through with sacramentarianism, but Nonconformity appears to me to be almost as badly riddled with philosophical infidelity. Those of whom we thought better things are turning aside one by one from the fundamentals of the faith. At first it was the doctrine of the eternity of future punishment that had to be given up; now it must be the very doctrine of the Fall—first one thing, then another; the whole must go. They treat our doctrines as though they were all to bo knocked down at their good pleasure when they choose to amend our theology. Through and through I believe the very heart of England is honeycombed with a damnable infidelity which dares still to go into the pulpit and call itself Christian. I do pray God may preserve our denomination from it. But my prayer shall rather go up that God will give us the Holy Spirit, for men never go wrong with the Holy Spirit. He will keep them right, lead them into all truth, and keep them in the truth. Soundness of doctrine is only worth having when it is the result of the living in-dwelling of God in the Church; and because too much of the Holy Spirit has departed we see here and there the signs that the orthodox faith is to be given up, and the inventions of man preached instead thereof. Sometimes I breathe, as I walk along, this prayer: that God would raise up more ministers to preach the Gospel with power. There is so much feeble talking, so much feeble preaching, so much twaddling, and not the declaration of the Gospel with force. But I do not know that I will pray that prayer again; I will put up this—'Lord, send Thy Spirit on the Churches.' Then will come the ministers, then will come the earnest workers. The Spirit of God in the men will touch their tongues with fire, and they will say, 'Here am I—send me;' and once again we shall have back the Puritanic age of preaching, and days of ministry like those of Whitefield and Wesley may be restored to us once more. The Spirit of God it is who is the power of the Church, and speaks with might in her." In the fall of this year the election of the members of the first London School Board excited great interest in the public mind. Numbers of persons appear to have been undecided as to the way they

ought to vote, and not a few were wishing to have some advice from the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Being extremely interested in the election, but having no time to allow of his taking any active part, Mr. Spurgeon had to be content with writing the following letter:—

"To the Editor of 'The Daily News.'

"Sir,—Having been asked to give my opinion as to the forthcoming election for the School Board for Lambeth, and being unable to attend public meetings, I venture to address a few remarks to the public through the medium of the Press. It is very undesirable that this election should become a contest between Church and Dissent. Surely we can give the present measure a fair trial without importing religious disputes into a matter in which we are all equally concerned for the general good. It is most pleasant to observe that all the candidates, with, perhaps, one exception, agree that the liberty for Bible reading given by the Bill should be carefully maintained; beyond that none have expressed a desire to go, nor could they if they would. The qualifications for the Board as to character and position it is not needful to discuss, but we will for the moment assume that all the candidates are in this respect equal—a supposition which each elector will readily be able to substantiate or reject. One very important requisite is not, however, found at all—viz., acquaintance with the subject in hand. If we had to select a national astronomer, we should rightly consider a man's character and standing as collateral matters, but the main thing would be his knowledge of astronomy; so in the present case, one very important element is the candidate's acquaintance with education, educators, educational processes, and educational literature. Some members of the Board should very fitly represent the financial element, and keep the expenditure in check; others should represent the working classes, who are on the receiving side of the question, and see that the economy does not degenerate into meanness; but first and foremost we need educationists—practical teachers—men who understand the work which the Board will be called upon to do. If this opinion be correct, I feel that I need not apologise for recommending to my fellow-electors Mr. W. R. Selway, a gentleman well known to many of them. He has for many years been associated with every philanthropic effort for the instruction of the people, and has also been during that time engaged personally as a public instructor. Many gentlemen can spend more money in soliciting their votes, but no one on the ground of educational fitness will better deserve them. Not only will he be at home in matters referring to the importation of the bare elements of knowledge, but ho will be able to render important service should the Government ever see fit to give a technical education to the people. I hope to see Mr. Selway returned at the head of the poll, and I feel persuaded that no man on the Board will prove himself more quietly efficient. Several of the other candidates on other grounds deserve their suffrages; but I am sorry to see on the list the names of clergymen and Dissenting ministers. If their places of worship are full, they will have abundance of employment for their time in attending to their congregations; and if they are empty, they will do well to use their strength in filling them. When we have so many able men ready for their office, it seems a pity to call away preachers of the Gospel from their spiritual engagements. In conclusion, it is but just that one of the working-men's candidates should be returned. Their class is more immediately concerned in the present movement, and ought to be represented; but the working men themselves will best judge of their own candidates, and I can only hope that the best man may win.—I am, etc., "Clapham, November 15."

"C. H. Spurgeon. A reply to the above by Mr. G. M. Murphy appeared in The Daily News, and of this effusion The Freeman remarked: "It aims at being smart, and succeeds in being abusive, and

can hardly fail to strengthen the impression that one at least of the ministerial candidates for Lambeth does not possess the requisite qualifications for the office he seeks." This was an unhappy disagreement; for George Murphy was a good man who did admirable Christian service among working people, which commanded the admiration of Mr. Spurgeon himself. Mrs. Taylor speaks of her brother's contribution to the controversy as an "angry and, as I think, uncharacteristic letter." He seems to have said some things which were not in good taste, but he soon repented of the indiscretion. For example, Murphy boasted of addressing nearly as many people at once as the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, "and none of these were taken from anybody else's congregation." He then wrote to Mr. Spurgeon, and received this reply:—"I beg to assure you that, so far from despising you, I have always admired your earnest efforts to do good. This is as much the case as ever, and I could not have dreamed that my opinions as to ministers and clergymen being on the School Board could have so incensed you. I do not write to complain of anything you have written, but to assure you that I never had any but the most respectful feelings towards you. I think your candidature is a mistake; but this is, I hope, quite compatible with the highest appreciation of you in other departures. I sincerely trust you will not cherish any hard thoughts of me; but if you do I shall regret it, but shall not imitate the example. I wish you success in all your efforts except in the election for the School Board."

Though not successful in this first instance, time ultimately proved that Murphy's candidature was not a mistake; for being elected to serve on the London School Board in 1873, he lived to do good service upon it, as Spurgeon himself would have admitted.

"While personally doing what he could to lessen the chapel debts of London, Mr. Spurgeon differed in opinion from some of his friends by cordially approving of bazaars as a means of raising money. One day in December he did what was always to him a formidable undertaking—he drove across London in order to open a bazaar at Grove Road Chapel, South Hackney, and that was only one of many such sales which he had thus recently attended, being prompted thus to give his time by intense anxiety to relieve the churches of the burden of debt which rested upon them, and which hindered their usefulness.

While he approved generally of bazaars, no one more emphatically protested against their abuse by lotteries and "fast" entertainments, etc. The wonder is that, with the pressure of work of this busy year, he was either able or willing to give the greater part of a day to merely opening one bazaar and then another. This was at least a telling testimony to his ever-growing popularity. However, that the preacher's fame continued to extend in every direction throughout the English-speaking world was evident to everyone save those jaundiced detractors in the Press who gave out that, at last, Spurgeon was "going down." The fact was that all classes were now appreciating the preacher as had never been the case before. Not only was he a commanding figure in Great Britain—the great congregation at the Metropolitan Tabernacle being supplemented by the tens of thousands who read the sermons weekly—but the American newspapers carried the discourses into countless homes throughout the Republic; and his unique popularity also extended through the Australasian colonies. Indeed, Spurgeon was popular on the sea as well as on land. About this time we find a Transatlantic newspaper giving an example of the attraction which the printed discourses had for steamboat passengers:—

"At our prayer-meeting, the other Sunday evening, a brother, to show the different ways of doing good, mentioned an incident that occurred on board a steamer in which some time before he was a passenger up the Pacific Coast to Oregon. It was Sunday, and a passenger who had with him a volume of Spurgeon's sermons went round asking one and another to read one of them aloud. The passengers declined, till he came to our brother, who consented to act as reader. Quite a company gathered round him, which gradually increased as he went on with the discourse, until, looking up after a little time, he saw that not only the passengers, but all the crew who could possibly be at liberty were among his audience, and that all were very attentive. The informal service was soon over—but not so the effect of the sermon; for some months after, being in San Francisco, he was abruptly saluted in the street one day by a stranger—a sailor—who seemed overjoyed at meeting him. 'How do you do—don't you know me? Why, I heard you preach!' 'I am not a preacher; you must have made a mistake.' 'No; I heard you preach. Don't you know—that steamer going so-and-so?' 'Oh, yes; I read one of Mr. Spurgeon's sermons.' 'Well, I never forgot it. It made me feel that I was a sinner, and I have found Christ, and I am so glad to see you!' Reader, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters.'" The closing months of 1870 represent a time of incessant labour on Mr. Spurgeon's part, some six weeks being devoted to the great effort he had voluntarily undertaken of trying to reduce the debts of the chapels in London. He felt the strain, but in his own sphere he found plenty to stimulate and encourage him. He was in especially good spirits at the annual meeting in December of the members of the Evening Classes, when seventy young men were present, and about a dozen made speeches. The new schools for the accommodation of four hundred children, in connection with the chapel at Vauxhall, also yielded rare satisfaction. Then there was a prospect of a church being founded at Portslade, near Brighton. On December 6 he opened a new chapel at Peckham, and on the following day he was preaching at the opening of the building at Croydon which had been erected for Mr. J. A. Spurgeon and his people. Thirty-eight persons were baptised at the Tabernacle during December.

Christmas Day was the last Sunday of the year, and through the prevalence of a dense, freezing fog, it was about as uncomfortable as inclement weather could make it. At the morning service the gas was lighted throughout the great building; but even then the familiar figure of the preacher was hardly discernible by his auditors a few yards away from the pulpit. Though he no more believed that December 25 was the anniversary of Christ's birth than the most uncompromising Quaker, Mr. Spurgeon was not averse to turning to account such seasons as occupied the people's attention and thoughts. He remarked that the incarnation of the Son of God was one of the greatest of all events in the history of the universe. Its actual occurrence was made known to certain shepherds and to certain wise men in the East. The shepherds were little acquainted with books, but the coming of Christ was made known to them, and they hastened to Bethlehem to see the great sight, while the Scribes and Pharisees did not seem to know when Christ was born. In expounding St. Matt. ii., Christ was shown to be the great personage of the picture; though Mary was present, the wise men did not worship her. The sermon was founded on St. Mat 2:2 : "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" etc. On the following day Christmas was celebrated at the Stockwell Orphanage in a way which delighted the boys; and on many successive Christmas Days the President himself dined at the institution, and did his part towards making everybody happy. The readiest way to his heart seemed to be to do something to promote the welfare of his family of orphans, and details of how the supplies came in had for him extraordinary interest. Thus something happened about this time which caused him some merriment. A friend sent a large

quantity of turnips to the Orphanage, and remarked that he hoped that someone else would send the mutton. Within an hour a whole sheep arrived from another donor. Supplies in kind were, of course, as welcome as money; and a striking instance of what could be done in one household was seen when, at the end of 1870, one ladies' school had made several hundred shirts for the boys. The second volume of "The Treasury of David" now appeared, and, being equal in value to its predecessor, was quite as cordially welcomed. Though he was never very greatly affected by the attacks of opponents, no one ever more heartily appreciated the favourable opinion of friends than Mr. Spurgeon. I well remember his being extremely pleased on one occasion with a passage in the diary of Dr. James Morgan, of Belfast, which related to the "Treasury." Sitting in his study at Helensburgh House, he directed my attention to what Dr. Morgan had written, and gave me the volume. This is the passage:—

"November 26.—I have spent my evenings this week in reading Mr. Spurgeon's book on the first twenty-six Psalms—a large volume, consisting of his exposition of each of the Psalms, with quotations from other writers much more lengthened than his own comments. His exposition is truly good, sound, able, elegant, new, and altogether admirable. There are many passages of the finest English composition—pure Saxon—simple, refined, and clear as crystal. They are more correct than his sermons, as might be expected, being carefully written by himself; and yet they are no less spiritual and practical and popular. I trust they may lead to a more careful perusal and study of this portion of the Divine Word. The accompanying notes, bulking very large in the volume, are most varied and instructive and interesting. This is the man who was accounted a few years ago unlearned, and not sufficiently educated for the Christian ministry. I never regarded such opinions of him otherwise than as the delusions of spiritual ignorance. I believe him to be the greatest power of any man of the present age."

After the publication of the sermon on "Baptismal Regeneration" the relations between the preacher of the Tabernacle and some friends in the Established Church, who might be supposed to sympathise with him in his work, were at the best somewhat strained. Further cause of irritation now arose in connection with the service of Christmas morning. On that occasion, when the great chapel itself was filled with smoky fog, some present were startled to hear the preacher refer to the Romish and Anglican communions, "and other apostate churches," during the general prayer. A correspondent of The Record took the question in hand; and, seeing that the matter might be seriously misunderstood, Mr. Spurgeon sent a reply to the same journal, and this was written with the characteristic force of a man who realised that, even if he had made a slip, he still had a strong case. Mr. Spurgeon wrote:—

"I have no doubt the expression objected to was used by me; but out of their connection words may or may not convey the same meaning. Should I use the expression at this moment I should mean no more nor less than this, which I fear you will think very uncharitable; but it is what I feel. As I look around me I am horrified at the widespread Popish teaching of the Established Church, and I am at once surprised and indignant at the degraded form which its superstition is assuming, equalling, if not excelling, the idolatry of the Church of Rome. This pestilent influence is carried far and wide by an able priesthood and prolific Press. In view of the fearful mischief which your Church is thus doing, I do not feel that it is more than the truth to say that she has apostatised from her Protestant position. It is as painful to me to use the expression as it can be to others to hear it.

"At the same time, I can never forget the many gracious and faithful men who remain in this Church, nor can I cease to pray for them. Towards these brethren, as earnest adherents and promulgators of evangelical truth, I sincerely cherish the warmest love. In these dangerous times, when so many heresies are abroad, it is most delightful to feel that common love to the grand old Gospel creates a bond of union which no ecclesiastical differences can break.

"I am thus in a strait betwixt two. I see around me a Church which largely teaches Popish doctrine—must I not denounce it? I see in connection with that Church some of the most earnest preachers of the Gospel—what shall I say to these? Express my opinion as to their position. I have done so, and they reply that I have done them a sore injustice. They do not see their position from my point of view. They are evidently not intentionally in a false position; by some means they have become satisfied that it is their duty to remain where they are. What then? If they are generous enough to accord me fellowship after the many sharp things which I have said, and with no pledge but that I may say them again, am I to refuse every sort of co-operation with them? It seems not so to me. If there are matters in which we may unite as Christians upon terms which do not require the least concealment on either side, thank God for it. A prayer-meeting for the revival of religion is surely one of these; and therefore when asked to address the assembly at the Freemasons' Hall I cheerfully consented.

"You may charge me if you will with 'culpable eccentricities,' but to me the position of affairs seems to be far more eccentric. I have the difficult path to tread of one who loathes Popery, whether in the Church or in the Romish Antichrist, but who in his heart of hearts feels the deepest Christian love to many brethren in the Anglican establishment. To err is human under any circumstances, but in such as the present it is almost impossible to be always in the right. May the Providence of God and the power of His Spirit render the way to the visible fellowship of believers more plain; in spirit and in truth it is evermore abiding." The newspaper comments on both sides may have been more irritating than the original statement, or the explanation, but no good purpose would be answered by further quotations. On Monday evening, January 2, an address by Mr. Spurgeon was given at Freemasons' Tavern in connection with the arrangements of the Evangelical Alliance for the week of united prayer. On the same evening he also addressed the members of the South London Teachers' Union at their communion service at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The fifteenth anniversary of the founding of the College was also held about this time, when the oft-repeated story of how the work originated was once more told. At various places, from the North of Scotland to Worcestershire, men had successfully settled, while between twenty and thirty others were preaching with a view to pastoral settlements. These occasions so far differed from the meetings of the spring Conference, however, that the people who crowded the Tabernacle did not so much meet to hear about the College as to look upon pretty dissolving views and to hear the President's lecture upon them. This time the subject was "Stones;" by no means a sterile theme with such a speaker. Stones of various kinds were referred to, and many useful lessons were drawn from them; and then, in order to illustrate the subject, varieties of stones were exhibited. Millstones, such as the Hebrews had used to grind their corn, were shown; and then there was one similar to what David had used in the sling when he killed Goliath. Then came some specimens of diamonds and other costly gems. While showing these, it was remarked that there were few crowns in Europe which had not sham jewels among their precious ones; but that was not the case with the Crown of England—every gem in that was genuine. The lesson drawn from this was an obvious

one—"Take care that you yourselves become as pure stones in the crown of your Maker."

Chapter 81: Mr. Spurgeon at Home

Chapter 81.

Mr. Spurgeon At Home

Nightingale Lane—The House and the Study—Intruding Callers—Saturday Afternoon Gatherings—The Host—American Exaggeration—Study Work—In the Garden—Genial Wit—Gardeners—A Coachmen's Party—Anecdotes.

Helensburgh House, Nightingale Lane, Clapham Common, was in all respects a charming suburban residence; and its being sufficiently distant from the town not to be a convenient place of call for that cosmopolitan crowd who think that they have legitimate reason for encroaching on the time and patience of a popular minister was an additional advantage. When the pastor of New Park Street Chapel first went to live there in the early part of the second half of this century the nightingales, no doubt, lingered in the neighbourhood, and many even do so still, although the lane would appear to have taken its name from the Nightingale Inn, which stands close to the house Mr. Spurgeon occupied. It is nevertheless quite possible that the hostelry derived its title from the nocturnal songsters which made this quarter their favourite haunt. Be that as it may, Nightingale Lane is about as pleasant a place as its name would seem to indicate, although the erection of villas may have robbed the neighbourhood in general of that charming rural aspect which belonged to it in days when old-fashioned mansions with their extensive walled-in gardens had the parish very much to themselves. How often have I crossed that common on the way to Helensburgh House. The general surroundings were then supposed to be wonderfully like what they had been in the early part of the century. The sites and scenes here and there reminded one of the Wilberforces, the Macaulays, the Thorntons, and others, whose genuine piety and great achievements have caused the Clapham Set to be held in lasting remembrance. The modest establishment was in all respects suitable for such a man as Mr. Spurgeon; for he was a man who loved his home and was happy in it. As a master he was kind and considerate to the servants, finding as much pleasure in allowing them little privileges as they did in receiving them. Then, as all the world knows, the pastor was happy in having a wife whose tastes and aspirations were in sympathy with his own. Ten or twelve years after marriage Mrs. Spurgeon began to be an invalid, however; and at the time that I first became acquainted with the family there would sometimes be two sufferers beneath the same roof. This chastening seemed to have a mellowing influence on the character of the preacher, and superficial observers; who said that he was changing, were little acquainted with the kind of discipline which had helped to bring the change about. In any case the course of true love between husband and wife went on without a jar.

Helensburgh House struck the visitor as being not only an elegant villa, but one which was well planned to suit the requirements of the family. There was a neat garden in front, charming grounds of some extent in the rear. When you entered the house from Nightingale Lane all the domestic arrangements would strike you as being exceedingly comfortable; but there was nothing provided for mere show. At each end the dining-room opened into a conservatory, which was also an

aviary, whose feathered inmates maintained a kind of cheerful chorus. There were pictures on the walls of some attraction; but probably the one you would stand still to look at would be the one consisting of photographs of the pastor's twin sons. Once a year, until the two came of age, a new photograph was taken, so that the progress of humanity from babyhood to young manhood was seen at a glance. "Ah," said the great preacher to me when I once showed some interest in this collection, "if one could only grow in grace like that!" To reach the study you ascended some stairs, and the room at once struck you as being all and containing all that an ardent student could require. The apartment was large; it was sufficiently lofty, and was, of course, richly furnished with books, new and old, some being of sufficient rarity to cause a bibliophile's mouth to water. These books, collected with great care and judgment, were not only on the shelves and a sight to see—they were well used; and, notwithstanding the very natural astonishment of a class of good folks who never enter a library without expressing the opinion that the possessor can never have read, nor can ever hope to read, so many books, you would have found some difficulty in reaching down a volume with the contents of which the master was not partially or fully acquainted. In addition to the printed books there were also divers unpublished MSS., some being the productions of seventeenth-century Puritan divines. The fact was, a number of second-hand booksellers had the intimation made to them that whenever a MS. of this kind came into their possession the treasure would find a ready purchaser at Clapham. The wonder was how, with such demands on his time, Mr. Spurgeon contrived to get through so much reading as he did; but the more you conversed with him in that charming room, the more clearly did you perceive that the mind of your companion was the garner of an omnivorous reader. He could not only read at lightning speed, but when he had gone through a book the contents became permanently his own. The house was supposed to be out of the great highway of city life; and when he went there the young pastor, of course, fervently hoped that the place would afford him a retreat from the crowd of callers, including even begging impostors, who seem naturally to be attracted by the popular minister, and whom they regard as their legitimate prey. As popular preachers know to their cost, however, it is impossible to keep the crowd of intruders altogether at bay. Probably Mr. Spurgeon fared better in this respect than many others, who, though prominently before the public, had still not reached the same height of celebrity. In. his case it became necessary to have some hard-and-fast rules, which had to be carried out without any show of compromise being made—at least to outsiders. Saturday had necessarily to be entirely reserved; but, strange as it may appear to such as are only imperfectly acquainted with Mr. Spurgeon's methods, Saturday afternoon was frequently allotted to the reception of friends of the more intimate kind, some of whom might have some business to talk about, while others were specially privileged. How many there are who retain pleasant memories of these reunions, which in winter would come off in the study, and in summer on the garden lawn. It was customary on such occasions to meet many persons who might he called representative. One or more of the preacher's publishers would occasionally join the company. Of course, open house was also accorded to the Tabernacle deacons; and then there were many others engaged in various departments of Christian work who would be equally welcome. Missionaries, preachers, and other leading sympathisers from America and the Colonies would also at times appear on the scenes, and some of these would go home to publish descriptions of what they had seen and heard. Probably those who were most welcome, however, were the persons who in various ways assisted in the many departments of Christian work. Mr. Spurgeon often remarked that no one was ever surrounded by a more noble band of helpers than

himself; and having found such assistants after his own heart, nobody ever better understood the art of encouraging them in their several spheres. Good masters make good servants, and that applies to Christian service as well as to service of a more ordinary kind.

Saturday afternoon, then, was a time of unbending and of free intercourse, if such a term as unbending may be applied to a man who never carried about with him any airs of the "great man." Still, at such times, when he was surrounded by friends, he would relate things which he would not have told in public; and such was the interest of his reminiscences and his opinions on men, books, and great public movements, that even his dog Punch seemed to be an interested auditor.

"You know, I am not the reverend gentleman," I once heard him remark; and it was at once realised that he spoke what he felt. He wished all of his visitors to be as much at ease as he was himself. I am not a lukewarm admirer of Boswell's "Life of Johnson;" but I am persuaded that, with all his powers, the literary monarch of the eighteenth century did not surpass Spurgeon as a conversationalist. He took a broadly commanding view of things, and astonished one by the surprising extent of his knowledge, as well as by his wonderful insight into human nature. One might have expected that such a mind as his was too capacious to be capable of being ruffled by the cares of life which trouble more ordinary people. That it was not so, however, was well known to all who were acquainted with his temperament. What are accounted little things were great in his eyes if they affected those for whom he had any regard. It might seem the easiest thing in the world for such a man to preach or to write what he did; but that it was quite otherwise was shown by his dread of crowds, and by the signs of wear which each year now became more visible. How he laid upon himself a burden of work which was not easily borne was well known to all who were closely connected with him; but I am not sure that the public ever properly realised the fact. At Helensburgh House you found yourself in a charming home, where indoors and out were all things to add pleasure or attraction to life; but so fully is the master occupied with the business which seems to fire him with enthusiasm, that all seem to exist for others rather than for him.

Mr. Robert Taylor, of Norwood, says: "Mr. Spurgeon greatly enjoyed his beautiful garden and grounds, and had almost equal pleasure in showing to visitors on his Saturday afternoon receptions his rare flowers and rare books. A few years ago a good minister from America who had visited him gave him some pain by an overdrawn description in the public Press of his residence and its surroundings. Referring to it, he said one does not like an exaggerated picture like that, as if one were a self-indulgent Sybarite lapped in luxury. And then he added, in a tone of chastened seriousness, 'My Master, I am sure, does not grudge me the enjoyment of my garden. I owe it to Him. It is about the only luxury in which I indulge. I am very hard worked. I have no time for social intercourse. I have neither time nor strength to move about and find refreshment in variety and change as others do; but I have my garden with its flowers and its fine prospects, and I praise Him for it.'"

Well, it is past three o'clock—dinner is over—and for one who can claim the privilege this is the time to see the pastor more at ease than on any other day in the week. "Is Mr. Spurgeon at home?" "Yes; and all alone in the study." The greeting is thoroughly cordial; but, at the same time, it would appear that this ever-busy man has been interrupted in his work. There may be a number of newly-written letters before him, the ink on the last being not yet dry. In any case there will be a number of printers' proofs on the table, some already corrected, while others are awaiting the

process. In later days more especially the corrections were very numerous, more so than seemed to be absolutely necessary; but it was better to be somewhat fastidious than to show any tendency towards carelessness in such a matter. The preacher does not write his sermons; if questioned on that point he will declare that he would prefer being hanged to going through such an ordeal, and this process of revising is to him, therefore, equivalent to an exercise in composition. In the course of an extended article, a Society journal gave a tolerably correct portrayal of Spurgeon as he was at home. I remember that I happened to mention this effusion to him in the study at Helensburgh House, and he at once turned to his secretary on the other side of the table and remarked, "Blackshaw, it's like life itself." I quote a passage or two:—

"It is difficult to say where Mr. Spurgeon may be considered most at home; for his time is spent in moving quickly to and from the Tabernacle, the Pastors' College, the schools, almshouses, and orphanages, of which he is the guiding spirit. Perhaps the most hardworking man on the Surrey side of the Thames, he finds but little leisure for taking his ease in his house in Nightingale Lane—a quiet nook hard by Wandsworth Common. He passes his life, when not actually preaching or working, in a pony chaise, varied by occasional hansom cabs. Wrapped in a rough blue overcoat, with a species of soft deerstalking hat on his head, a loose black necktie round his massive throat, and a cigar burning merrily in his mouth, he is surely the most unclerical of all preachers of the Gospel.... Bowls—not the noisy American tenpins, but the discreet old Puritan game—is the favourite sport of the great preacher, who plays 'whenever he can find time,' which is not very often. He confesses that in choosing bowls and tobacco as his amusements he is following good old Roundhead traditions, and loves to refer to the Lord Protector's enjoyment of a game of bowls with grave college dons. While savouring with keen gusto his hard-earned amusements, he escapes utterly from the hair-splitting of theologians, the bias of the bowl being the matter to which he bends his faculties. But there are other relaxations for Mr. Spurgeon—amusements in themselves, it is true, but yet indulged in with method." This is a charming passage relating to his love of birds:—

"As the game of bowls continues, we recognise that Nightingale Lane is well named, for the feathered chorus increases in volume. The air is full of birds. There are birds everywhere—on shrub and tree, on bush and lawn. And they take no heed of the bowl-players, and heed the rolling spheres not a jot. For Mr. Spurgeon's house is a species of refectory for the birds of the neighbourhood. Night and morning a repast is spread for them on the lawn—no niggard scattering of crumbs, but a plentiful banquet. When Mrs. Spurgeon began to feed the birds they soon found it out, came again, and brought their friends. Now they come in flocks, little birds and big birds, rooks and thrushes, blackbirds and sparrows. Swallows and martins take up their abiding place. Last spring two couples of them built in the summer-house, which was at once given up to their separate use. Like a true ornithophilist Mr. Spurgeon likes birds, but likes them wild, looking on cage-birds as but poor little creatures, leading at best but artificial lives; but the neighbours who have fruit trees entertain a different opinion. As the evening closes in and the damp air warns Mr. Spurgeon that the rheumatism to which he is subject, and which has had the effect of making him an habitual abstainer from strong drink, is not to be trifled with, we stroll again into his library, where the host tells many pleasant stories of his foreign travels in Italy and the South of France, and especially in that most sociable and enjoyable of places, Menton, where the ornithological pleasures of Nightingale Lane are exchanged for the orange and lemon-groves, the grey

olive-trees, and the fleshy cactuses of the south. Here Mr. Spurgeon enjoys himself to the top of his bent."

Well, as it is a fine summer afternoon, one almost feels that a needed service is actually done by interrupting such an incessant worker, and so compelling him, as it were, to get out in the open air. Ask him at what hour in the morning he entered his study, and he will probably tell you it was at six o'clock, and it may even have been two hours earlier than that. Now, however, as he seems all at once to throw care to the winds, and proposes a ramble round the garden, we gladly follow. The master of Helensburgh House is supposed by some to have no eye either for art or architecture; but one soon discovers that he has great taste for gardening. He also loves the birds so much that no gun might be fired off in that garden, which always appeared to thrive under the care of the most accomplished gardeners. For these the pastor has some regard. He will examine their work, and speak of it, or while passing by he will have a word with the men themselves. A friend who once looked in at Helensburgh House in the way I am now describing tells me a good story which shows what interest Mr. Spurgeon took in his garden. While being shown round, this gentleman listened to an explanation of how under certain gardeners things had not prospered so well as they should have done in the greenhouses and elsewhere. Notwithstanding their being professors of Christian "perfection," these worthies appear to have neglected their work, and the vines more especially appeared to have suffered. "You see, these men were so holy that they did not get here till eight in the morning when they should have been here at six; and then I discharged them and took on sinners in their place."

One anecdote will follow another, and some of these will relate to his own experience, probably in early days; and it is easy to see that while the pastor is amusing others he is also entertaining himself. His quick eye seems to take in at once everything worth seeing, while his ready wit was always taking unexpected turns. Thus if anyone he came in contact with happened to have an odd kind of name, it would be almost sure to suggest something, although nothing would be said that would be likely to hurt a sensitive person's feelings. One who had a name corresponding to that of one of the martyrs could never be hurt by being told to "burn away;" nor could Mr. Alfred Barley, of the Paris Mission, feel otherwise than complimented when solemnly assured that he would continue to be all right so long as he was not malted.

Before the afternoon is very far advanced others will make their appearance in the grounds. The Tabernacle deacons are, of course, welcome, and so also are others who are prominent among Mr. Spurgeon's helpers. In any case several sections of the church will most likely be represented; and to one who is thoroughly catholic in his sympathies that will be an advantage. If Mr. Rogers, Principal of the College, should come on the scene, he is a staunch Pædobaptist; while Mr. Alabaster, the printer and publisher, is an ardent Churchman. This is a matter of little consequence to our catholic-minded host, however, and, indeed, seems rather to stimulate his good humour; while he consoles himself with the reflection that if they do not see their error now, such friends will have to confess that they were mistaken after they get to heaven. The fragrant weed is indulged in; and if you are a connoisseur in cigars, perhaps you will be tempted to envy the preacher, who seems to have friends who keep him supplied with boxes of the best brands. The air of the garden seems to become fragrant; and while we have some good talk on the greensward in the cool shade, the birds above appear to be exceptionally merry. Would anyone like to exercise his arms with the bowls? If so, the grass is level, the bowls are in readiness, and the pastor himself will take

his turn in the game. Capital exercise it proves to those who follow sedentary occupations; and one cannot help thinking that Mr. Spurgeon would have been all the better in health if from his youth upwards he had enjoyed more of such outdoor exercise. As it is, you will only seldom see him indulge in such a pastime. On the contrary, it seems natural to him to take his seat, and, quite regardless of any risk of taking a chill, he talks on until all gather round him—drawn by irresistible attraction. The Literary Club itself, in Dr. Johnson's best days, was certainly never better regaled than we, the Saturday afternoon visitors, have been on such occasions. Persons who excel in conversation in such a degree as was the case with Spurgeon and Johnson appear to enjoy talking as greatly as their friends enjoy listening to them. Any competent judge whose privilege it has been to make one at the little gatherings such as I now refer to will readily admit that Spurgeon was one of the first conversationalists of his time.

It would naturally be provoking when other talkers of a different calibre appeared on the scene, and who, through a very natural love of hearing their own utterances, rather checked the flow from our chief entertainer. Such were, of course, not sufficiently discerning to see what they lost themselves, or of what they were depriving others. An ordinary company would not often have to complain on this score; but some comical examples would occasionally occur, and even Mr. Spurgeon himself would be not a little amused. The fact was that in the case of Christian people he seemed to regard them as being very much on an equality. He would tell many anecdotes of the "gold-headed cane era," when things were different, when actually to approach a minister was involuntarily to exclaim, "How dreadful is this place!" But to win his respect you were not expected to treat him either as "the great man" or "the reverend gentleman." Thus it happened that, under certain conditions, Christian people of very humble social grade might be seen in the garden or the study. He once told me of two Christian coachmen who, being employed in the neighbourhood of Clapham, had afforded him some entertainment while they had been his guests in the garden. Being comfortably seated in one of the summer-houses, these worthies stayed until ten o'clock in the evening. They had come up from the country, where one had been a deacon of a church, to seek employment in London, where, being, as it were, lost in the crowd, things had all turned out very differently from what they would have liked. Religious privileges might be just as valuable, but the line separating the classes was more apparent; so that satisfaction at being taken notice of by Mr. Spurgeon naturally had the effect of raising their spirits, as well as of loosing their tongues to a degree which led to their having almost all the talk to themselves. At length the flow of words became almost too much for the long-suffering host, though afterwards he seemed to enjoy relating the circumstance. "Did they not allow you to say anything, then?" said I, when he related to me the circumstance. "Well, sometimes they did," he answered.

Any who stayed to tea on Saturday afternoon might also, if they wished, remain to family prayer, which came immediately afterwards. Then, when all had retired, was the time to get the sermons together for the following day. He would compare the Tabernacle congregation to a flock of chickens, and his labours in the study to the work of one who was gathering food for them. We may think of Spurgeon alone in his study; but it must be borne in mind that he was a preacher sui generis, whose methods in work were of quite an unconventional kind. The brief notes of a sermon, as I have seen them, would cover not more than one side of half a sheet of note-paper. He once said to a brother minister, "If I cannot 'break' my text to my use in an hour, it is all over with me."

"Breaking" the text with such a student of the Bible meant looking well at the words in their setting, and then arranging the divisions. We may also safely believe that the matter was likewise well prayed over; for he did not advise his students to do in this respect what he did not do himself. After that, all was easy and straightforward; for the great range of his reading had stored his capacious mind with an ample supply of illustrations, all of which were arranged in order, and were thus available when wanted.

Chapter 91

VOLUME FIVE

Chapter 92

Westwood

Westwood

Chapter 82: Mr. Spurgeon's Home Life (Continued...)

Chapter 82.

Mr. Spurgeon's Home Life (continued)

Spurgeon not a Rich Man—Private Talks with Students—Festive Occasions—Anecdotes told by the Host—The Stockwell Orphanage—Dr. Cuyler's Reminiscences—Spurgeon and Gough—Westwood described.

Fully to understand what Mr. Spurgeon was in private life we should have to ask many settled pastors, as well as students, for what they have to say about him. Do not overlook the fact that one of the crosses of his life consisted in his continually being brought into contact with ministerial poverty in its most harrowing phases. Many of these brethren seemed to have contracted a notion that their distinguished friend was rich, whereas, in point of fact, when the agencies he had to maintain are taken due account of, Spurgeon was really one of the poorest men in the country. To myself it was ever a matter for wonder that he made the comparatively small general income of between twenty and thirty thousand pounds go as far as he did. At the same time it was a sorrow to him to be more fully aware of the extent and nature of ministerial poverty than any other pastor of the denomination. How much he actually gave away under this head will never be generally known.

Beyond this what shall be said about the advice given to single individuals in the study or the garden? Many a discouraged pastor has there opened his troubles and has gone away lighter-hearted. Or one about to leave the College and settle in the ministry would x x call upon the President, and before coming away would have some words spoken to him which would for ever afterwards live in the memory. One such in particular once related to me how he had fared. The great preacher led the way into the garden and, kneeling down in a summer-house, prayed for him with characteristic earnestness; and then, while his countenance assumed an expression of solicitude not to be described, he urged his young friend to remember that, as an instrument in God's hands, he would never get other people to be what he was not himself in his own life. Of course the private life of such a man had its comical side in regard to the numberless applications that were made to him by credulous or over-sanguine people, both sane and otherwise. On one occasion, at Helensburgh House, he gave me as extraordinary a collection of letters from this order of correspondents as any mortal ever set eyes on; but when I published some of the things contained in them he laughed at the ludicrous figure they made in print, but thought that one correspondent in particular would be "down" on him or on me. Some of the writers had gratuitous advice to offer. Some were, of course, prophets who made predictions more or less startling; but the chief want appeared to be hard cash, of which a preacher of Spurgeon's standing was supposed to have an unlimited supply. These would back up their pathetic appeals with Scriptural texts supposed to bear upon the subject, and which it was supposed could not be resisted. A man of genius would be in need of the money to bring out a most novel invention; and there was also a due proportion of the concoctions of professional begging-letter writers.

There are many persons living who could reveal some things worth knowing in connection with the private talks they have had with Mr. Spurgeon in his study. The fervour with which he endeavoured to stimulate such as he could influence to live up to the possibilities of the Christian life was as characteristic as the distress he felt when any seemed to fail, or actually to fall—to become moral wrecks. In this respect it was this great man's unhappiness to suffer many disappointments; but this was probably inevitable when we consider what human nature is. Out of so large a number as entered the Pastors' College it was to be expected that one here, and another there, would fall; the Church would have its cases of discipline, and occasionally, even among such as had been allotted places of leadership in the camp, would be found those who had proved themselves unworthy of confidence. I can bear witness to the depression of spirits which such cases caused the pastor. I have a vivid remembrance of a conversation I had with him one afternoon in the study at Clapham after one of his friends had disappointed his expectations. In tones never to be forgotten he spoke of the sorrow he felt when there was any falling away on the part of those in whom he had placed confidence. It was at such a time that even his features seemed to speak, and one could not but regret that the expression of the face could not be preserved by the pencil of an eminent painter. There is no great portrait of Spurgeon to go down to posterity. But what shall be said about the scene presented at Helensburgh House or Westwood on what may be called a fete day? I refer to the occasions on which the tutors and students of the Pastors' College would be entertained on the opening day of each session—about the beginning of August. It was a holiday in the best sense for all concerned—a high festival, when the flow of wit and humour at the hospitable board was not the least part of the entertainment. It was there also that the newly-elected freshmen first made their appearance, and when, marshalled on the lawn, these candidates for hard service in the Baptist ministry would be personally welcomed. Prayer would be offered and a short address given, and then, after a hasty luncheon, all would disperse over the grounds to follow such recreations as had attraction for them. Shall it be cricket or bowls, aiming at a target, or a quiet stretch on the greensward, while eyes and ears are charmed by the surroundings? You notice that the host takes his seat in a convenient situation, and that one by one, in continuous succession, the young men approach him for a brief interview. Whether student or pastor, if you have any case to state to the President, or any advice to ask, now is your opportunity, for later on in the afternoon he will smoke a cigar with the tutors and talk in a different way. Be careful not to occupy the Chief's attention too long, for there are more detectives looking after his interests than you might be disposed to believe. I well remember how a certain self-important neophyte was effectively rebuked when he exceeded the limit of moderation in his interview. A stout Tabernacle deacon had his eyes open, and, stepping up to the offender, said somewhat sternly in his ear, "Don't you take up too much of Mr. Spurgeon's time." At 1.30 George—the President's personal attendant, who to-day has charge of the commissariat department—will give forth the welcome sound of his great gong. We dine al fresco, and at the table there will be some post-prandial speeches, our host leading the way, and being followed by the tutors. If able to do so, Mrs. Spurgeon will make an appearance. After dinner all return to the grounds, and after tea there may be some more speaking. In former years this College festival might not always be held at Mr. Spurgeon's house; but as he was not content to defray the cost out of the subscribed funds, and found the expense was less at his own house, he latterly invited the students there oftener than anywhere else. On such an occasion as this, when Mr. Spurgeon was at ease, speaking to his friends, those present would possibly hear many anecdotes relating

to his early days or later adventures. A few examples of the kind he was able to tell may be given here. At one time, when engaged in preaching up and down the country, he visited an important place having a prominent chapel, and put up at the house of one of the principal deacons. While walking down to the chapel in the evening in company with one of the deacon's sons, the preacher asked the young man the pointed question, "Do you love my Master?" To be talked with thus was something so new in the youth's experience that he stopped suddenly in the street, and said, "Mr. Spurgeon, I have walked down to this chapel with the ministers for several years, and not one of them ever asked me such a question before." That became a turning-point in the young man's life.

One of the characters he had encountered in his early days at Waterbeach was a stingy man, of whom he related this story:—"I was told of a man who was so mean and stingy that he never gave anything to anybody. But, I answered, 'He gave me something once. In my early days, when my salary was forty-five pounds a year, my hat had got shabby, and this man at one of our meetings asked me to speak with him. He put into my hand seven-and-sixpence, and said the Lord had bidden him to give it to me. At our next meeting he asked me to pray that he might be delivered from the sin of covetousness. "The Lord told me," he confessed, "to give you ten shillings, but I only gave you seven-and-sixpence." The man then yielded up the missing half-crown.'"

Another anecdote related to a Christian woman who died while sitting with the congregation in a village chapel while he was discoursing of the glories of the heavenly state. She seemed to take in with great avidity what was said about the eternal world, and then, after a more than usually sweet smile had passed over her features, she became motionless. "Friends, I think that our sister over there is dead!" said Mr. Spurgeon; and on this being found to be the case, the body was carried out. Impressed as the congregation must have been, the preacher was still more affected, and he declared that he should be able to recognise those eyes again in the unseen world.

Some old friends may possibly remember Mr. Spurgeon's characteristic anecdote about an adventure with an organ-grinder when he was away from home on a holiday. The story was once given to encourage those who collected for the Stockwell Orphanage:—"I do not beg myself, because people give without my asking; but I did so literally on one occasion at Menton. An organ-grinder—a representative of a fraternity to which I am not very partial—came in front of the hotel; and, not being very successful, I said to the man, 'Here, let me have your organ!' After grinding for a time I held out my hat to the company at the windows and got sixteen shillings for the man. Immediately afterwards a colonel and another gentleman tried the same experiment, but they were not nearly so successful, because the first player was 'the old original,' who had appealed to the people while they were in a merry humour. Thus collectors should always see to it that they get hold of people when they are in the right mood. Two brethren went out together to preach, and, coming to a pond in a secluded place, they resolved that they would enjoy a bath. When they dived in they discovered it to be a leech-pond, and they were soon in a desperate pickle. Leeches always are ready to receive; but people should always be as ready to give as the leeches were to get the blood out of the two preachers." On these occasions the President might possibly feel disposed to give some illustrations of his remarkable experiences in regard to the obtaining of supplies. The history of the Stockwell Orphanage as he could tell it was a remarkable story indeed. On one memorable morning he was at a meeting of trustees, and the state of the exchequer was certainly calculated to inspire feelings of anxiety. "Well, we're cleared out," said Mr. Spurgeon; "we must go to the Great Chancellor of the Exchequer; but before we pray I want to

know what you are going to give. I will give twenty-five pounds." As each contributed a like amount, a sum of one hundred and fifty pounds was raised at once. Then followed a prayer—brief, and remarkable for the simple way in which present needs were asked for in behalf of the orphan children. That day was Friday, and when the pastor met his deacons on the following Sunday at the Tabernacle the first question was, "Well, sir, did you get the money?" The fact was that on that memorable Friday eight hundred and fifty pounds came in for the Orphanage, and not far short of a similar amount for other institutions. On that same Friday afternoon when he went to the College to give his weekly lecture to the students something still more strange happened; and it was one of those adventures of which you needed to hear Mr. Spurgeon give the particulars himself to realise their full significance. A stranger looked in who was quite unknown to everybody present. "Are you in need of money, Mr. Spurgeon?" "Always in need of money here, sir." When the College and the colportage were mentioned the visitor gave one hundred pounds for each; and then he said: "Ah, but there is something for which you have greater need than these." The reference was, of course, to the Orphanage, and then for that institution a very large donation was given. Having completed his errand, the stranger said, "You must sit in your chair for five minutes after I am gone; you must not try to find out who I am. I promised God to do this some years ago, and I have never done it till now, and now my conscience is relieved." From that day forward it was never discovered who that man was; and like stories were sometimes told of similar mysterious visitors.

It would be possible to tempt Spurgeon to speak about his early experiences in and around Cambridge. Listen to the account he once gave of his first convert:—"Well I remember beginning to preach in a little thatched chapel, and my first concern was, Would God save any souls through me? They called me a ragged-headed boy; I think I was—I know I wore a jacket. And I preached, and I was troubled in my heart because I thought, 'This Gospel has saved me, but will it save anybody if I preach it?' Some Sundays went over, and I used to say to the deacons, 'Have you heard of anybody finding the Lord? Have you heard of anybody brought to Christ?' My good old friend said, 'There is a woman who lives over at so-and-so who found the Lord three or four Sundays ago through your preaching.' I said, 'Drive me over there—I must go directly;' and the first thing on Sunday morning I was driving down to see my first child. Many fathers here recollect their first child; mothers recollect their first baby—no child like it; you never had another like it since. I have had a great many spiritual children born of the preaching of the Word, but I do think that woman was the best of the lot—at least, she did not live long enough for me to find many faults in her. After a year or two of faithful witness-bearing she went home to lead the way for a goodly number since. I have had nothing else to preach but Christ crucified."

Perhaps I have said enough to show that Mr. Spurgeon loved his home, though he had too little time to give to the fireside circle. You could not spend half an hour with him in his house without hearing his opinion on various matters, besides being entertained. Christian work at home and abroad seemed to interest him most; but a little genuine success, rather than a grand programme, was what yielded him satisfaction. He appeared to harbour a poor opinion of the methods and achievements of the Salvation Army, for example; but seemed to be in his element when entertaining at his table an unpretending Christian worker who, without drums, uniforms, and martial parade, was fighting the battles of the Lord. This description of Mr. Spurgeon at home may fittingly include an account of a visit to Nightingale Lane which Dr. Cuyler wrote in the summer of 1872. The style is somewhat gushing, and there is some exaggeration, but otherwise the picture

drawn is genial and graphic:—

"At ten o'clock I drove out with a friend to spend an hour with Mr. Spurgeon. He resides several miles from his church, on the beautiful Nightingale Road, Clapham. The road is lined with shade-embowered villas, like Clinton Avenue, Brooklyn. Helensburgh House, the residence of the great preacher, is a very attractive mansion, surrounded by the most exquisite bit of garden and velvet lawn that I have yet seen in London. The grounds cover two or three acres, and were purchased by Mr. Spurgeon when this quarter of London was new and unoccupied, and the land was comparatively cheap. In time this place will be a fortune to its owner. Mr. Spurgeon's income from his Tabernacle and from his work is large; but nobly has he earned it, and generously does he use it. One of the most laborious of Christ's workers, he has a right to a beautiful home.

"He greeted us in his free, cordial style, which is like my neighbour Beecher's genial manner. There are many points of resemblance between these two foremost preachers of the day—their stout, broad physique, their exuberant spirits, ready wit, marvellous fluency, and superabounding juices of a manhood that seems utterly inexhaustible. Spurgeon's hair is just slightly tinged with its first grey; he is as stout as ever. 'In this flesh dwelleth no good thing,' said he playfully.

"We spent a pleasant hour in his library, which overlooks the charming grounds. He showed us twelve or fifteen volumes of his printed sermons, besides several of his works translated in Dutch, Norwegian, and German. He is now at work on a Bible interspersed with notes and helps of a peculiar kind. But a most interesting object was a small pile of his sermon preparations—each one on a half-sheet of note-paper, or on the back of an envelope. Only the heads of the sermon are committed to paper, and not one syllable more. When we asked him if he had ever written a discourse, he replied, 'I would rather be hung.' His usual method is to choose his text and devote a half-hour to preparing the plan and putting it on a bit of paper. All the rest is left to the pulpit. 'If I had a month given me to prepare a sermon,' said he, 'I would spend thirty days and twenty-three hours in something else, and in the last hour I would make the sermon. If I could not do it in an hour I could not do it in a month.' This is certainly an extraordinary mental habit. But let it be observed that if Spurgeon spends but a few minutes in arranging a sermon, he spends many days in careful, prayerful study of God's Word and of the richest Puritan writers on theology and experimental religion. He is all the time filling up the cask, so that whenever he turns the spigot, a sermon flows out in a few moments. His fluency in language has also become about perfect from long and constant practice. But never does he go to the pulpit without a mental agitation amounting often to physical distress. 'For years,' said he, 'I suffered so much before entering the pulpit that it often brought on violent attacks of vomiting and profuse outbreaks of perspiration. Only lately have I outgrown these fits of physical suffering.'

"Mr. Spurgeon took us through his beautiful grounds. In the rear of his garden he has perched up his old Park Street pulpit into a tree. The pulpit stairs wind down around the trunk, and up in this eyrie he sits on a hot summer day. Like our neighbour Beecher, he has a keen appetite for flowers. His family is small. Two twin boys of the age of sixteen are at school. His invalid wife waved her hand to us as we walked through the grounds before her window. The painful illness of this devoted wife is the shadow that falls over his beautiful home. This crook in the lot has been a chastening, mellowing sorrow to him. The delightful hour that I passed with brother Spurgeon only increased my estimate of him as a minister of our Lord Jesus Christ. His marvellous voice, which

sweeps over five thousand auditors in the Tabernacle, is exceedingly pleasing in conversation. As I parted from him I felt anew that there is but one Spurgeon in the world. As he stands in the loftiest pulpit in Europe, long may he continue to have all Christendom for his congregation."

Dr. Cuyler is a typical American and representative of others who, having to "do" England, did not consider the thing at all complete until Spurgeon had been heard in his own Tabernacle as well as seen and spoken with in his own home.

Probably there are friends in various parts of the country who have mementoes of Mr. Spurgeon's home. He might be tempted to present one with an "everlasting flower," plucked from a plant in the garden; a smoker might get "a very particular cigar;" or another might get a pretty box from Menton made of olive-wood. Still more fortunate was Mr. George Goldston, of Hastings, who got possession of a table which the great preacher had used for fifteen years after coming to London. Of course, such an article was supposed to need a certificate of its quality, and this was very cordially given as follows:—

"Clapham, November 16, 1871.

"Warranty of Table.

"This is to certify that the table this day sent to Mr. Goldston has never been known to turn, twist, dance, fly up into the air, or otherwise misbehave.

"It has not been addicted to convivial habits, and has never been known to be on a roar. As a most studious piece of furniture it is sent to a studious man, with the kind regards of "C. H. Spurgeon."

Among other visitors to Helensburgh House was John B. Gough, who in due course made the desirable discovery that the great English preacher was worthy of something better than abuse for not being a teetotaller. Gough says:—

"Mr. Spurgeon has had a reputation for eccentricity fastened upon him, in common with many other popular preachers. As he says, 'Throw mud enough, and some of it will be sure to stick.' It is interesting to trace the pedigree of a pulpit story, though it is not always possible to discover its actual parent. Like Topsy, they may say, 'I growed.' He says, 'These same anecdotes occur from age to age, but they are tacked on to different men. Liars ought to have good memories, that they may recollect that they have already assigned a story to someone else.'

"I once asked him in reference to several tales I had heard of him whether they were true—whether he ever said on entering the pulpit, 'It's d------d hot this morning!' He said, 'Never, never;' and yet some time after I heard a clergyman relate this story, and when I told him of Mr. Spurgeon's denial of it, he said, 'My friend heard him say it, and I believe my friend.' He was once represented as sliding down the balustrades of his pulpit, and he says he never gave even the remotest occasion for the falsehood, and yet he hears of persons who were present when he did it, and saw him perform the silly trick. Mr. Spurgeon says that' a minister who is much before the people has need to be thick-skinned.' A literary gentleman sent me what he called authentic stories of Mr. Spurgeon. When I was with him I asked him about them. Not one of them was true.

"He is very fond of a joke, and there is a comical twinkling of the eye when he perpetrates one that is irresistible, reminding you of Sam Weller's winks, that always caused a laugh, though we are

utterly ignorant of the cause of the winking.

"On one occasion an artist had drawn a sketch of him and brought it for his inspection. Looking at it, he said—

"'Ah, this is very well; but women and fools are, they say, the best judges of these things, so I must hunt up somebody.'

"Just then up came one of Mr. Spurgeon's deacons.

"'Ah, brother, you are just in time. What do you think of this sketch of me?'

"Another artist wished to make an engraving of him.

"'I hope,' said Mr. Spurgeon, 'you will not make it an expensive one—the public would not give more than twopence for me. A friend of mine, to do me honour, published a photograph of me at eighteenpence, and he lost a lot of money by it.'

"I think these anecdotes show that he is one of the most natural of men, with no false pride or starch about him. He says just what he thinks, in the most natural and homely manner. He is a troublesome customer to pompous people who fancy themselves somebodies when they are nothing of the kind.

"The strangest stories have been in circulation with regard to his drinking. I am glad to be able to say that I know he is at present, and, has been for some time, a total abstainer, and that when he took stimulants it was by his physician's prescription. When he took it he made no secret of his course, but freely spoke of it wherever he might be.

"Personally he is fascinating. He may not be called prepossessing; there is nothing finical about him—not the shadow of a sham. Someone has said, 'His face is heavy;' but when illuminated by a smile it is beautiful. His first greeting captured me. I think the few hours spent with him were as delightful and profitable as any in my life. He is full of genial humour. His laugh is infectious. Yet with all his wit and fun, with the keenest faculty of seeing the ludicrous side of things, there is no unbecoming levity. It would not shock you if after a hearty laugh he should say, 'Let us have a word of prayer.'"

Mr. Spurgeon's home-life at Westwood was well sketched in an evening journal at the time of the Jubilee celebration of 1884:—

"Westwood, where he at present lives, is a house on the extreme western edge of Beulah Hill, the southern ridge of the wooded heights of Sydenham. A more charming spot it would be difficult to find in the loveliest suburbs of London. The house, which is a large one, stands in the midst of well-wooded and spacious grounds, commanding from its windows an extended view of a wide expanse of Surrey. All is so peaceful and still that the house and the grounds might be fifty miles from town instead of being but three-quarters of an hour's drive from the Tabernacle—that swarming hive of ceaseless activity in the heart of busy London. The house is approached by a carriage-drive entered by the lodge gates. The miniature lake, in which a somewhat water-logged boat was floating at the time of our visit, lies immediately below the house. The grounds are tastefully laid out, the lawns well-kept, the shrubberies in good order. Mr. Spurgeon loves to bask

in the sunshine, and regrets nothing so much at Menton as the delight of bathing in the southern sunlight all day long. A friend recently gave him a waterproof mattress, on which he can be in the grounds at Beulah Hill without fear of rheumatism; but the blazing effulgence of the southern skies no mattress can supply. The stables and coachhouse lie out of sight down the hill. They are protected against witches, warlocks, and all the uncanny tribe by a monstrous horseshoe, weighing a couple of hundredweight, the gift of a friend who evidently deemed quantity an invaluable specific against evil spirits. There is a fountain with gold-fish in another part of the garden, and any number of beehives; for Mr. Spurgeon is a great apiarian, and loves to hear the murmur of the bees as he strolls through his small domain. The borders of the kitchen-garden are all aglow with pinks and other homely English flowers, the beds of which yield every week a heavy crop of floral fragrance for the slums of Southwark. The flower-mission in connection with the Tabernacle—there is almost everything in connection with the Tabernacle except a theatre and public-house—sends its gleaners regularly to Westwood, and their baskets of flowers gladden many a home in the dark and dreary alleys of London. Rustic arbours and convenient seats offer pleasant resting-places; nor is the sense of restful seclusion and tranquillity much disturbed even by the presence of one or two fat pugs, ugly with the beauty of their breed, which run about the garden as if it belonged to them."

Then followed a picture of life within doors:—

"Within, the house is very bright and airy. The first thing that strikes a visitor is the peculiar arrangement by which Westwood in summer-time stands all day long with all its doors open to the air and sunlight without any insecurity. Within the hall, entrance to the house is barred by a wire-lattice fastened with a small brass lock, allowing free egress to the air, but excluding all more unwelcome intruders. Mr. Spurgeon rather prides himself upon this contrivance, and in the hot and stuffy London summer it would be a benefit to be able to leave the door open without any sense of danger. Passing the lattice door, recalling reminiscences of the wicket-gate, the visitor finds himself in a small entrance-hall, from which the dining-room opens to the right, and Mrs. Spurgeon's book-fund room, Mrs. Spurgeon's own room, and Mr. Spurgeon's library. Mrs. Spurgeon's room, from whence she directs the distribution of the books provided by a book fund, adjoins the small room,, where innumerable volumes accumulate until the fortnightly waggon arrives from the Globe Parcel Express and carries them off from Westwood to all parts of the world. Mr. Spurgeon received me in his study just as he came in from the garden, upon which the study windows open directly. From the windows the eye wanders over the kitchen-garden, murmurous with bees, to Thornton Heath, with Croydon in the distance. In this study Mr. Spurgeon keeps two private secretaries constantly going. He has two or more at the Tabernacle, one or two at the College, and others elsewhere. One of them at Westwood is a shorthand writer, and, together with his colleague, he is kept busy till six. All moneys sent for the College, Orphanage, etc., are sent direct to Mr. Spurgeon, who is the paymaster-general of all his institutions. 'It is my constant labour,' said Mr. Spurgeon, 'to thrust off some portion of my work on other shoulders, but it all comes back on me. The more I do, the more there is to do.' The study is a work-a-day room, the walls lined with books, and the spacious table in the centre bearing abundant traces of work and wear. Mr. Spurgeon himself, in a white felt wide-awake and a light alpaca garden coat, chatted pleasantly of men and things. A genial, hearty man, full of shrewdness and humour, whose character has broadened and deepened as he has made his way through life, and who, having

lived down the calumnies with which he was almost overwhelmed at first, now marvels most of all at the all-encompassing atmosphere of reverence and love in which he spends his life. Mr. Spurgeon has mellowed much with time; like a generous wine, he has improved with age."

Chapter 83: Another Illness

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Another Illness

Opening of the Year 1871—Colportage—Illness—W. H. Burton—James Grant—The Toller Jubilee—Punshon at the Tabernacle—"Silver Trumpets"—The Orphanage—The East London Tabernacle—Spurgeon "a Regular Pope."

At the opening of the year 1871 Spurgeon acceded to the request of the Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association to write a circular on behalf of Sunday letter-carriers; and copies of this were sent to Baptist ministers throughout the country. It was observed that numbers of letter-carriers walked eighteen or twenty miles a day seven days a week; and the example of the Government of a great country in thus overworking twenty thousand of its servants was decidedly bad. Pastors of churches were invited to send petitions in favour of a motion in the postmen's favour which was to be brought forward in the House of Commons. The February special meetings at the Tabernacle appear to have been especially hearty. Monday, February 20, was observed as an all-day prayer-meeting; and, beginning before sunrise, the assembly continued in prayer during fourteen hours. The annual supper of the College, which was given towards the end of March, had about four hundred guests, and the collection amounted to £1,456. In the course of his address to the subscribers Mr. Spurgeon referred in a happy strain to the continued success of the institution. About two hundred and forty men had entered pastorates to this date, including the two Jews who were now-employed as missionaries by a Jewish society. The College was still open to the poorest, and many of the students could never have been educated at all save for such an agency. Perhaps the most remarkable speech at the supper was what may be called the recantation of the late Dr. Samuel Manning of the Religious Tract Society.

Dr. Manning confessed that he had always looked upon Mr. Spurgeon himself with homage and affection, and upon his work with admiration; but he admitted that with regard to his College he had thought and felt, and he was afraid had said in his ignorance, some adverse things, and had looked upon it with suspicion and distrust. He thought it was the part of a true man to say that now, after all he had heard that evening, he entertained no longer any such feeling. He had been greatly struck with the aggressive character of their work. It was a great thing for them to break down some of the conventionalisms which had bound some of their churches hand and foot. Again, he rejoiced in the power of strong conviction that the young men had shown that evening. They had spoken as men who knew what they believed, and believed it with all their hearts. He had also observed with pleasure the naturalness and simplicity of the students who had addressed them. He had had an impression that the young men of the Pastors' College were but dim reproductions of the pastor—little Spurgeons—an impression, he might say, that very commonly prevailed, nor did he wonder at it; but he candidly confessed that now his mind was entirely disabused of that notion. Each speaker had been himself in manner, although it was easy to see that they had all caught Mr. Spurgeon's spirit.

Mr. Spurgeon got through the heavy last day's work of the Conference week with tolerable comfort. In addition to preaching regularly at the Tabernacle during the first quarter of the year, he issued the brochure, "The Royal Wedding," in commemoration of the marriage of the Princess Louise, and nearly ten thousand copies were sold in a fortnight. With the opening days of April, however, the symptoms of overwork were once more apparent; for the gout, from which the preacher had been almost or altogether free since the year 1869, again distressed him. An engagement in connection with the London Baptist Association at Downs Chapel, Clapton, could not be kept, and other preachers were heard at the Tabernacle. On the 9th of April the last service was held at Devonshire Square Chapel, of which Mr. W. T. Henderson was pastor; and so warm an interest did Mr. Spurgeon feel in this ancient congregation that he had arranged to preach the opening sermon in the new chapel at Stoke Newington at the latter end of June. That sermon was not preached, nor could the tour on the Continent, which had been arranged for the months of May and June, be undertaken. The colporteurs who assembled at the Tabernacle on April 17 also missed the presence of their President, although a good account was given of the year's work. On Sunday, the 16th, the National Temperance League had a crowded meeting at the Tabernacle in the afternoon, when Mr. Charles Garrett preached a teetotal discourse from the words "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." The service was a memorable one, the main part of those present being men. "Mr. Garrett very wisely made no attempt to vary from his usual style, and his sermon told on the vast and miscellaneous congregation with remarkable effect," we find it remarked. "The responses at different points in the sermon were not always such as are usually heard in our places of worship, indicating the pleasing fact that there were those present who were not much accustomed to public worship."

Mr. Spurgeon thought he was sufficiently recovered on Sunday, April 23, to preach, and during that week he also conducted the week-night Thursday evening service on the 27th; but he should have reserved his strength. Weeks of pain and weariness followed; and it was thought that the cold weather of June retarded his recovery. When he again stood in his place on the 2nd of July, the Tabernacle pulpit had been supplied by other preachers on thirteen Sundays during six months. But even while laid aside from active service Mr. Spurgeon continued to feel the greatest interest in the progress of his College men. At this time the late Mr. W. H. Burton, a successful preacher and an admirable man in all respects, was pastor of Kingsgate Street Chapel, Holborn. He occupied a difficult position in one of the byeways of London, and the church was one of those which had seen better days. He and his people were making an effort to raise six hundred pounds by a bazaar, but a terrible fire which had just happened not only drove many of the people from their homes, but even the goods collected for the sale were in great part consumed. In reference to Mr. Burton and his work Mr. Spurgeon wrote:—

"I wish that by some miraculous touch I could turn the mud of old Eagle Street into gold, and pay off the many hundreds of liabilities at once; then the church could do something for poor Mr. Tweedlepipes, who here sells his redpoles and linnets; and even Sairey Gamp might be saved from being so much 'dispoged' to the liquid which has supplemented the Bohea in her teapot. The little sinners without shoes and stockings and with well-ventilated breeches, who turn themselves into wheels down the streets at the back of Kingsgate Street, would indirectly be blessed if this debt could be discharged. Those who worship amidst suburban loveliness, where the luxury of their meeting-houses reveals their wealth, should not forget their struggling brethren who, with so

much more to do, have so much less to do it with."

It was at or about this time that Spurgeon's old friend, James Grant, retired from the editorship of The Morning Advertiser, and received a testimonial from friends amounting to eleven hundred pounds. I have not seen the list of subscribers, but have no doubt that among them was found the name of the great preacher, whom the veteran journalist befriended on his first coming to London. On Sunday, July 16, the thousandth sermon in the printed series was preached at the Tabernacle, the text being the cry of the prodigal son in St. Luk 15:17 : "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" When the discourse was published on the Thursday following, its appearance was justly considered to represent a unique fact in the history of preaching. The preacher had at that date been in London during seventeen years, and it was supposed that some twenty millions of the printed discourses had been scattered among the English-speaking communities of the world, this being in addition to the reprints in newspapers. Translations of certain sermons had also been made into German, French, Swedish, Dutch, Italian, Welsh, Hungarian, Russian, Danish, Spanish, Teluga, Malagasy, Maori, and Gaelic. In a time of more than ordinary weakness this world-wide circulation of his utterances was no small consolation to the preacher himself. The denominational organ reflected the popular sentiment in regard to this matter when it said:—

"In his sufferings and the retirement, total or partial, which they enforce it is something to know that he has the thanks, the sympathy, and the prayers of thousands whom his living voice has never reached, and who would regard the loss of their weekly printed sermons as a serious spiritual privation. They have been weekly 'letters, weighty and powerful,' in thousands of Christian homes; and thousands of invalid Christians, unable to repair to the House of God, have found their own houses made Bethels by these welcome preachers.

"But the fact itself of one Christian teacher being endowed with the gift implied in all this is in itself a marvel. Possibly there have been a few Christian preachers who might with similar press facilities have done the same. Probably a Chrysostom whose generally extemporised discourses were, like Mr. Spurgeon's, taken down by shorthand writers, might have done it—a truly noble predecessor. But, as a fact, our brother is the first Christian teacher whose sermons through so many years have sustained the ordeal of weekly publication.... Let us thank God, and take courage; 'the good old Gospel' has its thousands who rejoice in it yet."

Charles Waters Banks and certain of his followers were more than usually pleased with Spurgeon at this time. Especially had a sermon on the work of the Holy Spirit pleased them, so that the preacher was looked at more hopefully. Only a little while before the thousandth sermon was published Mr. Spurgeon had suffered so much from gout that when he wrote a few lines to his people he did so while propped up in bed. In the course of a review article Mr. Banks wrote:—

"We were at a public meeting the other evening when Mr. John Wheeler, an Essex divine of no mean order, expressed his sincere hope that the long and severe physical trial through which Mr. Spurgeon had passed had been sanctified to the still greater purifying of his mind, which to Mr. Wheeler was clearly evidenced in that sermon, 'The Withering Work of the Spirit.' We gratefully sympathise with Mr. Wheeler, having ourselves read that sermon with the same holy and pleasing persuasion.... We mentioned this sermon, 'The Withering Work of the Spirit,' to a rising minister of our own particular section, and begged of him to read it. He said he had almost made a vow never

to read another of Mr. Spurgeon's sermons, because in some he had seen such positive contradictions. We shall not dispute that point; but, as for ourselves, we ask all who look for the mercy of God in Christ Jesus to 'forget those things that are behind.' So for Mr. Spurgeon we say, although his Open Table and his occasional free-will must be grievous to some of us, and although his former onslaughts upon the Evangelicals in the Church have been offensive to them, still, after all, we cannot think there is one real Christian in his right mind but does believe the Lord has raised up, and holden up, this living messenger for the accomplishment of a great work in Zion." In the summer of 1871 there was some flutter of excitement respecting a proposed legalisation of an exchange of pulpits between clergymen of the Established Church and Nonconformist ministers. The Church Herald went so far as to express the fear that Mr. Gladstone was disposed to open the pulpits of St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey by Royal Warrant. Mr. Cowper-Temple also introduced his Occasional Sermons Bill in the House of Commons; and this, which also bore the name of Mr. Thomas Hughes, consisted of two clauses. The first clause simply gave the Bishops power to license such preaching, while the second clause allowed of such services being held either with or without the Prayer-Book form of prayer. Certain Anglicans professed to fear that the Royal Prerogative might be dangerously extended. But why be jealous in regard to that, since the Queen was the head of the Establishment? asked The Freeman, and then continued:—

"Royal Warrants play a principal part in State Churchism. Whether Mr. Gladstone has the dark designs imputed to him is quite another matter. We acquit him of any sinister purpose. He is an upholder of the Established Church. But even if the Premier were to advise the Crown to open the pulpits of the Establishment to Mr. Spurgeon and Mr. Newman Hall, he would not be guilty of a crime.... Should Mr. Gladstone wait till Dissenters ask him before he issues a Royal Warrant such as The Herald dreads, our contemporary need not be alarmed about the future. Exclusiveness by the Church is a help to Nonconformity. Like the Hebrews, 'the more we are oppressed,' or proscribed, 'the more we multiply and grow.'"

Among the interesting engagements of this summer which Mr. Spurgeon's prolonged illness obliged him to set aside was that of the Toller Jubilee at Kettering on July 19. Mr. Thomas Toller, pastor of the Independent Chapel in the town, had held his office for half a century, and a testimonial of seven hundred guineas was presented to him. The service was taken by Dr. Binney, who sat while giving his sermon, and whose unfortunate habit of dropping his voice at the end of a sentence made him inaudible to the greater part of his audience. As was the case with many other of the Dissenting leaders, Dr. Binney had found reason to modify his opinion of the Baptist preacher since the days when he had looked upon him as an upstart adventurer. "I have no doubt my hearers are much disappointed at not hearing Mr. Spurgeon, who is a noble fellow and whom I love very much," he said; "but that which is a disappointment to you has been the means of bringing me here—a circumstance which I cannot regret, although I regret the cause which has kept Mr. Spurgeon away." The death of Mr. Thomas Cook, who had rendered good service whilst the Tabernacle was being built, was an affliction. Mr. Cook was a man of faith and energy; and he and Mr. Spurgeon had prayed for a blessing to rest on the work of the future before the chapel was finished, kneeling together in the unfinished building after the workmen had left.

Towards the end of July the representatives of the United Methodist Free Churches invited Spurgeon to attend their Annual General Assembly, and in his reply reference was made to the death of the deacon just mentioned:—

"To the Assembly of the United Methodist Free Churches.

"Brethren in Christ,—Your letter, dated July 28, has only reached me on the evening of this day (31), hence my apparent neglect in answering is not a real one. I thank you heartily for the kind invitation, and should have endeavoured to avail myself of it but for two personally painful reasons. First, I am not yet equal to an 'Assembly dinner.' The glow of fraternal excitement would utterly overcome me. What little strength I have—and it is yet but little—I spend in preaching, and you will all agree it is the best form in which to lay it out. Second, at the hour of your love-feast I shall be on the way to a grave which is to hold the dear remains of a deacon, worthy and beloved, who has lately fallen asleep in Jesus. So I cannot be with you in person; but I have paused at this moment to breathe a prayer that the Lord's love, light, and life may abound in your holy gatherings, and that you may return to your spheres of labour clothed with the Holy Spirit's power. I know not in what better way I can serve you. May we, dear brethren, be all the more quickened to the fullest degree of spiritual life. We require all the spiritual energy that can be had, in order that our work for the Lord may tell upon our times. We must press hard on the graving-tool or it will leave no mark on this age of brass, and we cannot throw out more force than is first placed within us from above. Few of us rise to the sacred ardour of flaming love which Jesus' wounds claim of us. Conscious that I fall far short, I look anxiously to see the uprise of heaven-born zealots who shall be eaten up with the zeal of the Lord's house. Whether the Lord sends these to the United Methodist Free Churches or to the Baptists, we shall all be the better for them. Therefore we will join in praying for the coming of such, and aim to be such ourselves. Excuse this little written speech, and believe me to be, to you and all who love our Lord, a true brother and hearty well-wisher.

"C. H. Spurgeon."

It was a rare thing indeed for the pastor to hear a sermon in the Tabernacle; but on Tuesday evening, August 22, he and his deacons were among the crowd who heard a discourse from William Morley Punshon. The chapel was lent for the occasion, and the collection was on behalf of the Metropolitan Wesleyan Chapel Building Fund. The aisles and every standing-place appear to have been packed with listeners. The sermon was founded on Rom 7:22 : "But now being made free from sin," etc., and produced a deep impression. At a large gathering which followed a tea-meeting on Thursday, September 7, Mr. Spurgeon seemed to have regained his usual health. As chairman he addressed his friends in a very direct way, e.g.:—

"There is one thing that I think you perfectly understand, and that is the necessity for keeping up the College. You have proved how well you understand it from the way in which week after week you support it. I ought to say how glad I was, when lying on a bed of sickness, to see how your interest, instead of diminishing, seemed rather to grow stronger. Since I have been better I have seen each week some occasion for gratitude, and when I find there has been given eleven or twelve pounds absolutely in coppers, forty or fifty pounds in fourpenny and threepenny pieces, I know how many have given, and how hearty is the love of our friends for the work. Truly, my brothers and sisters, you do well to help it, for God blesses it. I once knew a gentleman who used to get reports from various societies, and would see how many conversions had been made in the year. He would then divide the amount of money subscribed by the number of conversions and ascertain how much each cost. If he found they were expensive he did not subscribe, but if he saw there was a good deal of work done for a little money, he then would give his five pounds. I do not

quite approve of this method myself—it is too arithmetical. Still, there is something in it." The fact that in six years the churches associated with the College had secured sixteen thousand four hundred and fifty members was mentioned with great satisfaction as being the best kind of return. It was added that applications were constantly being received from young men in France, Germany, and the United States who wished to become students; but these applications were commonly discouraged, because it was thought that such ought to be educated in their own country. Those who were received and went out into the world were encouraged to form new churches. "I woke this morning very early," added Mr. Spurgeon, "and found I had been counting the number of churches on this side of the river which had sprung from the College, and I found that in the south of London there were just twenty churches, all of which owed their existence to the College—no little work to have done. I cannot say how many there are on the other side of the water, hut the work done by our brethren there is in no way diminishing. It is always an expensive work to form a new church; but, though it be expensive, it is the right work to do." As it was the week-night service a sermon was expected, and the preacher said he would make up for a short discourse by a long text, this consisting of Num 10:1-10—the description of the silver trumpets of the Israelites: the use which God made of them; and then was shown the analogy between these trumpets and the Christian ministry. The trumpets were symbols of the Gospel ministry, and only when God blew through them could a certain and stimulating sound be produced. The trumpet was the most suitable instrument, because it sent forth a heart-stirring sound which could be heard afar off. Then a reference was made to the importance of a clear and bold utterance on the part of preachers. "I cannot bear to see," he said, "a great big fellow, six feet high and stout in proportion, mumble out his words as if they were for the benefit of a few flies buzzing round his nose, and consequently utterly regardless of the people in the far end of the gallery. Speak out boldly in a trumpet-tone, compelling attention, and constraining men to listen."

Just as the trumpets were of silver—a pure metal—so was the ministry of the Gospel to be pure and without alloy. The true minister was ever of the same voice, never unsaying on one day what he had said on another; and as the trumpet called the people together, so was it the minister's duty to get the people together to hear. "If they will not come in to us we must go out to them. There ought to be no difficulty in getting a congregation in London when we see the number of people in the streets, especially on the Sabbath-day. I wish all those vacant plots of ground to be let for building could be procured from the owners at a small rent, or, better still, no rent at all, and used every Sabbath-day for preaching—our evangelists would find plenty of work; and there is so much to do that one might almost desire to see a street burned down to get a space to preach in." The Stockwell Orphanage continued to make progress, and on September 20, when the annual meeting was held, there were two hundred boys in residence, while the endowment fund amounted to £23,608. In addition to Mr. Spurgeon's address, one was given by Mr. Thompson, rector of the parish in which the Orphanage is situated. A bazaar, a display of fireworks, and other entertainments contributed to the enjoyment of the evening. The East London Tabernacle, Burdett Road, Bow, designed for the accommodation of three thousand persons, was opened about this time; and from that day to this Archibald G. Brown has preached to a full congregation, besides carrying on a wonderfully comprehensive home mission. One of the earliest sermons preached in this chapel was by Mr. Spurgeon, who regarded with some pride this largest building ever erected in connection with the College. Mr. Brown, senior, a deacon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, was a munificent contributor to the building fund; and whenever he was in low spirits, Mr. Spurgeon had

only to remind him of what was being accomplished by his son to revive him. Among the chapel-building enterprises of the year was Mr. Spurgeon's second chapel in connection with his presidency of the London Baptist Association, as previously mentioned. He was unable to secure a site in the Wands-worth Road, as he desired, but asked permission of the committee to erect a chapel at Balham.

Reference in passing may be made to Field-Marshal Sir John and Lady Burgoyne, who, as attendants at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, both died within a few weeks of each other in the fall of 1871. As an officer in the British army Sir John served under Abercromby in Egypt and under Wellington in the Peninsula. In the year 1858 Lady Burgoyne passed from the Church of England into the Baptist communion, and thus early attended the ministry of Mr. Spurgeon. According to The Freeman she was an indefatigable Christian worker. "By visiting the sick and afflicted, by correspondence with those at a distance, by circulating tracts, magazines, and good books, by the regular distribution through the post of a large number of Mr. Spurgeon's sermons every week, and in many other ways, she diligently improved every opportunity of labouring for Christ." The only son of Sir John and Lady Burgoyne was commander of The Captain, which went down on September 7, 1870. It was their daughter who was the first wife of the present Dr. J. A. Spurgeon. At various times and in many ways Spurgeon was a living illustration of the truth that it is impossible to please everybody, and that a popular character who should attempt that feat would end in pleasing no one. While too high a Calvinist for many who were supposed to be members of Calvinistic denominations, he was still a mere Arminian or duty-faith man to others. Some would have had him get more money, and do more for the poor and for indigent ministers; others would have been glad for persons to believe that the Tabernacle mainly existed for getting money, of course concealing the fact that the pastor himself gave more away to the institutions than anybody else. As a pastor his rule was firm and peaceful; but that did not satisfy those who would represent him as overbearing and despotic. "We know, on good authority," remarked The Westminster Review, "that some of his own deacons describe him as 'a regular Pope,' popular though he be with them, and that he at one time had thoughts of introducing the Presbyterian form of church government among the Baptists." Some years later there were those at Menton who would say, "There goes the English Pope," when the preacher was out for one of his drives. If Spurgeon was a despot in any sense at all his rule was as benevolent as that of Cromwell; like the great Protector, he governed for the good of all.

Chapter 84: A Visit To Rome

Chapter 84.

A Visit To Rome In Paris—Southward—Nice—Menton—Monaco—At Rome—The Vatican—Spurgeon Preaches in Rome—Lecture at the Tabernacle—Various Opinions.

In November of this year (1871) the overworked preacher left England for the Continent. In France, and especially in its capital, he appears to have ever felt keen interest; and having frequently worshipped with the Baptist congregation which assembled in rooms at the Rue St. Roch or the Rue des Bons Enfans, he was at this time helping to collect funds to provide a more convenient meeting-place. So far as Spurgeon himself was concerned, however, health to do his work was now the chief want; and the most hopeful thing to do was to go quite away into a warmer climate. Although preaching had been resumed, he had not really recovered from his recent illness, and what had been done was done in that condition of weakness which still entails suffering. Otherwise, the work in general appeared to be at the very height of prosperity. At the United Communion of the London Baptist Association at the Tabernacle on the first Tuesday of November between two and three thousand persons were present; and during that same week forty-five persons were received into the church by the pastor. The invalid—for such he really was at this time—went first to Paris, the city being then in the early days of its recovery from the havoc wrought by foreign foes and by false friends—"those admirable friends of liberty, the Communists." On a fine moonlit night he walked about the French capital, and found that the damage done by the Germans was as a fleabite in comparison with what had been done by the French themselves, and this led him to reflect that the worst foes of any nation are found at home. At Lyons the weather was still cold, while the fires provided were of little use. At Marseilles the atmosphere was more genial, and the sight of the Mediterranean was gladdening. What was also reviving was the soft summer-like breeze which came from the bosom of the tideless sea. Even if it were in any sense true that Spurgeon had no eye for art, he had a keen perception for the beauties of nature, and the drive from Marseilles to Nice so charmed him that he could compare it to nothing save a delicious dream. In referring to this after his return he showed what a lasting impression the rare beauties of the sunny South had made upon his mind. There were "rocks on either side of the loveliest colour, like shot-silk, varying ever as you passed between them; peeps ever and anon of the blue sea; olive-gardens everywhere, which made me think more than ever I thought before of Gethsemane and its olive-garden, so famed in sacred history; and orange-groves in full bearing, so that you could hardly see the trees for the oranges." At Nice, where Sunday, November 26, was passed, the climate was much warmer. The preacher's bedroom in this town was small and curious, having a door which opened on to the roof (making him feel, as he confessed, like Peter on the house-top), the Alps being on one side and the sea on the other. By one who so keenly enjoyed the beauties of nature this enviable lodging was properly appreciated. He attended the service of the Free Church, for it was characteristic of Spurgeon when away from home to show a preference for the Presbyterian worship when there was no Baptist chapel. Despite its loveliness, however, Nice had mosquitoes, in whose buzz he said he fancied he could distinguish the familiar

nursery jingle, "Fe, fi, fo, fum," etc. On a week day he complied with the wish of the captain of an American ship of war to preach on board, the crew consisting of French, Spaniards, and Lascars, besides English sailors; and a boy who was among them came forward and said he had belonged to the Tabernacle school in London. At Nice the common people seemed to be always washing. "I often wonder what it is the Italian people wash," said the traveller. "It cannot be their own clothes, unless they keep one suit to wash and another to wear. Still, washing they always are; and I have come to the conclusion that where there is a good deal of washing there is very little clean linen; just as where there is a good deal of Pharisaical observance there is very little goodness or true religion." Notwithstanding its many attractions, natural and social, however, Nice had one master drawback: there were so many disinterested friends who themselves wished to hear him preach, while desiring that others should hear him also, that his holiday pastime would soon have become as onerous as work at home; the only thing to do, therefore, was to go forward and get away. In passing through Menton on the way to Genoa, Mr. Spurgeon had not yet any notion that the beautiful sheltered little town on the ancient classic sea would become his chosen winter retreat through many successive years. The view at Monaco was greatly enjoyed; and while on the high road to Genoa the young pastor wished that he could take all his friends along it. "The road is indeed superb," he told his people at the Tabernacle on his return; "it is a succession of rocky corners, picturesque bridges and torrents, orange, olive and palm-trees, fields where maize, Indian corn, and all manner of semi-tropical produce had been reaped; the air was balmy and the prospect indescribable." Genoa itself did not appear to him so striking a place as had been represented; but he learned there that it took three Christians to be equal to one Jew in cheating. He also passed through Pisa, and was less impressed by the Leaning Tower than by a fine baptistery, which he declared could no more have been intended for only infants to be baptised in than the Mont Cenis Tunnel for a fly to buzz through. The capital was reached at last, and what Mr. Spurgeon had to say about the city and its people a few months after United Italy had become an accomplished fact may be given more at length:— "I went to Borne to escape the rigours of the climate, and found bed the only warm place; while in the morning there was snow, the first, it was said, that had fallen for five years. Let a man say what he will, a thrill must pass through his soul at the thought of being in Rome that he would not experience anywhere else, except, perhaps, Jerusalem.

"I have not a grain of superstition about me, and if I had I would try to get rid of it this very night; but, at the same time, there are associations clustering around the Eternal City that must be felt by any man who has a soul at all. The Arch of Titus is a memorable thing to stand and look upon. The relief shows Titus returning from the war of Jerusalem with the golden candlesticks and trumpets, and while these things stand there it is idle for infidels to say the Book is not true. There is the plain history written in stone; and the more such discoveries are made, the more will the truth of the grand old Book be confirmed. As for the Colosseum, the Metropolitan Tabernacle would have to grow for a thousand years before it would reach its size. St. Peter's is a church indeed. Looked at from the outside, the dome seemed squat, and it has nothing of the glory of our own St. Paul's. But it is a thing that grows upon you; it is so huge and enormous that it fills the soul with awe; you have to grow big yourselves if you would appreciate it and its excellent proportions. What shocked me was to see the statue of St. Peter there. Some people say it is the statue of Jupiter; and to that some wag has replied, 'If it is not Jupiter, it is the Jew Peter, so it does not matter.' The amazing thing is to see the people kissing the toes of the statue. You laugh, but it is actually done. I saw

gentlemen wiping the toes with their handkerchiefs and kissing it, old women being helped up to do the same, and little children lifted up to follow the example. There also is the chair in which Peter never sat, and people bowing down to pay homage to it. It is, in truth, a big joss-house; an idol shop, and nothing better. It is not the worst image-house in Rome, but it is bad enough; and whatever may be said by those who turn to and profess the Roman Catholic faith, if they are not idolaters there are no idolaters on earth. I went to the Vatican, where the Pope has lived in seclusion since September twelvemonth, and perhaps it is as well he keeps indoors. It is very curious to see one of Victor Emmanuel's soldiers at the bottom of the steps and a handsomely dressed Papal soldier half a dozen steps higher up. All Italy belongs now to a free people, except that one solitary house in which the Pope lives, and I hope nobody will envy him that. Those two soldiers mark the difference. The ensign of liberty was typified in Victor Emmanuel's soldier and the cruellest of despotisms in the other. I should say the worst conceivable under which mortals ever suffered is the government of the Pope; and it is quite time that the trumpet of the Italian king should be heard ringing round the Vatican. I only hope the liberty which has come to Italy will last; but I have my doubts about it, for it is a political liberty, and not the outgrowth of religion."

It would appear that the natural beauties of the road from Menton to Genoa pleased the young pastor better than the chefs-d'œuvre of the Great Masters; for in walking through the galleries of the Vatican the copies which students were making of works of Raphael and Michael Angelo pleased him "almost as well as the dim originals." Many other tourists have, no doubt, had similar sentiments without having courage to express them with the same ingenuousness. Of course, he had no liking for relics at all, and the plain things he said about them would have shocked their more superstitious admirers. He then referred to some other things in Rome, of the kind which turned Luther into a Protestant. Of the monks he said:—

"What an uncommonly queer way these monks have of spending their lives! Some of them at the time of my visit were making a most awful noise. I thought I should like to have been their superior. I would have prescribed one penance—wash, wash, wash. In a dungeon where Paul and Peter were said to have been confined they showed me what is supposed to be the impression of Peter's face when pushed violently against the wall by the gaoler. It is a curious thing, however, that while the marks of Peter's feet in another place outside of Rome are those of a man at least twelve feet high, the imprint of his nose and features in the dungeon is that of a man no bigger than myself. It wants, in fact, much faith and little sense to swallow many of the pretty stories told one in Rome." In Rome were found two Baptist evangelists—Messrs. Wall and Cote—who had stations for preaching; and the opposition of the priests only had the effect of aiding the work, because the priests were not trusted. Spurgeon gave two discourses in Rome, one in the church of the Free Church of Scotland, of which Dr. Lewis was pastor, and the other in Mr. Wall's meeting-house hard by, and not far from the Forum of Trajan, Mr. Wall on this occasion acting as interpreter. Father Gavazzi asked for this sermon to be given in the Italian Protestant Church in Piazza Trajana; but for such a speaker to have to be dependent on an interpreter was dull work. "Two preachers were to be heard preaching one sermon," wrote the correspondent of a London daily paper; "a strange medley, for the Italian spoke little English, and the Englishman no Italian; and between them both the audience was confounded and the sermon a failure." Another daily paper may have startled its readers by giving out that two priests in civil costume had confronted Spurgeon and challenged some of his assertions, but that he declined to have anything to say to

them except in public. The fact was that a certain priest had illegally interrupted the evening service by asking some questions, but he got no satisfaction for his pains. The addresses in Rome were given on Sunday, December 10, and, writing on the 13th of the month, the correspondent of The Daily Telegraph gave a special account of what had taken place:—

"The greatest—nay, the sole—event of importance which has occurred in Rome during the last few days is the arrival of Mr. Spurgeon, and his intended sojourn here till the 15th instant. Mr. Spurgeon in Rome! How strange do those words sound! The enemy of monks and nuns, the denouncer of idolatry and Mariolatry, the foremost among Dissenters in the greatest Dissenting country on the face of the earth, has arrived in the city of Pius IX.—the city, I should rather say, which once belonged to Pius IX.—and preached a sermon against Popery within a trumpet's call of the Vatican; for the Pope's residence is too far from the Piazza del Popolo to admit of my talking about 'a stone's throw,' as I was prompted to do—unless, indeed, the stone were hurled from a sling, and the 'throw' were the action of a new David armed to do battle with a new Goliath. Did I choose to be allegorical, I might insinuate that the sermon was a moral stone cast at the successor of St. Peter; but I will not call Mr. Spurgeon by anyone else's name, nor term his discourse anything but a sermon. Although Mr. Spurgeon has in a material sense of the words 'gone over to Rome,' in the spirit he has been as far away as ever—nay, further than before—for, like Luther, he has seen the Papal city with his bodily eyes, and hates the religion against which he protests all the more bitterly for having done so. He described Rome, in one of the most eloquent sermons he ever preached, as an 'idolatrous city,' and he warned his hearers against idolatry in terms as startling as they were persuasive, with a look and gesture worthy of a really great actor, which he undoubtedly is." Being present at the service the same correspondent gave a graphic and brilliant description of the scene inside Dr. Lewis's church:—

"The sermon of Sunday morning was delivered in the Presbyterian Church, outside the Porta del Popolo, the regular minister of which is Dr. Lewis—not the Established Scotch Church, inside the walls of which the minister is Mr. Paton. The audience was very large, the interest—both of old and young—intense, the oration a perfect triumph. Of the text I say nothing, for many reasons, one of which is that I have forgotten it. Yes, I am ashamed to confess it. I paid so much attention to the discourse that I forgot, and cannot now call to mind, the words with which it began, albeit those words were sacred. But the text and the discourse had, I know, little to do with each other; the former was the apology for the latter, not the groundwork on which it was built up; and while the one made us thoughtful, the other made us alternately sad and merry—brought tears into our eyes and laughter to our lips, and made us forget at times, though not for long, in whose house we were, and whose cause the speaker was pleading before us. Perhaps the word 'laughter' may appear too shocking; let me, then, say that some of Mr. Spurgeon's remarks caused smiling—loud smiling; but do not forget the real merits of the man—his earnestness and pathos, his fine voice, and his great command over the English language. Perhaps the boldest thing Mr. Spurgeon ever said was said in his running comments before the sermon while reading a chapter of Scripture. Somehow or other he introduced Rome and Roman affairs into his discourse, and raising his hands and eyes at the same time—the hands clasped, the eyes turned up to the ceiling—he broke out, without warning or preparation of any kind, in the following terms: 'O Victor Emmanuel! O Emmanuel of Heaven, thou true Victor! Help the Italians, bless and sanctify their cause, and make them prosperous.' I do not think the cry of 'Fire!' or 'Stop thief!' uttered in the middle of the sermon

would have caused more sensation than this prayer did. Some of the congregation looked frightened, some indignant, some painfully amused. A few old ladies seemed as if they would rush out of the church; but, being too far from the door, kept their seats. Others appeared bewildered, hardly knowing whether to laugh or to cry, and quite beside themselves. Others again—and they formed the greater part of the congregation, both as regards men and women—sat, as it were, spell-bound and devout-looking, wondering what would come next, prepared apparently for any change, no matter how violent, from grave to gay, from passion to grim humour. The change came and came adroitly—came before it was possible to laugh or to feel really angry; and tears, worked up from the depths of the heart, came to the eyes of those who a moment before cast looks of reproach and misgiving at this singular preacher. 'Is this man an actor or a servant of God?' asked a pious-looking lady of her husband as they left the church together. 'Can't say,' answered the gentleman, putting on his hat; 'perhaps a little of both.' That is just what I felt, and I am convinced that many members of the congregation felt and thought in the same way by the time the sermon was over." This keen observer, who as an English journalist on the lookout for something good to send to London appears to have been one of the most attentive auditors at the memorable service, had something else to say concerning the preacher's characteristics:—

"Like most of Mr. Spurgeon's sermons the discourse of Sunday abounded in anecdotes, all happily chosen, all pointed and well told, some of them pathetic, others exceedingly funny. The story of the 'Monk and the Convent Bell' was very effective, although a little hackneyed. Who has not read in his childhood of the good friar, praying in his cell before the Vision of Our Saviour, who, at the very moment the Vision was on the verge of speaking, was called away to give bread to the poor? If anyone has forgotten the legend, let him read Miss Christina Rossetti's poem on the subject, and he will find how, when the monk returned to his cell, fearing he had done wrong in going away, the Vision addressed him in these or similar terms: 'Be not afraid, thou faithful servant; thou hast done well and not ill. Hadst thou forgotten the poor, I had forgotten thee; hadst thou tarried with me, I had departed.' Mr. Spurgeon's story of the young preacher who broke down in his prayer caused some of the 'loud smiling' to which I have already referred. It was the case of a tyro in preaching, who meant well, but could not say much, partly in consequence of shyness, partly of incapacity. 'I like that young man,' said Mr. Spurgeon, 'and I like him because he broke down. Oh, what a good thing it would be if some ministers of our acquaintance would only break down when they are in the midst of a long prayer!' The shortest prayer noticed was that of a man who would make no prayer at all. It was a soldier on the morning of a battle. Before girding on his sword to fight in a righteous cause, he looked towards the table where his Bible lay and then towards heaven. 'Gracious Lord!' he exclaimed, 'to-day will be a busy day, and I fear I shall have no time to say my prayers; but if I forget Thee, do not Thou forget me!'"

There was a collection after the sermon, and the preacher called on those present to do their best in helping on the work of the Lord in the "idolatrous city" in which they resided. The accounts given in the newspapers of this visit to Rome so far stimulated public interest that when Mr. Spurgeon gave an account of his travels at the Tabernacle on Tuesday, January 2, with dissolving views from pictures that were sent home for the purpose, the crowd attracted was quite beyond anything that had been expected. "The building was crowded in all parts, many being compelled, as on Sundays, to stand in the aisles, while not a few were unable to gain admittance," says one contemporary account. "This led to some unpleasant altercations outside, some protesting that

they had paid ten shillings for their ticket, and insisting upon gaining admittance, room or no room." In reply, those in charge could only say that the lecture would be repeated. It was well for the lecturer himself that he could retain his self-possession under such conditions. In vain did he wish to hold a meeting of his own people and a few outside friends who were like-minded. Spurgeon abroad and Spurgeon at home had become too popular a subject not to be eagerly appropriated by those journalists who wanted materials for sensational writing:—

"Here we are again! The genuine original comic Christmas entertainment for this night only at the Tabernacle, Newington! The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon will undertake, as usual, the part of harlequin, while the Pope of Rome will do involuntary duty as pantaloon. Managers of other transpontine houses may thank themselves that this formidable competitor appears only for one or, at most, two nights. We should fear that the best pantomime in London would fail dismally if it depended only upon speech and action unaided by one or more gorgeous transformation scenes. But although Mr. Spurgeon promised to illustrate his lecture by dissolving views, the interest of the lecture was so absorbing that the audience would probably not have missed the illustrations if they had been forgotten by the lecturer. They desired to see Mr. Spurgeon and hear him talk. He has been on a holiday trip to Rome, and he was certain to crack some of his most racy jokes over the superstitious practices which he witnessed there.... It is curious that a feature of Continental churches which we have always thought particularly disagreeable should be produced with improvements at the Tabernacle. Many readers have, doubtless, witnessed the noonday performance of the Strasburg clock, and may remember the keen, businesslike manner of the verger who lets chairs for halfpence to visitors who desire to secure good places for the spectacle without the fatigue of standing. Just try to help yourself to a chair and see how quickly the verger will discover and pursue you. This we had thought a tolerably strong example of the practice which the text condemns, because the performance of the clock cannot be considered as a religious service, although the Twelve Apostles take part in it; but it is nothing compared to the banquet of tea and cake and the lectures and dissolving views at the great annual festival conducted by Mr. Spurgeon."

Among the high-class weeklies, perhaps The Spectator was as generous as any in its general estimate of the preacher and lecturer. It was said that the pastor of the Tabernacle had "a good deal of nature" in his general make up. Then, as his lecture seemed to show, the Bible and his faith in it was his chief passport to the favour of the southern peoples. He was also a man of genius and moral worth. "He is not only a very clever and homely preacher who makes his people realise the wrong and the right in every day's moral alternatives, with a vigour and freshness such as few of his class manage to obtain, but he is in himself a very interesting type to study, because he reproduces the ideas of a very large class of English folk with the cleverness and emphasis of a strong nature quite devoid of shyness and reserve." By way of contrast to such amenities, we might take the example of a reader of John Bull, a clergyman of the West of England, who was exceedingly angry at seeing a report of Spurgeon's lecture in that journal. What "wicked uncharitableness towards the Church of Rome" was shown by that "ignorant man," the "mountebank of the Tabernacle," whose "disgusting buffoonery" and "vulgar ravings" were, of course, highly objectionable! The lecture was repeated on January 22, when an explanation was given to the effect that it had never been intended for the general public; it was a talk about a pleasant tour, intended for friends, without previous preparation. While mentioning his recent

illness, Mr. Spurgeon advised that ministers should rest. He had worked for six years without taking such rest as was needed, and he found his physical strength seriously weakened. "No one living knows the toil and care I have to bear," he said. "I ask for no sympathy, but ask indulgence if I sometimes forget something. I have to look after the Orphanage, have charge of a church with four thousand members; sometimes there are marriages and burials to be undertaken; there is the weekly sermon to be revised, The Sword and the Trowel to be edited; and, besides all that, a weekly average of five hundred letters to be answered. This, however, is only half my duty; for there are innumerable churches established by friends with the affairs of which I am closely connected, to say nothing of those cases of difficulty which are constantly being referred to me." The visit to Rome had been a genuine pleasure trip; the rest had helped to re-establish health, while the preacher's knowledge had been extended by an excursion into new fields. Of all the striking things he had seen in the territory of the ancient world, nothing seems to have afforded greater satisfaction than what he saw in the Catacombs. One carving was a representation of John baptising our Lord by immersion. Then he had seen in the Catacombs "a genuine baptistery." This was "the very facsimile of the one we have in the Tabernacle, showing, from its absence of Popish symbols, that it was a relic of the old Church, the Church of which we are members, which is older than Catholicism or Protestantism—the ancient Apostolic Church of the Lord Jesus Christ." On February 22 he preached at the East London Tabernacle, when three thousand were present. That was a joyful occasion for Spurgeon as well as for the pastor, Mr. Brown; for what had been achieved in East London in connection with this church was a wonderful example of the aggressive work of the College. Even the text announced on this occasion sounded a jubilant note: "The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly" (Psa 118:16).

Mr. Spurgeon showed that wherever the Gospel was faithfully preached, there would the words of Christ be verified: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Reference was made to the brave days of old, when the Church of England was asleep in the dark, when Dissenters were slumbering in the light, and when Wesley and Whitefield were raised up to preach the Gospel until the whole land was filled with the glory of Christ.

Mr. Dransfield, a venerable elder at the Tabernacle, died about this time. On Sunday, March 10, James Wells, the great Strict Baptist preacher of the Surrey Tabernacle, also passed away. He had attained to the age of sixty-nine, and had been in the ministry over forty years. Born of humble parents, he received little or no school education; but when he began to preach in an obscure corner of Southwark his devotion and genius soon won for him a foremost place; and when at length the Surrey Tabernacle was erected, his congregation of two thousand persons was drawn from many distant suburbs, who accounted the opportunity of hearing their favourite preacher to be one of the chief privileges of life. Spurgeon and Wells had much in common; but their differences on certain theological points seem to have prevented their being very cordial friends. Notwithstanding this, however, the men had an admiration for each other which at times would find expression. Thus, when Wells lay in his last illness, Spurgeon sent him the following remarkable letter:—

"Clapham, March 11, 1871.

"My Dear Friend,—I must apologise for intruding upon your sick chamber, and must beg you not to be troubled by it; but I am very anxious to know how you are, and shall be very grateful if some

friend will inform me. I had hoped that your sickness was but a temporary affliction and would soon pass away, but now I hear conflicting rumours.

"I assure you of my deep sympathy in your protracted confinement from the labour which is so dear to your heart. Only to be kept out of the pulpit is a bitter sorrow, even could the bed be one of entire rest. I fear, however, that you are enduring days and nights of languishing; and I pray the Lord, the tender lover of our souls, to lay under you His supporting arms. He comforts omnipotently, and no griefs liuger when He bids them fly. He breaks us. down, and while we lie prostrate He makes us glad to have it so, because His will is done.

"You, who have so long been a father in the Gospel, are no novice in the endurance of trial, and I trust that you will be enabled to play the man as thoroughly in lonely suffering as in public service. Immutable purposes and infinite love have been themes of your constant ministry to others. May the Holy Ghost make these mighty floods of consolation to roll in upon your own soul, till all things else are swallowed up in your heart's holy joy! Personally I own my great obligations to the furnace and the hammer; and I am sure that you also rejoice in the assurance that tribulation worketh patience, and brings, through the supply of the Spirit, a long train of blessings with it. May you be delivered from all excessive care as to your church and your work—the Lord's work is safe in the Lord's hands. Happy is it for us when we can feel it to be so. May your sick chamber be the very gate of heaven to your soul, the presence of the Lord filling the house with glory.

"Do not think of acknowledging this; but if you are able to have it read to you I hope someone will be so good as briefly to tell me how you are.—With most sincere respects, yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon."

Concerning Spurgeon and this letter Mr. T. W. Medhurst remarks in a private letter:—

"So far as my knowledge goes, I do not think that he and James Wells ever met. C. H. S. always entertained the kindliest and most brotherly regard for James Wells, and esteemed him as an able preacher of the truth, though he had no sympathy with him in his extreme Calvinistic, or, rather, ultra-Calvinistic, teaching—viz., 'that to believe savingly on the Lord Jesus Christ was not the duty of all men.' Not only did he send a most characteristic letter to Mr. Wells during his long illness, but he also followed him to the grave, though not as an invited mourner. James Wells, on one occasion, said to me, 'I love Mr. Spurgeon, but I do not believe in his duty-faithism.' On another occasion Mr. Wells said: 'Mr. Spurgeon is a duty-faith man, and although he does not, in any of his printed sermons that I have seen, in so many words, declare it to be the duty of all men savingly to believe in Christ, yet he clearly holds the doctrine.'

"This was the one point of Mr. Wells's antagonism."

Mr. Spurgeon preached for the first time after his return from the Continent on Christmas-Eve; and his health being much improved by the rest and change, he worked on through the first quarter of 1872 with pleasure to himself, his strength seeming to be renewed. He was in excellent spirits because the work of the College more especially was so far prospering that during this quarter the President preached at the opening of new chapels for former students, at Chalk Farm, Enfield Highway, and Burdett Road, this last, as regards size, ranking next to the Metropolitan Tabernacle. In addressing the colporteurs and their friends at the Tabernacle on Tuesday, April 9, he took an opportunity of giving his sentiments concerning the case of the agricultural labourers,

which was then prominently before the public:—

"It often happens that the clergyman in a country district knows as much about the Gospel as a ploughman does about medicine. If people heard him for as many years as Methusaleh lived, they would not know much about Christ. They would not be going in the way of salvation, because the guide is blind, and it would be simply the blind leading the blind. If a poor man goes to a Dissenting place of worship, probably he gels mentioned to the squire or his employer, and he is told that he must not do anything of the sort. The condition of our agricultural labourers is most shameful, and I have not rejoiced in anything since I was born so much as when I heard that they had begun to stir and to strike. I wonder they have not struck long ago, when there were such cases as men having to expend the whole of their week's wages in bread for their families."

Mr. Spurgeon mentioned this subject of the labourers and their grievances to me in the study at Helensburgh House; and, whether in public or private, it was easy to see how heartily he sympathised with them, although he had no desire to harbour harsh opinions respecting either the landowners or the clergy. The Tabernacle does not appear to have been frequently used for marriages; but soon after the date at which we have now arrived, Mr. Spurgeon officiated at the wedding of his third sister, who was united to Mr. T. C. Page, a solicitor of Newington. Eph 5:25-33 was expounded, "not for the especial benefit of the young people, but lest any of the older married people in the congregation should have forgotten their duty."

Chapter 85: Work and Progress in 1872

Chapter 85.

Work And Progress In 1872

Literary Work—Conference—Home Missions—Village Churches—Colportage—Denominationalism—Spurgeon's Letter on the Orphanage—Mr. Wigner and the Houses for Ministers' Orphans—Letter to a Missionary's Wife.

In the year 1872 I became still more closely associated with Mr. Spurgeon in literary work. He could then be seen after the service on Monday or Thursday evening; but so many persons thronged the vestry-door and the deacons' anteroom that, for those who could avail themselves of the privilege, there was more advantage in calling at Helensburgh House. On the afternoon of Saturday, January 20, I called at the manse, which had now become familiar; but not being very well known to all of the servants, I was told that Mr. Spurgeon was in bed and could not be seen. There was nothing to be done but to make the best of a disappointment and to retire. On that same evening, the following note reached me:—

"Clapham, January 20.

"My Dear Friend,—I am annoyed beyond measure that you have been here and gone and have been denied me. The fact is I had a heavy headache, and told my people not to wake me; but I expected to be up to see you. I wrote you a card early on Friday. Our general rule is to reserve Saturday from callers, and hence you were refused; but it was owing to your modesty and goodness in great part. As soon as I came down I asked for you, and was mortified to find you had departed. Please write me, and accept my apologies and say what it is you would see me upon.—Yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon."

It was about a month later that I received a post-card: "Call and see me very soon—say on Saturday, between three and six. I think of offering you a permanent position as sub-editor of The S. and T." I obeyed this summons, and the engagement lasted for twenty years. The Conference of the Pastors' College opened on Monday, April 15, and Mr. George Hanbury presided at the annual supper, at which a sum of £1,532 was collected. The number of students was between seventy and eighty, instead of one hundred, and all had worked exceedingly hard. In his address to the three hundred guests who were brought together by special invitation, Mr. Spurgeon remarked that he had told the young men from the first that he expected the prescribed course would kill some of them; but he would be sure in each case to bury them at the expense of the College funds. No such case had, however, as yet occurred. There had been a good deal of sickness in the past year, which he could not but attribute largely to the unsuitable and dark rooms in which they studied. Large buildings had been erected around the Tabernacle, and had rendered these rooms rather unhealthy. In giving accounts of the achievements of the more prominent men, the President was naturally proud of the sphere which Mr. Archibald Brown had made for himself in East London. The new College building was now much needed; and as the fund grew there was

a prospect of building operations being soon commenced. A sum of three thousand pounds was in hand, and three friends were present at the supper who promised each to give one hundred pounds.

During this year Mr. Spurgeon was able to take his share of speaking at the spring meetings. On Monday, April 22, he gave an address at Exeter Hall on behalf of the United Free Churches, the meeting being a very enthusiastic one. In reading his resolution, he produced some effect by suddenly stopping in the middle—"That seeing that there are so many calls upon our mission committee, and so many of them have to be declined on account of the lack of suitable men, this resolution pledges the meeting to pray that the whole connection may be baptised------." After stopping for a few moments until the people seemed to see what was intended, the conclusion was added—"with the Holy Spirit, that many men might come forward and say, 'Here am I, send me.'" On the following evening he gave an address at Bloomsbury Chapel on behalf of the British and Irish Home Mission. It was shown that charity begins at home, and that thus every church ought to be a mission to a much greater degree than was found to be the case. In one passage reference was made to early days at Cambridge, and to the work done by the Lay Preachers' Association, which seems to have been regarded as a pattern for other churches:—

"Endeavour to maintain in good vigour the Lay Preachers' Association. I might have preached without it, but that Association in Cambridge offered me opportunities of preaching every night in the week, when I first began to open my mouth for Christ, and I found brethren who encouraged me; and I think they were all the greater encouragement to me because I don't think they preached much better than I did, but very much on a par with myself; and we did not mind talking together, because we had not a solitary Doctor of Divinity, or even a Master of Arts, to criticise us, and our pastor did not come to the monthly meetings, which was quite as well, for we there fraternally spoke to each other; and some of my brethren ear-wigged me about my oddities and eccentricities, and I was able to ear-wig them about their dulness and stupidity. I am sure that the Lay Preachers' Associations assist young men very materially, and help greatly to supply the pulpits with those men who will afterwards carry on the work. We ought not to have a single church without a strong back (in proportion to the number of the church) of preaching men. "We must have very many, and indeed we must encourage more to preach. I believe there are a great many men who do very much service by preaching whom you and I would not like to hear, but whom God will bless nevertheless, and it is a pity that they should have their mouths shut." A good deal was then being said about the undesirableness of having two weak Nonconformist interests in one village; and it was thought by many that Baptists and Independents might meet in one chapel more profitably than in two. Spurgeon himself boldly declared that he would not be amalgamated with others, nor absorbed by them. "I have quite another theory," he ingenuously confessed. "I look forward in the future, not to the absorption of our denomination, but to the gradual enlightenment of other churches." If the difference dividing the denominations was so small a thing as to be merely the apex of a pyramid, let the others themselves strike it away. Even if it came to meeting on a bridge which was too narrow for two to pass, he would not be the one to lie down. Then came an explanation:—

"I have been charged sometimes with helping to form a church when there has been already an Independent church in the town. Well, I have done so, and I mean to do it again. I have never done so when there has been an earnest, lively minister in the Independent place, and not population

enough for two, nor would I. But when I have seen a chapel and nobody in it, and a most respectable and well-educated minister the only occupier, or when I have seen a people driven out of the sanctuary because the word was not conceived by them to be the Gospel of Christ at all, I have come forward and helped them." Being then actively engaged in extending the operations of the Colportage Association, he embraced the opportunity of strongly recommending that agency, while in addition he urged renewed zeal on account of the country having accepted the principle of National Education:—

"We have at the Tabernacle fourteen men now, and they are supported, some of them, by brethren who are present, and friends of this society too. About £30 a year raised by a district gives to it a man who will be ready to preach if the pastor is ill, going from house to house, praying with the sick and talking with the dying. He is kept busy with the fact that he must sell his books to raise the other half of his income, and so he carries the Word of God with him in two respects, often where a pastor could not be maintained.... Our agricultural districts are sadly in want of help. Who can go and take a walk and talk to a ploughman without discovering the need of the Gospel? And, on the other band, there is coming this education which is to be given to all, and there must go with it on the part of the Church of God an increased effort to give religious education side by side with it, or else the possibilities may be that you shall only do what has been done in Hindustan—convert men from idolatry into Atheism, and bring people from the stupidity of a dormant intellect into the vicious activity of an intellect that seeks for anything but God." The English Independent gave a leading article on the subject of this address, in course of which the Baptist preacher was urged "to put the curb a little on his denominational zeal," while it was hoped that he and his people were not about "to distinguish themselves by an aggressive and meddlesome sectarianism." One correspondent protested, apparently as a Baptist, against "using up in denominational rivalries resources and talents that ought to be devoted to making known the great salvation to the perishing millions of the earth." On the contrary, another well-known minister welcomed what had been said as a trumpet-call to conflict and victory. "I have known the formation of a new church revive an old fainting church in its neighbourhood," he said. "I have heard, though I forget where, of its helping at the funeral of a dead church; but I never knew it injure a really healthy one." The Stockwell Orphanage, of which Mrs. Hillyard was the munificent founder, as already described, continued to make progress, and the trustees were beginning to see their way to the erection of a number of houses for fatherless girls. The following letter was written at this time in regard to supplies in general:—

"To the Editors of 'The Freeman.'

"Dear Sirs,—Some few years ago a large number of the Baptist churches did me the great honour to present me with a sum of money sufficient to erect two houses of the Stockwell Orphanage. It was an understanding that children of deceased Baptist ministers, otherwise eligible, should have a preference of election, so far as these houses are concerned.

"This understanding the trustees and myself have been able to carry out without in any degree infringing upon the unsectarian character of the elections. We have received thirteen needy little ones of the honourable stock of the Christian ministry; and upon the late lamented death of our dear brother, Benjamin Davies, of Greenwich, we determined to receive such of his boys as may be eligible.

"I write now to say to your readers that it is very pleasant to have had the happy burden of these orphans presented to me by the denomination as a token of respect; but, at the same time, it is not all pleasure. Very trifling, indeed, is the pecuniary help sent me by our Baptist friends towards maintaining these fatherless boys. At the present moment the funds are so low that we live from hand to mouth. It takes £10 a day to feed my little charge of two hundred and twenty children, and I believe the Lord will send it; but yesterday I do not think there was a day's cash in hand if the monthly bills had been at that moment brought in. I greatly admire the courageous silence of Mr. Müller in refusing to make his wants known to man, but I have never set up to be his imitator. I think it right to remind Christian people of their duty, and with this view I sat down to write to The Freeman. Surely, when my brethren and sisters know that their help is needed to find food and clothing for my poor orphan boys, they will not withhold their support. I know the notion is that Mr. Spurgeon can have everything he wants, but if everybody says this it will turn out that Mr. Spurgeon will get nothing at all. I never allow the idea of actual want or failure to cross my mind, for these cannot be, since the work is of the Lord; but still it is right to stir up pure minds by way of remembrance. This Orphanage is more nearly connected with our denomination than any other: will no churches give it annual collections? Will no sisters in Christ become collectors for it? Are there none of the Lord's stewards who will send it a portion? No collector is salaried; none will be. No agent will canvass the country. The needed amounts will be forthcoming as necessity arises; but are not some of those amounts now in the custody of readers of The Freeman?

"Yesterday's experience of a handful of meal in the barrel may be repeated many times. If the Lord wills it, so let it be; but if His people are of generous heart, it ought not to be so.—Yours in holy brotherhood, "C. H. Spurgeon.

"Clapham, S.W., May 18." The mention of the houses for orphans of ministers affords an opportunity of explaining that this provision was entirely the work of Mr. J. T. Wigner, one of the fathers of the Baptist denomination, who has lately retired from active service and the pastorate of the church at Brockley. The idea of building such houses originated with my venerable friend; for he wrote the appeals, issued the circulars, and signed the receipts. The late Mr. Goodall acted as joint treasurer, and the bankers' pass-book shows that the total amount raised was £2,333 7s. Mr. Wigner also drew up the illuminated testimonial now hanging in the board-room of the institution. His original idea was to provide one house; but after the money for this was raised it was found to be possible to double the amount. Mr. Spurgeon's recognition of this service was very cordial. At a festival held in the Orphanage grounds in September, 1872, the President presented his friend with a set of his Sermons elegantly bound, with this characteristic inscription written with his own hand: "To our beloved friend, the Rev. J. T. Wigner, in memory of most eminent service rendered to the Stockwell Orphanage, with the sincere respect of the trustees and the warm affection of C. H. Spurgeon." When the second volume of "Lectures to My Students" appeared a copy was sent to the same friend, with a similar inscription: "To my highly esteemed and deeply beloved brother, J. T. Wigner, with most grateful memories of the kindest acts which one man ever rendered to another.—C. H. Spurgeon." The service rendered was worthy of such recognition; and since that day many orphans of deceased ministers have had reason to feel grateful for what Mr. Wigner was able to achieve. Meanwhile the effect of the letter just quoted was so beneficial that the President was tempted to write again:—

"To the Editors of 'The Freeman.'

"Sirs,—I am requested to acknowledge, in your excellent paper, the receipt of twenty pounds as a 'Thank-offering.' Permit me to do so gratefully, and, at the same time, to thank many other contributors who have come to the rescue of the Orphanage, and were led to do so through your kindness in inserting my letter. I am deeply grateful to my brethren for this kindness, and especially to three or four pastors who have made collections for the work. They might not be pleased if I mentioned their names, and therefore I will not do so; but their action in bringing the matter before their people is as beneficial to the good cause as are the collections themselves. By the goodness of God our funds are now put into a healthy condition, and if the liberality of the brethren should continue, we shall have no more to scoop up the last handful of meal from the bottom of the barrel.

"Clapham, June 8."

"C. H. Spurgeon. The expenses of the Orphanage at this time were a little over three hundred pounds a month, or less than a third of the present outlay. No sooner was it known that supplies were lacking than money was sent in rapidly—a sufficiency for several months. Not only was this the case in England, even friends in India were stimulated to help, Mr. Thomas Evans, a missionary at Allahabad, taking the lead in collecting subscriptions. In acknowledging what had been done, Mr. Spurgeon wrote to Mrs. Evans:—

"I am often depressed in spirit, and am very apt to play on the sackbut, and such tidings as yours are like balm to me. I feel made strong again by seeing that my labours are not in vain in the Lord. Brotherly love from a far country is doubly refreshing, and, when rendered in so practical a form, it is intensified in comforting efficacy. Thank every one of the friends—civilians and soldiers, officers and privates.... I am never very well, but seem to be old before my time. Nevertheless, the Lord's work does not flag, but rather goes from strength to strength. The College has enjoyed peculiar blessing, but I long for missionaries to come out of it.... The Orphanage has been provided for hitherto. There has been no lack for the two hundred and twenty boys. Funds just now are low, but they are sure to come, for the Lord will provide. I want to have a place for girls now. The way is clearing for this, and it will be done.... Good days are coming both for us and you. The Lord is remembering Zion, and He will build her waste places. May the Lord abide with you all, and enrich you with comfort and strength and make India to be the Koh-i-noor of Jehovah."

During the spring of this year Mr. Spurgeon keenly felt the somewhat sudden death of one of the earliest of the students associated with the Pastors' College, and one of the most successful—Benjamin Davies. He was settled at Greenwich, and, having toiled long and hard for the erection of a large chapel, he passed away just as the most cherished object for which he had lived seemed to be realised. Mr. Spurgeon was not singular in holding Davies in the highest esteem, for he had made an extraordinary impression on the neighbourhood. Canon Miller, who was then Vicar of Greenwich, referred in the pulpit to the loss the district had sustained, and collected one hundred and thirty pounds in the church for the widow and children. Mr. Bardsley, another clergyman, appears to have acted in a similar manner, besides presiding at a prayer-meeting in the Baptist chapel. Two of the boys were received into the houses which Mr. Wigner had erected at the Stockwell Orphanage for ministers' orphans. The "Treasury of David" (Vol. III.) was also published during this summer, a work which, from first to last, was twenty years in hand.

Chapter 86: A Sermon Beneath Crouch Oak

Chapter 86.

A Sermon Beneath Crouch Oak

Addlestone and Edward Leach—An Historical Tree and an Open-air Service—Sympathy with Agricultural Labourers—Ministers' Incomes—A "Strike" suggested—Spurgeon and Moody—Changes—Gough and the Orphanage.

We have now to look on a singular and picturesque scene, and one which guide-books refer to as something that belongs to the historical area of Addlestone. In the summer of 1872 Edward Leach, editor of The Freeman, and former sub-editor of The Sword and the Trowel, was desirous of erecting a new chapel in the little town for the congregation of which he had some time before become pastor. This sanctuary was to cost twelve hundred pounds—a modest sum, but a large amount for a small company of people who were, for the most part, poor. Leach was a genuine fellow who had made his way by hard work; but he died a comparatively young man a few years later, from a fever caused by a draught of impure water. Being as enthusiastic in this matter of raising a chapel as he was with his weekly newspaper, Leach prevailed upon his former chief to undertake the ceremony of laying the memorial-stone of the new building and to preach a sermon in the open air. A most attractive programme was drawn up, and a triumphal arch, decorated with boughs and flowers, was erected in honour of Spurgeon. Throngs of people from the surrounding towns and villages entered Addlestone. The event of the afternoon was the stone-laying; then followed tea in a meadow, after which the great preacher gave a discourse beneath the ancient and historic tree known as Crouch Oak. This tree, which has been associated with Wycliffe and Queen Elizabeth, was twenty-four feet in circumference nine feet from the ground, and it derived its name from the cross cut upon it as the boundary-mark of Windsor Forest.

Here is a description, by one who was present, of the scene in Addlestone before and after the memorial-stone was laid:—

"In a lane leading from the station at Addlestone is a massive oak, which, if the gossips of the neighbourhood be trustworthy, has seen some notable sights. It is said that under its far-reaching branches 'Wycliffe has preached and Queen Elizabeth dined.' The combination of circumstances is striking, and might furnish the text for an interesting essay were not a restraint placed upon the fancy by the consideration that possibly, after all, Wycliffe never did preach there, nor Queen Elizabeth dine. A constructive argument in favour of every tradition might be derived from the fact that Crouch Tree Oak yesterday afforded a canopy under which was delivered a sermon that might, for simple and moving eloquence, possibly hold its own in comparison with any the great reformer preached, and that, though no opportunity was afforded of testing its suitability as the roof of a dining-room, a tea, which gave profound satisfaction to some five hundred persons, was spread at its foot. The occasion which led to these remarkable doings was the laying of the foundation-stone of a new chapel which is being built for the accommodation of the Baptist

congregation of Addlestone. A place of worship formerly stood upon the site of the projected new erection, but it was in a dilapidated condition; and the congregation, which is comprised almost entirely of the working classes, boldly undertook the task of finding funds to build another."

After he had laid the stone of the new chapel, Spurgeon made some general references to Nonconformity and the Church of England, defending himself and his adherents from charges of schism. He added;—

"By the grace of God the Nonconformists must remain where they are; but they must also improve their position, putting away from them all error and every evil thing I deprecate the entertaining of the idea that our own denomination has exclusive possession of the whole truth, and that it is right in everything. Let us see to it that we make true that boast—which I fear is not a true one—that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants. We must not preserve any error in our churches, for an error might act as did the bombshell taken during the siege of Paris, and buried in one of the fields in the vicinity of the city, but which, on being afterwards struck by the plough of the farmer, exploded with the most disastrous consequences."

He seemed to think that entrance into the Church was being made too easy, whereas in the old days candidates for Christian fellowship were supposed to have "a severe time of it." Many who were too easily admitted as easily relapsed into their former ways. He also hoped that the main strength of Dissent would never run into politics; for to be spiritually weak, though they might he politically strong, was a calamity. He then added:—

"Give us saints conversant with the Word of God, and who are faithful in heart and life to its requirements, and we shall be a power in the earth when the powers that oppress us shall have crumbled into dust. Our church members must be the most devout and the most devoted people in the community. I would not care if we were even to live in such a manner that we should be called strict. The error of this day is certainly not over-strictness. We have Christian liberty running into what I call licence. The holiest church will one day be the most powerful church. The Baptists are very few still in this land; but for all that we have no reason whatever to be ashamed." Not being a pessimist naturally, he predicted better times generally for England. The agitation of the agricultural labourers was then at its height, and he strongly advocated their cause, remarking that they were the first to welcome a Nonconformist minister into a village, the Established clergy not having succeeded in winning their hearts. He longed to see the labourers with more ample means, not only for themselves and those dependent on them, but to enable them better to support religion. No one valued English freedom and the institutions of liberty more than Spurgeon; but he, nevertheless, compared this country to one where caste ruled, and where so many things cramped the energies of the Christian worker that it sometimes seemed as though the Spirit of God were saying, "I will not work here." Despite all, however, the outlook was that of a great future; and it was hoped that when all were educated the freedom enjoyed would be wisely used. When the address was concluded, the people passed in front of the stone on which they placed their offerings, Mr. Spurgeon sitting on the wall as President, and having an umbrella held over his head on account of the heat. In a short time a sum of £100 was placed upon the stone, and then all were ready for tea. I will again quote the graphic description of an eye-witness:—

"At half-past five the bulk of the congregation, assembled in a tent raised under the oak tree, and indulged in the pleasures of tea, bread and butter, and cake. The opportunity was regarded as a

favourable one by a visitor to make inquiries touching the grand old tree by the roadside, which stretched its gnarled arms half way across the tent. The result was not, however, encouraging. 'It was called Crouch Tree Oak hereabouts.' 'Might an ignorant but interested visitor ask why?' 'Well, you see, sir, it crouches like;' and the visitor was invited to observe the mighty branches bending over from the trunk, one supported by a limb striking upwards from the ground. 'But about Wycliffe and Queen Elizabeth?' The gentleman who was having his tea did not know anything about 'them,' nor was the knowledge spread in other quarters yet. One intelligent inhabitant was able to state that the tree marked the boundary of Windsor Forest; but that was hardly pertinent to the question. This was disappointing; but it presently became evident that whether Wycliffe had or had not, five hundred years ago, preached under the tree, Mr. Spurgeon was presently about to hold forth. After tea a pulpit was extemporised, upon the model of the one at the Tabernacle, by covering a carpenter's bench with red baize, and fastening before this a wooden railing, which also had its decent covering of baize. A pair of steps, constructed with a considerable amount of trouble, were placed in position before the rostrum; but when, a few minutes after seven o'clock, the preacher appeared, he scorned their assistance and scrambled on to the bench from the level of the field, grasping the rail as soon as he was in a position to face the congregation, as if he recognised in it a familiar friend whose presence made him feel at home under the novel circumstances that surrounded him. Mr. Spurgeon at once began the service. There might, when he stood up, have been some doubt whether his voice could be heard throughout the vast throng that had gathered in front of the tree, the numbers whereof had considerably increased upon the conclusion of the feast, and the consequent free admission to the field of all who might choose to enter. But the first tones of the speaker's voice dispelled all uncertainty on that score, and the congregation settled quietly down, whilst Mr. Spurgeon, with uplifted hands, besought 'the Spirit of God to be with them, even as in their accustomed places of worship.' A hymn was then sung, a portion of the 55th chapter of Isaiah read, another prayer offered up, and the preacher commenced his sermon." The discourse itself was one of the preacher's most telling efforts in the open air, and was worthy of Whitefield in his best days. The text was St. Mat 9:36 : "He was moved with compassion." From first to last the sermon, which was an hour long, was a masterpiece of forcible simplicity. With a rapid hand the chief events in the life of Christ were sketched; and the attention of the farm labourers was at once arrested when the Lord was depicted as moving about among the crowds of Palestine in "the smock-frock of an ordinary labourer." The reference to the English Poor Law was not complimentary; its working was something very different from the example of Christ. "If Jesus Christ were abroad in these days," said the preacher, "He would, I much fear, have occasion to say, 'I was hungry and ye fed Me not; thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink; destitute, and ye told Me to go to the parish.'" Tracts were no doubt good things in their way, but were not to be exclusively relied on to bring people to a knowledge of the truth. "I believe a loaf of bread often contains the very essence of theology," it was added; "and the Church of God ought to look to it that there were at her gates no poor unfed and no sick untended." Then "the clergy of all denominations"were reminded that as fish first went had at the head, "so a church, when it goes wrong, goes had first among its ministers." It was some time after sunset when the preacher's eloquent closing appeal to the crowd to lose no time in seeking salvation rang through the field. "I call heaven and earth, and this old tree, under which the Gospel was preached five hundred years ago, to bear witness that I have preached to you the Word of God, in which alone salvation is to be found."

Some things which were said about this time concerning ministerial incomes provoked discussion in the newspaper press, and in reply to the mild threat of "a strike," The North British Mail gave a leading article:—

"But is a strike likely to mend matters? Would it not be wiser to inquire whether excessive competition does not reduce the value of those of whom he spoke, and whether the bulk of them are really as fit for the work they profess as the men who laid the foundation-stones of the chapel are for theirs? Mr. Spurgeon has attractions which could in any profession procure for their possessor large emoluments; but it by no means follows that he can transmit his gifts to his students. People hare become knowing and critical, and a minister must have something rarer than a black coat to exhibit before he can fill a church. The humorous suggestion of a strike shows that the 'wages question' is reaching others than working men; and if Mr. Spurgeon's remark carries its full weight it will do good. If a minister has piety, learning, and eloquence he will have no cause to complain of his earnings; if he unhappily lack these, he must be content to suffer from the want of natural fitness for his office, and from the absence of the acquirements got by years of irksome study." On this Spurgeon remarked that it was easier to write in such a strain than to prove the assertions, the truth being that Presbyterians in Scotland found it hard to realise the state of things in England. Of the Established Church more particularly it was said:—

"It starves many of its own best men, whose very excellences hinder their advancement from the position of curates; and its influence on other communions is most pernicious. The Nonconformist congregations in such a city as Glasgow find it quite easy to give their pastors as good an income as their brethren in the Establishment receive—in some cases a better one; such emulation is not practicable where prelacy is the established form of religion. Anything like a fair standard is destroyed where one Christian minister has palaces and £15,000 a year, while others of equal or greater merit, but destitute of political or personal interest, are condemned to a curacy and £100 per annum." On Monday, August 5, Mr. Spurgeon laid the memorial-stone of the chapel at Lordship Lane, Dulwich; and it was here that he made special reference to the hardships of poor ministers, and in a joking way suggested "a strike." On the Wednesday following a similar ceremony was gone through at Faversham, where a new chapel was required for the congregation of Mr. Alfred Bax. The Mayor, Mr. C. Bryant, presided; and, as was usual on such an occasion when the weather was fine, a great concourse of people assembled from the towns and villages of the surrounding country. Mr. Spurgeon referred to the principles of the Baptists, and he then showed what were the conditions of success in the case of a working church:—

"I would, say to the members of this church, 'Do not be satisfied unless you have conversions.' Ministers may preach earnestly and prayerfully, but I consider there is little good done if there are not conversions. I regret that there are churches in which there have been no conversions for months and years, and yet if they are spoken to on the subject they will say they are 'very comfortable.' That is the worst part of it. Imagine a large fire breaking out in Faversham, and the engines being sent for, and on arriving somewhere near the fire the men stopping, taking seats on the engines, and lighting up their pipes, and on their being asked how they were getting on with the fire, the reply being, 'Oh, we are not doing anything towards putting out the fire, but we are uncommonly comfortable.' All I can say is that if a man can be comfortable when good is not being done he is no use to any church, and the sooner he is packed off to attend some other than the Lord's business the better." In illustrating the ready common sense which often characterised the

working classes, he told this anecdote of what once happened near home:—

"I once met a man going across Clapham Common with a very large barrow, in which was a very small parcel. I could not help remarking to the man that it was curious he should have so large a barrow for so small a parcel, and he replied, 'Yes, it is curious, but there are more curious things than that, for I have been about the whole day and have not met a gentleman who looked as if he would give me a pint of beer till I met you.' Well, that man had his mind bent on that one thing, and he took the straight road to it at once. So must you act if you wish to fill your chapel. I firmly believe that if you had the will to increase your congregation you could do it; for instance, I believe it might be done by your repeating to others some nice little extracts from the excellent sermons you hear. If you do this you will soon have plenty of hearers, and then the blessing will follow."

He arranged that no silver trowel should be presented; and, after remarking that no coins were placed in the cavity beneath the stone, he added, "I have known memorial-stones to suddenly move during the night when money has been placed in them." About six hundred persons sat down to tea, and a sermon was given in the evening. The Stockwell Orphanage festival was deferred until Wednesday, September 18, when an attractive programme was provided, including music, refreshments al fresco—though it was somewhat late in the season—Chinese illuminations, and speeches. Unhappily the President was taken ill during the afternoon, and was obliged to return to his home. Otherwise the occasion was a memorable one. There were then two hundred and forty-five boys in the institution; and the founder of the Orphanage, Mrs. Hillyard, who was present, received a costly album, containing portraits of all the inmates, the lads themselves having subscribed the cost. It was also on this occasion that Mr. J. T. Wigner received the elegantly-bound set of Spurgeon's Sermons to which reference has been made. This time Mr. Spurgeon's illness was not of the most serious kind. He was able to preach at the Tabernacle on Sunday morning, September 22; but his old enemy, the gout, attacked him with such vigour that his right foot had to be rested on a chair during the whole of the service. In the autumn of this year the Transatlantic journal, The Watchman and Reflector, contained a letter by Professor Richards, of Pittsfield, Mass., relating to Spurgeon and Moody and our own Aldersgate Street noon prayer-meeting:—

"The last person who came between myself and Mr. Spurgeon was Mr. Moody, of Chicago, and Mr. Spurgeon was resisting strenuously what Mr. Moody was urging. Presently Mr. Moody turned, and, seeing me, he gave me his characteristic greeting, and then said, 'Help me to prevail with Mr. Spurgeon to go and lead the Aldersgate Street noon prayer-meeting.' He went off without the consent he sought, and after he was gone Mr. Spurgeon told mo why he wouldn't go. He had been there on one occasion, and, finding much indecorum of words and manner, he openly and strongly condemned it, when he was rudely called to account by one of the habitués, who angrily demanded of him, 'Mr. Spurgeon, where is the Spirit of the Lord?' The great preacher replied, 'Not in you, my friend, I fear. He would not abide beneath so angry a face as yours.'"

Many changes occurred during the autumn of 1872. Dr. Brock resigned the pastorate of Bloomsbury Chapel; James Grant, who had retired from the editorship of The Morning Advertiser some time previously, now commenced a penny weekly journal; and Dr. d'Aubigné, the historian of the Reformation, passed away. As was quite natural, the great preacher of the Metropolitan Tabernacle gave a cordial greeting to the little paper of his old friend, who had stood by him in

early days; but from the first the prospects of the new enterprise appear to have been hopeless—Mr. Grant was too sweeping in his condemnation of Nonconformist ministers in general. In taking notice of Mr. Spurgeon's "anticipatory and commendatory notice of this new journal," The Freeman added: "Our honoured friend is the last minister of Jesus Christ to approve of this wholesale and shameful vilification of the ministers of the. Baptist and Independent bodies." Grant meant well; but he was too much disposed to extreme views in religious matters. The Stockwell Orphanage had become one of those British institutions which an American was necessarily required to "do" before his tour of the world could in any wise be considered complete. John B. Gough had now changed from a detractor into a "beloved friend," who sought and enjoyed Spurgeon's company. The temperance lecturer has given us a word-picture of the Orphanage as it was in those days:—

"I would like to give you one incident to illustrate the man in his greatness and simplicity. He wished me to visit his Boys' Orphanage at Stockwell. I could go only on Saturday, and his note to me was characteristic:—

"'Beloved Friend,—Although I never go out on Saturdays- my horses, being under the law, and not under grace, keep the seventh day Sabbath—yet we will arrange to visit,' etc.

"A beautiful day it was for London as we rode together, chatting all the way. The history of the Orphanage is intensely interesting. The commencement was a sum of twenty thousand pounds to Mr. Spurgeon from a lady to commence an Orphanage for fatherless boys. All the money that has been expended has been raised by voluntary contributions, and the twenty thousand pounds is invested as an endowment. When we entered the grounds the boys set up a shout of joy at the sight of their benefactor.

"I asked, 'What are the requirements for admission?'

"He said, 'Utter destitution—nothing denominational. We have more of the Church of England than of the Baptists. We have Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists—all sorts.'

"After the boys had gone through their gymnastic exercises and military drill I spoke a few words to them. Mr. Spurgeon was like a great boy among boys.

"He said, 'There are two hundred and forty boys—only think! How many pence are there in a shilling?'

"'Twelve.'

"'Right! How many shillings in a pound?'

"'Twenty.'

"'Right! Twelve times twenty, how many?'

"'Two hundred and forty.'

"'That's a penny a-piece for each boy. Here, Mr. Charlesworth,' handing him a sovereign, 'give these boys a penny a-piece;' when a shrill hearty hurrah was given as Mr. Spurgeon turned away with a laugh of keen enjoyment.

"'Will you go to the infirmary? We have an infirmary and quarantine; for sometimes the poor creatures we take in need a good deal of purifying. We have one boy very ill with consumption; he cannot live, and I wish to see him, for he would be disappointed if he knew I had been here and had not seen him.'

"We went into the cool and sweet chamber, and there lay the boy. He was very much excited when he saw Mr. Spurgeon. The great preacher sat by his side, and I cannot describe the scene. Holding the boy's hand in his he said—

"'Well, my dear, you have some precious promises in sight all around the room. Now, dear, you are going to die, and you are very tired lying here, and soon you will be free from all pain, and. you will rest. Nurse, did he rest last night?'

"'He coughed very much.'

"'Ah, my dear boy, it seems very hard for you to lie here all day in pain and cough all night. Do you love Jesus?'

"'Yes.'

"'Jesus loves you; He bought you with His precious blood, and He knows what is best for you. It seems hard for you to lie here and listen to the shouts of the healthy boys outside at play. But soon Jesus will take you home, and then He will tell you the reason, and you will be so glad.'

"Then, laying his hand on the boy, without the formality of kneeling, he said: 'O Jesus, Master, this dear child is reaching out his thin hand to find Thine. Touch him, dear Saviour, with Thy loving, warm clasp. Lift him as he passes the cold river, that his feet be not chilled by the water of death; take him home in Thine own good time. Comfort and cherish him till that good time comes. Show him Thyself as he lies here, and let him see Thee and know Thee more and more as his loving Saviour.'

"After a moment's pause he said, 'Now, dear, is there anything you would like? Would you like a little canary in a cage to hear him sing in the morning? Nurse, see that he has a canary to-morrow morning. Good-bye, my dear; you will see the Saviour, perhaps, before I shall.'

"I had seen Mr. Spurgeon holding by his power sixty-five hundred parsons in a breathless interest; I knew him as a great man universally esteemed and beloved; but as he sat by the bedside of a dying pauper child, whom his beneficence had rescued, he was to me a greater and grander man than when swaying the mighty multitude at his will.

"I need not describe Mr. Spurgeon's preaching; very few Americans visit London without hearing him. So much has been written and published in the United States of him and his sermons that the people of this country are familiar with him as one of our own people. I am most impressed with the simplicity, freedom, fearlessness, earnestness, and naturalness of his preaching. He has more heart than eloquence, and illustrates the truth of his own words, 'Eloquence of the most lofty kind is mere sound, unless there be love in the speaker's heart to give weight to his words. Better to have a loving heart than to speak twenty languages.'"

Chapter 87: The Baptist Union At Manchester

Chapter 87.

The Baptist Union At Manchester

Letter from "John Ploughman"—The New College at Brighton Grove—Address to the Students—Spurgeon and The Church Times—Bazaar for the Orphanage—Watch-Night Service.

In 1872 the Baptist Union held its autumnal session at Manchester, Dr. Thomas Thomas presiding, and Mr. Spurgeon being present. After listening to the President's address on the Baptists and Christian Union, the London preacher said he had an objection to being famous for proposing resolutions—there were no "resolutions "in the Acts of the Apostles. Notwithstanding, he had felt disposed to move a resolution concerning the union of different denominations. He wondered if it would ever become possible to hold each year a congress of all the voluntary churches for spiritual purposes; and whether, if the Baptist Union took the initiative, and invited the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, and the Primitive Methodists, and the Congregationalists, and all the evangelical denominations to send certain delegates to meet together, not to interfere with each other's polity or discuss doctrine, but for prayer and mutual edification—he wondered if they would not see an infinitely more unanimous congress than was produced by the various denominations of that ecclesiastical community commonly called the Church of England. He thought the voluntary churches were vastly more nearly one than the Established Church was, and that no small value might accrue from an open display of their unity. The meeting on Thursday evening, October 10, in the Free Trade Hall was densely crowded, so that a supplemental assembly was held at the Friends' Meeting House. When Mr. Spurgeon rose to give an address in the first-named place, he received quite an ovation, all the people rising from their seats. He thanked Manchester for having entertained eight hundred guests, and thought they should not return to their homes without having secured some substantial results. He again advocated a conference of all the Free Churches, and then created some amusement by reading what he called "A Letter from 'John Ploughman.'

"'I have got an odd letter I should like to read,' he remarked.; I do not know whether any of you know "John Ploughman." This is a letter written by a relative of his; and I want to lay it before the Baptist Union very solemnly:—

"'Have I been dreaming or not? If I have not, I have a serious case of moral obliquity among Baptists which I wish to bring before the Baptist. Union. Be it understood I am a Baptist myself, but should be almost ashamed to confess it unless my impressions should turn out to be those of a heated imagination. I have been, or fancy I have been, lately to a country much like our own—a bright and happy land, as like this one as one race to another. I thought I was in my native country till a strange discovery undeceived me. Having occasion to do business with a worthy tradesman of the Episcopalian denomination, who was withal a most intelligent man, I naturally inquired as to the position and prospects of the Baptists in that district. He answered with a degree of warmth

and severity which greatly surprised me, for he was of a remarkably gentle temper. "Why," he said, "I suppose it must have prospered, for I have this morning paid £7 14s. 6d. for a tithe to their pastor in this parish, whom I have never seen in the pulpit. None, I daresay, thinks him any the better for living at the expense of those who do not believe in his teaching. Is it not monstrous, in a country which calls itself free, that I, who am a law-abiding citizen, paying all my dues to the powers that be, should see any sect in high places, and a religion calling itself the national faith, and that Episcopalians should be called Dissenters because they do not agree with a certain sect which practises immersion!" I sympathised with the good man very much, though I said but little to him, but resolved to call on the Baptist pastor and tell him a little of my mind. I found him living in the best house in the parish, except the squire's, and was highly gratified in noticing a young assistant-minister pleasantly engaged with the ladies on the croquet lawn. Having announced myself as a Baptist, I was, of course, very cordially received, and went at once to my point. "So, my dear friends, you have turned the tables on the Episcopalians, and taken the good things of the State out of their hands?" "Indeed, no," he answered; "we have always possessed our present property. The Episcopalians are a modern sect, which sprung up some few centuries ago. We are the Old Catholic and Apostolic Church, practising the ordinances as they were delivered unto us. All other churches are guilty of schism; for it is as clear as anything in history that the original churches consisted of persons who were immersed upon profession of the faith." I replied, "Well, and that fact you conceive is a sufficient warrant for making the schismatics of the whole nation support your Apostolic Church? Do you conceive the original Baptist churches possessed this privilege and exercised it?" "That is a lengthy question," he said. "I believe it has been settled long ago; but I am sorry to say the Episcopalians are beginning to dispute it, and are getting to be a little troublesome, and other sects are also opposing us in this matter. My own opinion is they are a set of robbers, and want to take away from our church what was bequeathed to us by pious ancestors." I replied to him, "Is it true that the Episcopalians are trying to take away property left to you by wills which are to be found in the various courts?" "No, not exactly that. We say that there were pious ancestors all over the country who happened to live in every parish—and they left a tenth part of all the property in all the parishes of England to the Baptist ministers—but the date is so far back that the documents are lost." I thought I saw his eye twinkle roguishly as he said this, and I did not think he believed it himself, and therefore did not answer it. To make a long story short, after a good deal of conversation with him and inquiry in his country, I found that a few years ago these Baptists actually compelled these Episcopalians to pay for the baptising gowns of their ministers, and for the water they used in their baptism, and were very reluctant to part with the precious privilege of presenting robbery to God as a burnt-offering. I find to this day their leading ministers, including Maclaren, the Lord Bishop of Manchester; Haycroft, the Lord Bishop of Leicester; Landels, the great Bishop of London; and Chown, the great Bishop of Bradford, occupied seats in one of the great courts of legislature, always fighting against every great measure of progress, and by their very presence there insulting every Episcopalian, Wesleyan, and Independent in the land. It oozed out that many if not all these Baptist pulpits were put up to auction to the highest bidder or were given by certain lord deacons and other patrons to their sons, and were commonly called "livings." The ministers themselves I found professed to subscribe to one confession of faith; nevertheless there were three sects within their limits as far apart from one another as rattlesnakes, lambs, and owls are apart from one another. I cannot understand how they all confessed one creed honestly, and yet holding scarcely anything in common. That was not

all. I found these strange Baptists in possession of the national graveyards, and as fierce as fighting-cocks at allowing any of the unimmersed to be buried in the same soil with them. I found them everywhere with their influence—in the almshouse. grammar-school, the soup kitchens, and the clothing clubs. An attempt at national education had become the cause of universal dissatisfaction, mainly through the unexpected use of a certain clause in the Act which was for the interest of the Baptist priests as against the Episcopalians. I stand up with all my might for the Episcopalians, as they are not justly dealt with. The Baptists forget the golden rule that they should do to others as they would be done by. The Episcopalians are ignored by our Baptist brethren. Why, then, should they be called upon to sustain a body whose principles they do not agree with? Should the Baptist Union not see to this matter? But perhaps it was all a dream.'"

Having read this letter, the writer added, "This is why we cannot invite Episcopalians to our Conference." Reference was made to the fact that in the provinces the Free Churches had not made much headway, although in London the Baptists had been fairly successful. They advanced much as the sea did; they might think it was receding, but by-and-bye there came a great wave and there was a real advance. Then followed advice to both ministers and people. The first were to work with all their might and to remember that it was a mistake to keep back truths respecting which others might differ from them.

After touching on some other topics, he referred to the oft-debated "secret" of his own success. He had been asked, "How do you account for your success?" One very candid friend said, "I have heard you preach two sermons, and heard abler men than you a good deal." The reply was, "I believe that; I do not doubt that for a single moment." Hard work—that was Spurgeon's "witchcraft." He preached the Gospel as plainly as he could, and worked as hard as strength would allow.

Wednesday, October 16—while the Union meetings were in progress—was the day on which the memorial-stone of the new Baptist College, Brighton Grove, Rusholme, was laid, and the chief attraction of the afternoon was an address by Mr. Spurgeon. He spoke of the responsibility he felt in having students to educate, and urged that prayer should be made on their behalf. Some objected to what they called man-made ministers; but a man like the speaker himself, who never went to college, was not man-made; though, at the same time, it was wonderful that some preachers who were said to be God-made were not better. The importance of training young men for service in the Gospel-field was then enforced. Christ and His Apostles, as well as Wycliffe and the later Reformers, had all set a worthy example in this respect. Then came a word on the New Gospel of Doubt:—

"If any man among you is a Calvinist, I can say 'I more;' but, on the other hand, if any man would preach the Gospel fully to the sinner, 'I more.' I am glad when we get something which we can believe. I am refreshed nowadays with a man who believes something. Except with such low-bred people as Baptists and some others, belief is out of the question, people have come to doubt everything. The Old Gospel was, 'He that believeth shall be saved;' but the New Gospel is, 'He that doubteth and is sprinkled shall be saved'—a wonderful alteration, and certainly not one for the better. I hope that in this College they will not mate any pretence to be philosophical nor yet to be respectable; the least respectable person in the world is the one who thinks himself respectable. People are apt to say, 'Oh, you know Mr. So-and-so comes to our place.' Well, what of him? What

is the good of a Gospel that draws horses? Let me have the Gospel to draw men, even if they wear fustian jackets. One soul is as good as another. If you want to have real prayer meetings you must not go canting and whining after rich people. I wish you to feel that you are sent to preach to broad humanity. You are sent to preach as much to the poor as to the rich, and as much to the rich as to the poor. I hope that in this College the most earnest means will be taken to support the inward spiritual life of the men who enter it. I believe that sometimes you would do well to have no classes whatever for a whole week, but to spend it all in prayer. You must have spiritual power." In speaking of students and their surroundings, he thought that they should be such as should remind the men of their work. To be altogether shut out from the world had a tendency to make men anything but what they should be. It was well for a ministerial student to be where he could occasionally hear a baby cry, and where, poor people being about, he was enabled to see something of life. If there were any who had to bear hardship and to do with little money, they were Baptist ministers. As for loaves and fishes, they must not go into the Baptist ministry for them; for the loaves, such as they were, were made of barley, while the fishes were few. This address was given to a great concourse of people in the open air; and when umbrellas were put up in consequence of rain coming on, Mr. Spurgeon remarked that he should be able to make all hear notwithstanding the "sprinkling," which was ever in opposition to them. The students were then told how to go about their work:—

"Preach all the Gospel; do not preach one end of it. Some do so; they can never preach the whole of the balances, they are so occupied with one scale—they are small moons; they never get into the full moon; they never see a full-orbed Gospel. I saw a man in Rome roasting chestnuts; he put them in a cylinder which revolved over a fire, and thus all the chestnuts were roasted. I like to see in the ministry all the chestnuts roasted. I have known men who have bought a barrel organ with five tunes in it, and whenever they have played it has always been one of the five tunes. There is an infinite variety in the truth; give the whole of the truth, and God will bless one part of the truth to one, part of it to another."

Reference was also made to the catacombs and to the ancient baptistery already mentioned; but additional particulars were given:—

"There is a catacomb in Rome which every Baptist ought to see. It is seldom shown, and, in fact, only since the new Government came into power. In it there is a baptistery. There is no doubt about it; it is a facsimile of one, and it stands exactly where it should stand for the immersion of believers. There is only one out of nine ranges of cells that has ever been opened. I asked the attendant why they have not opened the others, and he replied that 'along there they never found anything about Popes.' We never find anything but Alpha and Omega; we find nothing but the old Christianity—the old Baptist Christianity—and therefore they never open the other eight. The man said that it would take about six thousand pounds to open them, and he asked if the Baptists of England could not open the others." Being a cordial hater of the old-fashioned pulpit, he not only spoke against it, but ventured the opinion that if a man had to plead in one in a court of law he would lose his case for certain. "I once preached in a pulpit in the bottom of which there was a hole," he said, "and I felt inclined to preach to the congregation through the bung-hole in order to show how absurd it was." The students were advised always to do their best, and were reminded that a thin congregation especially needed a good sermon. "If you get hard up for a shot to put into your cannon, ram yourself into the cannon and shoot yourself at the congregation," was a very

characteristic piece of advice; and this was followed by an anecdote of the conversion of a Ritualistic clergyman through reading Spurgeon's Sermons:—

"Some people with the despondency I deprecate said: 'We are all going to the Pope.' Dreadful, horrible, awful! Very likely; but I do not believe it. God has always beaten the devil yet, and He always will. We will see the Ritualists converted to the Gospel yet I do not despair of any man that is in earnest. I see some of the Ritualists are earnest, and God may yet bless them and bring them round to know the truth. The men I am most afraid of are men that do know the truth, but knuckle under to those that do not. If a man does not hold firmly the truth he does know, God will not show him more. A gentleman once came to me and told me that he owed everything to me because I had brought him to Jesus. The gentleman said he was 'only a humble vicar of the Church of England,' and I asked what line of things was he in. 'Very high,' said he. 'But did you forgive people's sins and so on?' 'Yes.' 'And how did you get rid of the idea that you were a priest?' 'I sincerely believed myself a priest,' said the vicar, 'until I read one of your sermons; I was then convinced of my own sin, and the priesthood oozed out of me directly.'" The College in which he thus showed his interest was for Strict, or Close Communion, Baptists; and though restrictions placed upon the assembling of Christians at the Lord's table were never favoured at the Tabernacle, the pastor was glad at seeing this new building provided on account of the sound theological curriculum prescribed.

About this time he preached for his friend, Mr. Archibald Brown, at the new East London Tabernacle; but he was already showing those signs of feebleness which indicated need of rest. On Sunday morning, October 20, he sounded a cheerful note, founding his sermon on the opening verse of Psalm ciii., and on the following day he set out for the South of Europe. In the early part of November he was again in Rome. Not only were several towns in the South of France visited; Venice, Florence, Rome, and Naples were also included in the tour. Pompeii was also explored and described. This was regarded as the Scriptural rest of forty days; but on his return to England an accession of rheumatism prevented his taking the services at the Tabernacle on the first Sunday in December. He preached on December 8, but the exposure in the inclement weather brought on another attack of gout. On Sunday, the 15th, he was again unable to preach; but he was in his place on Thursday evening, December 19, after which the more acute symptoms disappeared.

"The Interpreter" now began to appear in monthly parts, this work consisting of a selection of Scripture for use at family worship, with short running comments. Though its sale has been large, I believe its success did not come up to the expectations entertained What would have ensured greater popularity would have been the addition of prayers; but these Spurgeon refused to supply. The preacher of the Tabernacle continued to be of commanding interest to all classes; and on Sunday morning, December 8, a representative of The Church Times was among the congregation. The singing was reported to be remarkably good; while the exposition of Scripture was so well done that it was thought the practice might be borrowed with advantage by the Church of England. Psalm xxv. was expounded, and some things were said about commercial morality which seemed to suit the congregation, only it was thought that the petty practices of low shopkeepers were too exclusively exposed, as well as the procedure of a cheating banker who had been accustomed to open his bank with prayer. Spurgeon, the people's preacher, was then thus depicted:—

"There can be no doubt that he is a man of great powers as a preacher. When we consider that he has been able to keep up such a congregation as that which I witnessed on Sunday, after nineteen years' preaching, and with so many rivals as there are in London, it would be absurd to pooh-pooh him as some have been inclined to do. His style of oratory is very quiet; there is little action and no very great variety in his intonation. Occasionally, no doubt, he sins against good taste, but I believe he has quite given up the coarseness of remark which characterised his sermons in the earlier portion of his career. Those of his discourses which I have examined are well arranged, and seem to have been carefully prepared beforehand. He always preaches from brief notes, which keep him from wandering far from his point or at least enable him to get upon the main line again in case he has shunted. As to details, I conceive that his strength chiefly lies in the use of well-poised antitheses, pithy aphorisms, happy illustrations, and ready wit. His sermons, I take it, are rarely, if ever, dull. He has also an excellent voice, and he knows perfectly well how to use it. Speakers often forget that to make their words come out with effect they must throw their shoulders back and open their mouths. Further, there is an air of most perfect self-possession about Mr. Spurgeon which 'takes' with a good many people, and when all these qualifications are held in combination I am not surprised at his popularity. He has, withal, acquired a name, and he evidently takes infinite pains not to lose it; and what with, lectures, classes, prayer-meetings, and the like, he manages to keep up a lively interest in the minds of his followers." On the last day of the year a bazaar was held on account of the Stockwell Orphanage. There were nearly twenty stalls; and in addition to the attraction of the bazaar a large number of people assembled in the Tabernacle lecture-room in hope of seeing the President after his illness. He came early, and was soon surrounded by crowds of friends; but he was still so weak as at times to need a chair.

It was at this bazaar that an uncommon kind of incident occurred:—

"Some very fine Spanish fowls had been presented—a very unusual gift, by the way, to a bazaar—and for a long time they preserved a decorous silence befitting well-conducted members of the feathered tribe. At length Mr. Spurgeon began to speak. For a time the birds behaved themselves; and while he was alluding to the inconveniences which were experienced at the Orphanage in consequence of want of room, not a sound was heard. But directly he began to express his thanks to the friends who had worked so hard to get up the bazaar, one of the fowls could not contain itself, and set up a jubilant crow, which brought forth a hearty laugh from the visitors. Not content with one crow, it gave vent, at intervals during the speech, to several more, and they came in so appropriate that Mr. Spurgeon expressed a wish to know who had given the bird so excellent a training." The Watch-night service at the Tabernacle also drew together a full congregation, although the pastor was not able to be present. During the same week interesting services in connection with Mr. Hugh Stowell Brown's twenty-five years' pastorate in Liverpool took place; and, had health permitted, Spurgeon would perhaps have attended instead of merely sending a letter of congratulation.

Chapter 88: At Work Again

Chapter 88.

At Work Again

Recovery of Health—Account of the Continental Tour—Spurgeon dines with the Baptist Fundees—The Ninth Conference—An Offer from America—A Philanthropist's Wedding.

At the opening of the year 1873 Mr. Spurgeon sufficiently recovered his health to take the pulpit services at the Tabernacle. Meanwhile the loss of old friends by death continued; for within a short period Dr. Haycroft, Dr. Guthrie, and the Hon. Baptist Noel passed away; and later in the year these were followed by the able theologian, John Howard Hinton, who for many years held the pastorate at Devonshire Square Chapel. On a very cold night—Tuesday, January 28—a large congregation assembled at the Tabernacle to have some account of the Continental tour. The pastor assured his audience that to him lecturing was the severest of all toil. He never looked forward to it without pain, never began it without hesitation, and never finished it without thinking he was a fool to attempt it, and should be a greater fool to attempt it again. The tour had been made in wet weather; and "six weeks of pain and anguish" at Cannes had caused him to forget many things which had been stored up in his mind for future use; and beyond that, he had found that his memory failed him in a way it had never done before. He again confessed that he took very little interest in the Continental picture-galleries. He had seen the Virgin Mary depicted so many times that he did not know what she was like; but he had been greatly struck by a picture of Napoleon I. in hell, the object of the artist being to set forth the detestable character of war. The success of the evangelistic efforts of the Waldenses and the Wesleyans, the singing of English hymns in the Colosseum, where also he preached—these things were of more interest to him than pictures and statuary. An account of Pompeii was given, the whole being illustrated with dissolving views.

It was at the beginning of this year that Mr. Charlesworth, the master of the Stockwell Orphanage, was baptised. When he was appointed to his responsible position Mr. Charlesworth was an Independent, and it is a striking proof of Spurgeon's catholicity that he should have engaged the services of one Pædobaptist for the College, of another for the Orphanage. "The circumstance shows the breadth of his nature," remarked the new organ of the Baptist denomination, which had just commenced its career. "No one would ever be likely to suspect him of holding his principles lightly, and the explanation is obviously found, therefore, in the fact that he sought out the men best adapted for the posts to be filled, and imposed in the selection the one all-important test."

Early in March I attended the annual gathering, at the Guildhall Tavern, of the Baptist Fundees, which is strictly confined to members. As a social meeting this is usually a pleasant occasion; for a number of leading ministers, as well as messengers from their churches, are always at the table. Those who were present will remember how during the hour before dinner all were conversing tête-à-tête in different parts of the room, when a hum of satisfaction seemed to run round, caused

by the unexpected appearance of Mr. Spurgeon. He looked somewhat pale and worn, but was otherwise in good spirits, and at once consented to take the chair when requested to do so. According to custom from time immemorial, the chairman at this dinner has to propose the health of the reigning sovereign, and this the great preacher did very gracefully, explaining that the regard of Nonconformists for the Queen was that of real appreciation. He then went on to remind the more elderly of the Fundees how differently the throne was filled in the bygone days some of them were able to remember. To the chairman the most pleasing fact was, however, that £2,766 had been distributed during 1872, and he did not like any balance to be lying at the bank while poor ministers were in need. On the afternoon of March 12 he preached at the opening of the present Dr. James Spurgeon's chapel at Croydon. Though difficult, the pioneer work had been abundantly successful. At the outset "the ground was occupied by clergymen of the most pronounced type of High Churchism. Not one of them unites with Dissenters in City Mission work, or even in the Bible Society. They had monopolised nearly the entire educational field, and their School Board formed a liturgy to be used in the schools." The ninth conference of the Pastors' College opened on the last day of March; and in reference to the week's meetings The Baptist said: "The men as a body have not lost an iota of their early enthusiasm. They love their alma mater, they love their work, they love their President, and still believe in preaching, the morphic influence of books having manifestly exerted little influence over them." The Monday evening meeting took place at Vernon Chapel, Pentonville; and, as the College building was not yet reared, the Tuesday morning meeting was at Walworth Road Chapel. Though the President was thought to be looking well, he was not in the best of spirits. The subject of the address from the chair was "Encouragements in Pastoral Work." A contrast was drawn between the romance of early days and the more prosaic earnestness of the present. What a difference there was between then and now. A good deal of the romance had gone. Then they were to be shepherds, who would sit and pipe, and the sheep would answer readily to the call; but now the crook had to be used, perhaps more often than the pipe. The romance had partly gone under the sense of reality. Though the will was as strong, was the will the same? The late Dr. Duncan once said that when he first read Berkeley's book, he was nearly carried away by it, and he was soon after effectually cured of Berkeleyism by knocking his nose against a bed-post. The daydream had vanished, and youthful conceit had gone with it. Then they had heard of pastors who had failed, but it was not likely that they would. If coaches were overturned or horses ran away it must be the fault of the driver; but they? Yet now they knew that they were much the same as other people. Human nature remained the same, members were the same, deacons were the same, and pastors were the same too. Then as to sermonising. It was so easy to prepare sermons then, as well it might be when all the texts were in the Bible, and they had only used some half-dozen. Besides, there were the books they had read—the sermons of others; they could not borrow now as when the memory was young and good!

Some other contrasts were drawn, and it was shown that preaching was about as hard as any work beneath the sun, comparable even to the Egyptian brick-making when straw was withheld, unless the Spirit of God lent His aid. It was added that the work might grow monotonous:—"The road of a minister's life is sometimes as hard and monotonous as a typical road in Holland, where you may walk the first mile and see three hundred and fifty-two poplar trees, exactly similar and cheerless-looking, all in a row; and walk the second and find three hundred and fifty-three of precisely the same sort; and the third mile to find three hundred and fifty-four, the road seemingly going on as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. So in the conscientious pastor's life.

Monday has its row of poplar trees; Tuesday has its row; Wednesday has its row; the same people to be seen, the same plaints to be patiently listened to, the same calls to be made, the same routine to be passed through; and one's spirits will grow heavy and one's heart faint unless one specially feel that God is near—ever near—and that the work is His." As regarded encouragements, notwithstanding Deacon Grumper, these were to be found in the world, in the Word, and in the course of Providence.

Mr. Spurgeon's Library At Westwood

Mr. Duncan presided at the supper on the Wednesday evening, when the usual collection was made. The usual statement regarding the College and its work was also given; while an answer was also given to the question, "How do you judge of the men?" "As best I can," replied Mr. Spurgeon. In some cases six months were allowed to pass before the application for admission was answered, and that tried the men's mettle. Then each man must have preached for two years, and that cut off a large number. Ministers' recommendations, as a rule, were of little use; for too often they recommended a man into the College just as they would do into the police service, merely to do a kindness. It was well to look well at a man; for while it might not always do to judge by appearances, there were appearances about which there was no doubt. Thus one young fellow came who, according to his own account, had read everything; and when told that he knew too much for such a college and would not be wanted, he replied, "If you pass me by you will miss one of the finest opportunities you ever had." Not long afterwards this candidate was in the dock of one of the police-courts. There was another who came forward and said, "Oh, sir, I believe I'm called to the Lord's work." "How so?" "Well, I was put to the grocery; but I could not stand that—the hours were too long. I then became a clerk, and afterwards travelled on commission; but as this did not answer, my friends put me into business." "Well, and what then?" "Why, the business did not answer, and so you see, sir, the Lord has hedged my way up to the work of the ministry." Of course he was not accepted.

It was at this time that Spurgeon had an offer to be taken through the United States on a lecturing tour, and it was of a more extraordinary kind than had ever before been made to any eminent man. Here is his own statement as given at the Metropolitan Tabernacle:—

"I will just tell you one little thing which happened to me this afternoon. I had a letter from a gentleman well known in America, giving me this offer—twenty-five thousand dollars for twenty-five lectures—that is, two hundred pounds for each lecture. On these terms the twenty-five nights would give me five thousand pounds, and in a hundred nights I should have twenty thousand pounds. Besides this, I should he allowed to lecture for as many nights as I chose, so that I might in the course of a year be worth forty thousand pounds, and no doubt the persons who undertake this would earn ten times the amount. I have nothing to do but to leave you for a year and come home with twenty thousand or forty thousand pounds, while if I stay here I shall have nothing like that. What do you suppose was my answer to this offer? I wrote, 'If you were to multiply that offer by one hundred times and again a hundred times, I should feel it as easy to decline as I do now, when I say I cannot cross the ocean to lecture upon any subject whatever. I am a minister of the Gospel and never lectured for money, and do not intend to do so now; and if my people cannot support me, it is a pity.' Some people would say, 'Why not go over to America and get the money to build the College?' I shall not do so, because I would not do one thing to

degrade myself nor disgrace you. I shall not make any appeal to another country to do what you can and ought to do. There are two brothers here to-night who have received offers from America. Each man can lecture as well as preach, and there is no harm in their having five hundred pounds and a month's holiday. If I were in their position I should do the same thing, but as I am I cannot leave you. I cannot leave the College nor the Orphanage, not if my house were filled with silver and gold from top to bottom.... If I went to America... I should go, not to preach the Gospel, but to lecture, and I cannot do that, not for the National Debt." By this decision and self-sacrifice he could not do otherwise than win for himself golden opinions, and this seems to have been the case especially in America. The English preacher's old friend, The Watchman and Reflector, expressed the wish that all ministers in the United States would take a similar view of the sanctity of their calling; but so far was that from being the case that there were popular ministers who seemed to misread the divine commission as "Go and lecture all nations." Hence what was intended to be a purely sacred calling was, with many, a calling of a semi-sacred character. It was even reported that a popular Boston preacher had earned twenty-five thousand dollars in a single season by lecturing; but it was not surprising to find such a man asking why greater numbers did not attend the preaching of the Gospel. "The tendency has been very strong of late in this direction among preachers," it was added. "It is one of the many evil influences that have come from the eminent and commanding ministry of the Plymouth pulpit. Would that the equally eminent and far more salutary power of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London might be felt, moulding our rising ministry into the opposite type."

During the spring meetings of the denomination in April, 1873, the great missionary sermon by Spurgeon at Westbourne Grove Chapel on the last evening of the month was a chief attraction. As was usual on such occasions, the crowd mustered in strong force, and large numbers were unable to obtain admission. The portion of Scripture read—St. Mat 5:1-20—was expounded in the preacher's best style, while the discourse which followed was so far a missionary discourse that it showed missionary service to be a necessary element of church life. "With reference both to the morning and the evening sermons, we have heard but one expression of satisfaction and delight," it was remarked; "and we doubt not that by their means the missionary spirit has been greatly strengthened, and that the brethren present will henceforth work in this good cause more heartily and lovingly than ever."

One extract from this memorable sermon may be given. In showing that it was not necessary to be a preacher in order to exercise Christian influence he said:—

"Do not let us imagine that to salt the world it is necessary that we should preach. It is necessary that those of us who can should, but to think that those of you who cannot preach are therefore prevented from blessing mankind would be a grave error. Far from it. I believe the very best of preaching is done at home. Conversions are often wrought by the example of the converted; and the best ministry, mark you, would fail if it were not backed up by the godly example of the church. I am certain that the most eloquent minister, even with the Spirit of God upon him, could hardly expect to see conversions if his hearers could say, 'Tour church belies your doctrine; the practical result of your teaching is sin and unholiness; you are not successful in producing good works in Christians, and therefore your testimony is not to be received.' No; the example of the Christian is necessary to the ministry, and apart from the ministry it is in itself a potent ministry for good. Who shall tell the effect which godly men have in the city or the village where they dwell? The tone of

morality has been raised in this country—history can be my witness—by the presence of one earnest church. What Whitefield and Wesley did by the revival of their period for common morality returns can tell you, and they are obliged to bear witness. A languid church, and you very soon have low morals; but the presence of Christianity in a country prevents the gross transgressions which accompany idolatry. Yes; and every Christian man lifts up the tone of his household; if others are not Christians, yet they cannot go to the same excess of riot in the presence of the Christian." This discourse, given in the preacher's best manner, and when he was apparently in his happiest mood, represented one of those great occasions when a profound and lasting impression was produced. Magnificent as it was, such a sermon was a complete contrast to the master efforts of great preachers of preceding years. As has been already shown, those venerable leaders struck the best judges as men who laboured to less profit when they had to make what was supposed to be their greatest effort. They preached to produce effect; Spurgeon's one aim was to say something which would tend more than anything else to advance the cause. Carried away, as it were, with his enthusiasm, he seemed to speak with the fervency and eloquence of one inspired. The tact and readiness with which he adapted himself to surrounding circumstances would also be characteristic. He would be happier on a great missionary occasion, when he was surrounded by a crowd of those who could influence others; but when the theme was less congenial, and when less enthusiasm was in the air, the occasion might be none the less striking and educational.

Thus, in preaching at the opening of a chapel about this time, he enlarged on the text, "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin;" and after drawing an analogy between the old Dispensation sacrifices and that of Christ, he went on to show that the punish-merit of sin was simple justice. Indeed, that truth was so patent, that men who were the greatest sinners were often the greatest cowards when the time of trouble came, and the most hardened blasphemer and infidel was the most full of apprehension if he had but a slight pain. On Tuesday, June 17, there took place at the Metropolitan Tabernacle a marriage ceremony which was generally regarded as being one of the most singular scenes which had ever taken place in the great building. The bridegroom was a well-known philanthropist, and the congregation consisted of some three thousand persons, for the chief part poor people who had been sent from Stepney, a choir of working lads, all decorated with rosettes, and a ragged-school boys' band, which occupied the outer steps of the building. The time inside the building was whiled away by the singing of a selection of pieces, and the wedding party arrived some minutes before eleven o'clock. They occupied seats on the lower platform, Lord Radstock being present to conduct the religious part of the service. "Still the bride came not," says a contemporary chronicler, "though half-past eleven had struck and quarter to twelve had been sounded, everybody fearing, meanwhile, that the delay would render the marriage impossible—for that day at least." The young lady appeared at last, however, and the registrar, "with commendable celerity," got through his part of the contract, the religious part of the service being continued for another hour. A large number of the poor people then adjourned to Clapham Common, where, beneath a large tent, a feast in honour of the marriage was provided for them. At midsummer of this year a visit was paid to Tunbridge and Tunbridge Wells, sermons being given on behalf of a new chapel. About the same time Mr. W. H. Brearley, of Detroit, made one more endeavour to induce Spurgeon to visit America to undertake a lecturing tour, and this was the answer:—

"Dear Sir,—I must decline your courteous offer, not because I doubt your good faith, or desire higher terms, but simply because I do nothing in the lecturing way for money. I am a preacher of the Gospel, and believe that the people among whom I minister ought to support me, and then have a right to my time; consequently I never add to my income by lecturing. I have an offer of twenty-five thousand dollars for twenty-five lectures in your country, and for more on similar terms; but I cannot accept it, nor could I if the offer were multiplied a hundred times. My income is not such that I can despise money; my people could not remunerate me in four years at the rate offered for twenty-five nights; but my work engrosses me and I cannot leave it, especially to enrich myself. Moreover, I am no lecturer, and do not want to be. I honour those who can do it well, but I cannot, and am quite content not to do it; for I have enough of other work, and work more directly bearing on my life's aim.—With many thanks, yours very truly, "C. H. Spurgeon."

Chapter 89: Some Characteristics—A Portrait Draw From Life

Chapter 89.

Some Characteristics.—A Portrait Drawn From Life A Character only understood by a Personal Friend—Standing alone—Spurgeon's Liberality—No mere Worldly Ambition—No Desire to be a fine Preacher—His Enthusiasm—The Students—William Olney's Opinion—Was he an Egotist?—Professor Matthews's View—A Diligent Reader of Scripture—Naturalness—"Unreasonable Men"—A Reviewer's Estimate—The Athenæum's Estimate—Mr. Medhurst's Reminiscences—The World on Spurgeon at Home—Dr. H. R. Reynolds's Reminiscences.

Those who were most intimately acquainted with Mr. Spurgeon are aware that he had characteristics which were peculiar to himself. Taken altogether, as I understood him, he differed from other people in general things quite as greatly as he did in those superlative gifts of speaking which made him the commanding figure he was among the greatest men of the nineteenth century. I doubt whether any worthy estimate of Spurgeon could be written by anyone who was not personally acquainted with him, and even then one must have been a very acute observer to understand such a man sufficiently to form a correct or worthy estimate of his character and influence. Many who thought that they understood him did not; and some, with the best of intentions, may have given wrong impressions to the world. A man who was too much of a pessimist would never have understood the preacher, and the same remark would apply to one who was a mere gushing optimist. In point of fact, to such as did not thoroughly know him, Spurgeon would at one time appear to be an optimist and at another time a pessimist, while he was really neither the one nor the other. The mental barometer showed great variations; but Spurgeon was well able to act on the advice he would occasionally give to others—not to trust too much in variable personal feelings, which under some conditions imparted too roseate a tinge to the outlook, or at other times caused the man to look at things through jaundiced eyes. Without wishing it to be taken for granted that every view here advanced is the right one, I will make an endeavour to depict the great preacher of the Metropolitan Tabernacle as he appeared to me. Let it be called a portrait drawn from life.

Speaking after the manner of men, Spurgeon was one for whom a particular life-work was appointed; and recognising the fact, he set himself to its worthy accomplishment with a devotion which has never been surpassed. To say that he was entirely unselfish and far removed from anything like self-seeking is to express only half the truth; he was an example of open-handed generosity, and even of self-sacrifice for the sake of the service to which he had set his hand, such as it would not be easy to parallel. In this respect he knew nothing of that worldly prudence which is supposed to be a necessary trait in the characters of those who would make for themselves a sphere and a reputation. In giving away his money in his early days he seems to have made no calculations to keep himself in check, and he was hardly kept in check by those who made calculations for him. In addition to the large proportion of his income which he devoted to the

maintenance of the College, his benevolence found ways of expressing itself more numerous than friends ever suspected. It would almost be true to say that he found more pleasure in giving his money away than ordinary people do in spending it. At all events, his generosity found even eccentric ways of expressing itself, so that in numbers of instances the recipients of bounty were unaware of the name of their benefactor. To make up a complete record of what was done under this head would be to insert testimonies from widows, pastors, and students in different parts of the country—persons whose poverty established their claim to consideration. Whether the benefactor himself ever kept a record of what was dispensed in the way indicated cannot be stated; but we may suspect that it was a case of one hand not knowing what was done by the other.

Hence we have in common fairness to infer that to this man the world, as such, had no attraction; in other words, he had no ambition in the conventional sense. If he ever harboured any ambition in this direction like other youths, the daydream was once and for ever dispelled by the Voice which seemed to speak from the heavens on Midsummer Common, and which, however it may he explained, undoubtedly gave a new turn to young Spurgeon's life. That was an incident which the preacher himself would not have undertaken to explain; and it was one of many things which were too sacred for common conversation or for the public assembly. Some will probably be tempted to object that Spurgeon's sanguine temperament made him over-credulous, and that credulity led him to the borderland of superstition. In point of fact, however, he was neither credulous nor superstitious; but, at the same time, he believed with the world's great poet, as he would have called Shakespeare, that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy. It is not to be taken for granted that the Voice was understood to be a literal speaking from the clouds; but, nevertheless, a lasting impression was made on the mind, and it was effected by supernatural means. The adventure seems to remind us of what befell the Apostle Paul on his way to Damascus; and just as Paul said to Agrippa, so Spurgeon might in a sense have said to the world: "I was not disobedient to the heavenly Vision." At all events, from that moment the world as a sphere for securing worldly aggrandisement and distinction was to be nothing. "Seekest thou great things for thyself, seek them not!" Going to college might be one of those things; he would therefore depend upon God alone for the Gospel preacher's equipment. Perfecting his oratorical gifts in order to shine as one of the fine preachers of the age might also be one of the "great things" to be avoided; therefore imagination and rhetoric must ever be kept in subjection. If worldly riches represented another of the "great things," money was not to be hoarded; all that was not needed for living in a plain sort of way must be used in the common cause—the service in the Lord's vineyard, to which the preacher had set his hand. With Spurgeon it was emphatically, "This one thing I do," and the only reward which was really dear to him was the approval of God.

Thus the one thing for which the man lived was his work; and all his surroundings had to be made subservient to that. Ways and means, as a personal matter, to which more ordinary people are commonly compelled to give too much of their attention, never troubled him. Nor can it be said that he troubled himself about money matters generally; and in the later years of life, when more ample supplies were wanted for the growing institutions, he probably showed less anxiety concerning the incomings than was the case in earlier years. He was his own chancellor of the exchequer; and whether the balance at the bank was large or small, he never lost faith in God. "The Lord will provide"—the Scripture motto of the Stockwell Orphanage—was no mere pretty watchword with

him; it was a solemn belief, of which no seeming ebb in the tide of prosperity could cause him to let go his hold.

Money in itself had no temptation for him, therefore; gold was only valued so far as it could be made to serve the Lord's cause. In the course of his career Spurgeon proved this again and again. When substantial testimonials were presented to him the whole was given to philanthropic objects, as a matter of course; and when the American agents offered a thousand dollars for each lecture of a series that they proposed should be given in the United States, there was nothing captivating in the offer merely on account of its excessive liberality. The only question to be decided was, "Shall I do most good by going to America or by staying at home?" He never went to the New World; but had it been otherwise the money gain would merely have been an additional contribution to the Tabernacle institutions. Practising what he preached in regard to the non-hoarding of money, we may excuse his harbouring somewhat hard opinions of those who acted differently while professing to be religious teachers. I once heard him say of a Nonconformist minister who died worth nearly one hundred thousand pounds, "He must have needed a good tug to get him into heaven."

Spurgeon would not have struck a close observer as being what is called a domesticated man. He loved his home; he was happy in it, while he made the surroundings happy for others; but a man who almost grudged the time necessary for meals as interruptions to his work, and who was often away on preaching excursions, could hardly be regarded as a homely man. The parlour or the fireside was not so much his domain as the study in which his working-hours were passed. He was hospitable by nature, and seemed to delight in entertaining friends; but he was never the kind of man you would expect to find giving dinners or shining to advantage in the drawing-room. In later years what would have been the drawing-room to an ordinary family became transformed into a study—a receptacle for receiving the rich overflow of books from the study. In point of enthusiasm in preaching the Gospel he rivalled Whitefield himself. This was the one thing which seemed to set him all aglow; and in lecturing his students his manner was such that men who were themselves in earnest seemed naturally to catch their leader's fervour. They were accused of imitating the great preacher, and of thus becoming mere little Spurgeons; but if they copied him at all, the best men did so quite unconsciously. The weaker men, who were painfully fluent, were probably the worst offenders—the stronger had before them an exemplar who well repaid them for their most careful attention. They were well aware, as a candid friend once told them, that Mr. Spurgeon's clothes would prove much too large for them; but in some respects it seemed that he could be imitated with advantage. The President, on the other hand, was only ambitious to train a battalion which should extend his influence where he himself could not go. While he hoped the best of them, the best he could do for them or the best he could give them was never considered too costly. Though he did not expect more than about twelve per cent. of the number to become good preachers, he may have looked to the College to provide a successor to himself. There was thus enthusiasm on both sides; and both sides found it to be contagious. There was a great leader to follow; to lead forth against the common foe there was a company whose devotion and self-denial were Puritan-like in quality.

It has been already shown that Spurgeon stood alone, as it were; and he seems to have done so in more than one sense. The late William Olney—one of the most valued helpers, as well as one of the most devoted of friends—believed that his pastor had neither confidant nor confidante after

the manner of many other men. This perhaps helps to explain many things which might otherwise be incomprehensible. He unburdened his heart to God; but he was chary of saying very much to mortal friends about the things which often oppressed him and sent his spirits down to zero. Perhaps it would have been better if there had been free intercourse with those who could have shown sympathy, while giving words of comfort. He seemed, however, as though he preferred to be lifted up from the depths by the Divine Spirit Himself, although he was occasionally comforted by having read to him a passage from his own works without being told who the author was until the reader got to the end. The mystery and burden of life appear at times to be too much for such minds to bear, and Spurgeon could not claim to be any exception to the general rule. If, as he would seem to have done, he realised that he was raised up to do a special work, the sense of responsibility may at times have been crushing. Nevertheless, that was a matter between him and his God alone; it was not anything to be talked about in common conversation. Oftentimes when depressed an outsider would not have suspected the fact, much less would this be the case with a congregation while listening to his voice in public.

Many would maintain that Spurgeon was an egotist; and so he was, but he was an egotist sui generis. He differed in his egotism from other people just as greatly as he differed from them in other things. As editor of The Sword and the Trowel he inserted numbers of letters referring to himself, and he allowed people to make gushing allusions to his preaching and writing, such as other editors would hardly have ventured to pass. If you understood Spurgeon, however, you would instinctively see that in this respect he was not to be judged by the same standard as others. Your ordinary egotist acts from a love of self-praise; those who best understood Spurgeon abstained from praising him, knowing that his thoughts were never for himself at all, but were for the Lord's cause. Hence all that was done, that was said, or that others were allowed to say, had but one object—the advancement of truth. The opinions of people weighed very lightly with him when conscience told him that he acted from disinterested motives. Even in his early days he accepted the homage of the crowd with a self-complacency which would have been becoming in a popular sovereign; but this was characteristic. He was quite aware that the eyes of the world were upon him; and he would maintain that it was well for Christians to bear this in mind. If they were the lights of the world, what were lights for but to be looked at? A city set on a hill could not be hid.

What did he look like to the world of fashion? In his Diary, "not very thickly strewn with notices of sermons," the clerk of the Privy Council, Charles Cavendish Fulke Greville, gives a note bringing out the characteristics of Spurgeon as he understood him, though it may be noticed that the man of fashion does not quote Scripture as though texts were familiar material with him. On February 8, 1857, he attended at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens, and heard a discourse founded on Psa 19:12 : "Cleanse thou me from secret faults." This is what he says:—

"February 8th.—I am just come from hearing the celebrated Mr. Spurgeon preach in the Music Hall of the Surrey Gardens. It was quite full; he told us from the pulpit that 9,000 people were present. The service was like the Presbyterian: Psalms, prayers, expounding a Psalm, and a sermon. He is certainly very remarkable, and undeniably a very fine character; not remarkable in person, in face rather resembling a smaller Macaulay, a very clear and powerful voice, which was heard through the whole hall; a manner natural, impassioned, and without affectation or extravagance; wonderful fluency and command of language, abounding in illustration, and very often of a very familiar kind, but without anything either ridiculous or irreverent. He gave me an impression of his earnestness

and his sincerity, speaking without book or notes, yet his discourse was evidently very carefully prepared. The text was 'Cleanse me from my secret sins,' and he divided it into heads, the misery, the folly, the danger (and a fourth which I have forgotten) of secret sins, on all of which he was very eloquent and impressive. He preached for about three-quarters of an hour, and, to judge of the handkerchiefs and the audible sobs, with great effect."

We are enabled to see some other characteristics of the preacher by looking at him through the eyes of competent observers who from time to time visited the Tabernacle. When they did not fall into their besetting sin of gushing exaggeration, American visitors frequently produced some very good things; and an article by Professor Matthews, of Chicago, published when Spurgeon had been in London nearly twenty years, contains some passages which may be quoted with advantage. After giving a description of the scene at the Tabernacle and an outline of the sermon, Professor Matthews says:—

"After service we had a pleasant interview with the preacher, whom we found lying on a sofa in a back room, quite exhausted by his effort. He had but just recovered from a severe sickness, this being his second sermon since he left his bed. It is well known that his exhausting labours and burning enthusiasm have begun to tell upon his physical constitution. The sword has proved too sharp even for the stout scabbard. Ten years ago preaching was almost as easy to him as singing to a bird. To electrify, convince, and persuade audiences was a labour of love. Now every Sunday's efforts cost him forty-eight hours' pain. During our interview a gentleman said to him that an American preacher who had heard the sermon observed at its close, 'That discourse was composed in this house.'; Did he say so?' exclaimed Mr. Spurgeon. 'That is remarkable. The text was given me by one of my deacons who died yesterday, and requested in his last moments that I would preach from it. At six this morning I sat down to think out the discourse. I spent an hour upon the text and could make nothing of it. I never could preach from other people's texts. I said this in my despair to my wife, who told me to try again. I tried again, with the same result. "Well," said Mrs. S., "go into the pulpit and the sermon will come to you." I followed the advice, and you know the result.' In this case Mr. Spurgeon must have spent more time than usual in preparation, for it is said that he commonly devotes but a half-hour to this purpose. Only the heads of the sermons are put on paper, all the rest is left to the pulpit....

"Yet if Mr. Spurgeon spends but little time in immediate preparation, he spends a vast deal of time in general preparation for the pulpit. No preacher has drunk deeper draughts from the old English divines, or saturated his mind more thoroughly with the spirit of God's Word. By these means he has become 'a Leyden jar, charged to plenum,' in Horace Mann's phrase, and the moment he comes in contact with his people gives forth the electric fire. In our conversation with him we observed that we would not call the sermon eloquent; it was something far better than eloquence. 'Oh, no,' was the reply; 'I have no pretension to that sort of thing. I love to hear eloquent men, you know, as well as anybody; but if I should attempt oratory I should be sure to fail.'... He once heard a man say, 'If you want to touch my purse, you must touch my heart;' to which he (Mr. S.) replied, 'I believe you, because there is where you keep your heart.'"

These are the jottings of a shrewd observer, and as such are a grateful contrast to the exaggerations, amounting in some cases to actual misrepresentations, which were given by some American writers as portraits of Spurgeon, or of his mode of life. Far more able than anything

which had come from American writers were some passages in "The Ingoldsby Letters," which appeared in 1863, when the preacher at the Metropolitan Tabernacle was still quite a young man. The author of these Letters, being a High Churchman, viewed Spurgeon from his own standpoint, and, as has been shown by the extracts already given in Chapter xlvii. of this work, he was struck almost more by what may be called the preacher's common-sense than by the mere brilliance of his genius. Thus he devoted much attention to the reading of Scripture, as well as to the exposition. And yet Spurgeon would have smiled at your simplicity if you had asked him where he acquired his correct elocution. He could not comprehend how a man of ordinary powers and a good voice needed to be instructed in such an art at all. In his case the gift evidently showed itself as a natural characteristic even when he was the Boy Preacher of the Fens, and even more notably from the outset of his London career. Did he not pride himself on his ability even to whisper in the Tabernacle so that those in the farthest corners could hear; while some when standing on the same platform roared and gesticulated until the congregation wondered what the oration was all about? "Gentlemen, be yourselves and not anybody else," was good advice for the students of the Pastors' College, and the President knew how to apply it to himself.

I am not aware that the fact of his being mighty in the Scriptures had anything to do with his being called the "Last of the Puritans;" but this was a characteristic of which particular notice had to be taken by anyone who wished to understand Spurgeon and the sphere he occupied. The habit of diligently reading the Bible, which he no doubt acquired when living under the care of his aunt and grandfather at Stambourne, was continued throughout his busy life. Even among great preachers a man has rarely been found who knew the Scriptures so thoroughly as Spurgeon; and as the Authorised Version of the Bible taught John Bunyan his forcible Saxon style, so did Spurgeon draw copiously from the same "well of English undefiled." In this sense he was an Anglo-Saxon; but to speak of him as being such physically would seem to be a little absurd. He seems rather to have done credit to his Low Countries ancestry by presenting to us a sturdy Dutch build. Physically he might be without angles; but we go wide of the mark if we infer that there were no angles of a moral kind, to be without which a man would hardly show any strength of character at all. In taking account of this great man's general characteristics we have to bear well in mind that he was, above all things, a lover of truth, that for the truth's sake he was prepared to make any sacrifices. At the same time, as an anonymous writer once pointed out, Spurgeon's fervent love of truth may have sometimes had a tendency to make him exaggerate certain forms of evil. Occasionally in his satire he was thought to show prejudice. "He is so intensely real," we also find it remarked, "that, being but human nature, what he does not favour he soon dislikes, and what he dislikes he is not long ere he hates, putting it down as an abomination, and abhorring the idea of justifying it, even that good may come." Then how hard he would hit in controversy; what ingenuity he would show in giving an outspoken reproof, or in offering advice! What, for example, was to be done with a College lecturer whose able utterances were in part counteracted by a trying temper? Spurgeon would be sure to say something to such a man by way of rebuke; but he would show art enough to do it in a way which would not give offence. Hence when the gentleman referred to once more showed himself, the President called out, "There is Mr. ------ again, who has one of the worst tempers in the world, but whose lectures are so good that if he kicked us round the room we should put up with it and hear him." There was, of course, an outburst of laughter, and the lecturer had for the time to confess that his temper was conquered. The naturalness of the preacher was always regarded as one of his leading characteristics; and he endeavoured to look at everything in

a common-sense manner. "He is eminently practical and matter-of-fact in his opinions, and evinces a willingness to exchange any nicely-balanced theory for the smallest sound experience, and to sacrifice a great deal of appearance for a trifle of that which belongs to the more substantial," remarked one writer, who added: "He is hardly the man to plant a tree for mere beauty's sake when a fruit-bearing one might well be placed; hence he would prefer ten righteous poor to twenty rich and merely intellectual persons in his congregations." He was ever fond of children, but was not supposed to be so successful in addressing them as some others of lesser powers. What gave such weight to his teaching was the obvious fact that all was supported by his own example. Thus when he denounced money-hoarding he did so as one for whom such a failing had no temptation. A brother Christian died worth a large fortune. "If, when I die, I am worth that amount, consider me as lost," said Spurgeon. "I should be ashamed to die with it in my possession." And his trust in God was unwavering and complete. "Who can possibly take your place when you are gone?" once asked one of those genial persons who "think all men mortal but themselves." Said Spurgeon, "I never trouble myself as to who shall marry my wife after I am dead." The way in which he could deal successfully with "unreasonable men" was apparent from time to time. Take these examples:—"In Park Street Chapel a troublesome member used some unbecoming epithets in regard to the pastor (Mr. Spurgeon) which were exceedingly distasteful to the rest of the members, who accordingly requested him to refrain, and ultimately left him and the minister alone, as the latter would not consent to his being put down. Mr. Spurgeon then quietly held up to the man's reason the result of his persistent insult, which altogether so overcame him that he then and there acknowledged his error and told his pastor 'he was a perfect gentleman.' The other members came back, and business was resumed in a cordial spirit." On another and more recent occasion a cantankerous man, who had a habit of complaining, was thus rebuked by a deacon:—"Look here, my friend, we have but one captain on board this ship, and that's Mr. Spurgeon; and if you don't agree with what he wishes done we shall see that you are cast overboard like Jonah was." Mr. Spurgeon smiled and added, "Yes, and I will ask God to send a respectable whale to swallow you up." The man who thus showed a disposition to be officious was a newly elected deacon; and it was thought necessary to check him in time. My friend, Mr. John De Kewer Williams, says, respecting Spurgeon, "Now we have to estimate our loss, and to be thankful to the Head of the Church for such a gift for forty years." In the course of his estimate, Mr. Williams asks:—

"What was it, then, that made him the greatest preacher of his age—incomparable—that gave him a breadth and depth of influence unparalleled? Had he been asked the secret of his success, he would certainly have said, 'By the grace of God I am what I am; 'and he might have said, 'I did fear God, and I never did fear any man.'

"But as God works by means, we may consider the circumstances which made him the power that he was. As a man he was not commanding, he was not at all imposing, he was not fascinating. He had none of the fine frenzy of the poet; and could not produce it in others. And he acquired no artistic, no dramatic, no sacerdotal graces. His elocution was perfect, but he was not eloquent. He had no taste for art, and knew little of science, except agricultural chemistry, which enabled him to tell the farmers, 'You may use your phosphates and superphosphates as you please, but you will never have a harvest without "The Dew."' Artistically he was nowhere as compared with Whitefield, or the great French preachers, or Cardinal Wiseman; and so he was never a

drawing-room preacher; and though the noble and the mighty went to hear him out of curiosity, none of them ever joined his flock. He has been called 'The People's Preacher.' When he was young they brought out a caricature of him and the most popular preacher of that day, and called the two Brimstone and Treacle, and most would have concluded that the other would be far more attractive. It was not at all so; and now the very name of the sweet preacher is forgotten, but the name of the stern preacher liveth evermore.

"So I conclude that nature had done little for him beyond a noble voice, not touching and not thrilling, but very telling, and a tenacious memory, and an uncommon quantity of common-sense.... Then how came this to pass? how came it that he did what no other preacher, lecturer, or entertainer ever did before—kept together a congregation of five thousand week after week, and year after year? Well, two centuries ago, when finished preachers were common, La Bruyère said, 'Until there appear a man who, with a style learned from the Holy Scriptures, shall explain to the people the Divine Word familiarly and with singleness of heart, the orators and declaimers will be followed.' Spurgeon was just that man—'mighty in the Scriptures;' and full of Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; everything about him was scriptural, and his one business was ever to explain the Word of God, and never to explain it away. 'The higher criticism,' imported from Germany, was his scorn; but he loved simplicity and godly sincerity. No great linguist, he knew full well his full and forcible mother tongue, and how to use it. A very English preacher, most at home in London. So his English speech went straight into the English heart; the feather that winged the arrow of the Gospel. This well fitted his mother-wit, which he was not careful to restrain, which appears to perfection in his volumes of proverbs which he wittily called 'The Salt-Cellars.'" An article appeared in The British and Foreign Evangelical Review for January, 1866, which in some respects well brings out the preacher's characteristics. While making the Puritans a particular study, he avoided their far-fetched similitudes and long-winded sentences. His unique popularity had to be accounted for by a combination of rare gifts—"the logical faculty," a fancy to bring together "all sorts of unexpected things" when wanted, a perfect memory, a voice "ringing like a church bell." It is said that "the whole structure of his sermons is conversational, but then it is conversation through a speaking trumpet. The speaker is on fire throughout, but it is not in occasional flashes of flame that the fire appears, but in the sustained white-heat of the furnace." Attention was also directed to the world-like tone of his addresses. "He has got into the way of talking for the Gospel exactly as the world talks against it." The preacher's division and arrangement of his sermons were also thought to be remarkable, resembling "the art of the skilful angler, which no rule can teach and no study can acquire. Indeed, in the craftiness with which he baits his hook at the commencement, and the deftness with which he drops his line as he advances, we discover 'a fisher of men' who knows how to 'catch them by guile.' Eminently textual in his mode of treatment, his text—it matters not what it may be—becomes, for the time being, the idol of his soul; he gazes at it admiringly."

Notwithstanding all his high qualities, however, Spurgeon was not perfect, and his "faults as a preacher" were detected. He was thought to be "lacking in the warmth of affection," so that he appealed "to every faculty of the mind, but seldom, if ever, to the heart. Neither in the tones of his voice nor in the strain of his address is there even an attempt at the tender or the pathetic." The charges of levity and egoism are also referred to:—

"His is a hardy religion. He succeeds, we doubt not, in healing many a broken heart, and binding up many a wounded spirit; but he is decidedly addicted (we do not use the image profanely) to the cold-water cure. It is needless to advert to the common charge of levity brought against him, often by those who give small evidence of their reverence for sacred things. While, in general, we deprecate the practice of indulging in sly jokes, humorous allusions, and smart witticisms as unbecoming the chair of verity, we have no sympathy with the squeamishness which would blackball Spurgeon merely because, from the very buoyancy of his spirits, he cannot repress an occasional sally of humour, even when speaking on the most solemn subjects. Such as he have a sort of licence to deal in these pyrotechnics, which few besides could manage with safety to themselves or to those around them. Another charge is less easily rebutted—that of egoism. There can be no doubt that Spurgeon is fond of introducing himself as an illustration. That he does so frequently as a mere figure of rhetoric we can well believe; but with so many thousands before him, to whom he is the centre of attraction, he is in great danger of indulging in this sort of personification to excess." As a divine, Spurgeon was not assigned a high place by the writer of the above; for it was not supposed that he had studied the doctrines of the Gospel systematically after the manner of a collegian. I can hardly accept such a dictum, however, and other things which the reviewer advances concerning want of scholarship rather tend to show that the pastor of the Tabernacle was not fully comprehended. It may be true that he often put forward the points of Calvinism more strongly than some thought it necessary to do while holding them quite as strongly; but was it strictly true to say, "Election and free-will, particular redemption and the universal offer, man's deadness and man's duty, salvation by faith, and working out our own salvation are preached upon one after the other with equal force—nay, sometimes are driven in pairs, without bit or bridle, through the same discourse?" Much of his success in England was supposed to be due to his keeping aloof from controversy. As a Baptist, Spurgeon did not strike the Presbyterian critic as a faultless exemplar, and his conduct in the Baptismal Regeneration controversy was regarded with strong disapproval. But after making all allowances for shortcomings, real or imaginary, all impartial critics had to concede that Spurgeon was a prince among men—a model of unselfishness and devotion to duty. In the monthly magazine owned by Mr. James Clarke the preacher was thus referred to:—

"As real a man as any living. 'There's an honest man in that pulpit,' may frankly be said whenever he stands up in any chapel in the nation. You are not asked to hear him that you may add further importance to his greatness, and help to blow the trumpet of his fame. The ring of that voice is the music of truth. Its words do not come up from the depths of a hollow heart. If he prays, you feel that he is praying in earnest, and with a desire for God's blessing. If he reads a hymn he does it in such a way, if he likes it, that you might think he had composed it for the occasion. When he reads the Bible it is with a reverent enjoyment that appears as fresh as though he had God's Word there before him for the first time. He means all he says to you; he does not deal in superfluities, nor cherish the practice of inflating his expressions to make them appear aerial and beautiful. The most ardent scoffers at Revelation never dare to suspect his earnestness and sincerity—they can only hold him to be mistaken. We could wish that he had a chance of having some half-dozen talks with the sceptics about those great facts which are fundamental to our religion. Few men would have more power over them than he. That keen eye of his would detect quickly the weak places in their evil system; and that manly 'fighting in the front' enables him to deal hard blows and telling ones upon falsehoods which will withstand any number of manoeuvres. He has had a wide realm,

and has sometimes risen to heights that are very giddy; but the good, real man is as simple and true to-day as he was in the earliest moments of his career." The magazine also bore this cordial testimony to the preacher's unselfishness:—

"Mr. Spurgeon has occupied a position of so much prominence that 'the fierce light which beats upon a throne' has fallen upon him and his ministry. If there had been any of the too common marks of human frailty they would have been detected years and years ago. Had his vanity been at all strongly marked, or his care for himself undoubted, the opinion would have been circulated that he was 'not much better than the rest.' But none have been able to impugn him on the score of selfishness. He has had opportunities of self-enrichment and aggrandisement such as no other man of his time in similar circumstances has had. He might have lived in affluence and luxury. His income, without a strain, might have been equal to a bishop's, and his children might be the prospective heirs to a fortune. It is true that, like a wise man, he has not lived in disregard of his creature wants and comforts; but he has not shown one particle of care for himself. He has not become a rich man through his own hard work. He has preached and lectured with incessant regularity during some of the years of his hardest toil, and could thereby have filled his own personal coffers with gold. But those earnings, as we may call them in view of his own exertions, have been devoted to the great works which have inspired his energy and kindled his zeal. His chapel has been built, his College kept at its work, his. Orphanage maintained by the offerings which in many instances might have been diverted to his own use. And so it has come to pass that with untarnished lustre his name is kept shining in the list of illustrious men whose names this nation delighteth to honour. He sought not himself, and the people have shown their sense of his absolute greatness by according him a fame which, in its way, is unparalleled in the history of this country." The leading literary journal also said concerning him:—

"It is clear that Mr. Spurgeon cannot only work upon the feeling of his audiences, but can get to the bottom of their purses. He can do more than open hearts and wring shillings from the brethren; he has found a sister voluntarily furnishing tens of thousands of pounds for really useful purposes; but before taking her money he ascertained that none of the heirs of her own household suffered unjustly by her gifts to him. Mr. Spurgeon has won thousands of hearers as well as of pounds. We can very well see that Mr. Spurgeon, having no other church rule but 'common sense,' which he undertakes to supply, is a sort of Pope in his own Tabernacle, and has not been unsuccessful in a material point of view. The secret of his spiritual success lies in the fact that he is thoroughly understood by the meanest capacity. He leaves riddles and inexplicable doctrines to minds that love to torture themselves over those terrible riddles. He deals continually with the duty of man towards God, and he has the art of making men not tremble at the idea of failing in duty, but feel joyously anxious to perform the duty without reserve. Fastidious 'orthodoxy' may cry, 'Fie!' but, to be honest, it must confess that this eccentric minister has been a 'Godsend' to thousands in Southwark and elsewhere."

Mr. Barry Wake, of Crouch Hill, sends me the following, which I am glad to give in this place:—

"I remember very vividly a circumstance which impressed me with his wonderful modesty, and that indicated how dead Mr. Spurgeon was to anything like self-adulation. I think it would be during the seventies when he visited the City and delivered two or three addresses to City men at the Cannon Street Hotel and the Friends' Meeting House in Bishopsgate Street. At the latter place Mr.

Spurgeon spoke at one p.m. As a matter of course, the large building was crowded, admission was by ticket, and I remember seeing Mr. John Bright amongst the vast concourse of City men who attended.

"Some few weeks after that remarkable gathering I was asked by Mr. Spurgeon to give a short address at the Monday evening prayer-meeting at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. At the close of the meeting, and just before his leaving the chair, Mr. Spurgeon whispered to me that he would like to have a few minutes' private talk with me in his vestry. I therefore followed him there shortly afterwards. Mr. Spurgeon opened the conversation by saying, 'Now, Mr. Wake, as to the City work you have just been speaking about, I don't want to go to the City again.' I scarcely knew what to reply, so I said, 'I am very sorry to hear you say that, Mr. Spurgeon, and very much surprised. Why,' I said, 'there is no minister of religion in England whose name would induce City men to devote an hour in the middle of the day to such a service as yours has been proved to do in the past and would do in the future, should you consent to renew your visits to the City.'

"Mr. Spurgeon replied: 'I know it as well as you do. But what am I to do with all my other work pressing upon me?—for the giving an address to men of the City of London takes so much out of me, I can't stand it. You will understand me when I tell you that I can't sleep the night before, and I can't sleep the night after.' And said the great preacher as we parted: 'I know I have promised a gentleman on the Stock Exchange to give one more address in the City, but I intend to put it off as long as ever I can.'"

Mr. T. W. Medhurst, previously referred to as the first student, also sends me some reminiscences which bring out in an interesting manner some of the preacher's characteristics:—

"On Saturday morning, May 30, 1857, I was standing talking with Mr. Spurgeon when suddenly he placed his hand on my shoulder and said, 'Be quiet a moment or two.' He remained in a thoughtful attitude for a minute or so, and then said, 'I have my text and sermon for to-morrow evening.' We were standing beneath a tree, in which some birds were singing. He pointed up to the tree and quoted the text, 'When thou nearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines' (2Sa 5:24). The sermon preached from this text is No. 147 in The New Park Street Pulpit. It has always seemed to me that this text points out what was ever the ruling principle in Mr. Spurgeon's marvellous career, and was also one feature of the secret of his success in whatever he undertook. He took no step without God. In all he did he first asked help of God, and then did it, and in the doing of it was blessed. He was wise because he trusted in the Lord with all his heart, and leaned not unto his own understanding. Concerning his every movement it was his wont to say, 'I will not go up until I have inquired of the Lord.'

"In 1856, during the time I was studying at Bexley Heath, Mr. Spurgeon came to preach at the old Baptist chapel. At the close of the service I walked with him behind two old women who were discussing the youthful preacher. We overheard one of the women say to the other, 'Well, I liked the young man very much, but I think I should have enjoyed the sermon more than I did if he had not so closely imitated Mr. Medhurst.' Ever after this incident Mr. Spurgeon enjoyed telling this anecdote at my expense.

"On another occasion I was with him in the vestry of Queen Street Baptist Chapel, Woolwich, where he had been preaching, when a conceited parson said to him in a supercilious tone, 'I think, sir, you should train your student, Mr. Medhurst, not to imitate you when he is preaching.' Mr. Spurgeon turned to me sharply and asked, 'Do you try to imitate me? 'For the moment I felt a little confused, and said, 'I do not try to do so, sir.' He at once responded, 'More flat you, for you could not imitate a better man.' At this the parson made himself scarce, when Mr. Spurgeon said to the other friends present, 'That is the way to answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.'

"I once wrote to him asking if he thought it was Scriptural to observe the Lord's Supper on any other than the Lord's Day. He replied:—

"'Dear Friend,—You amuse me with your question about the Supper. It certainly was not instituted on the Lord's Day, and if we are to raise such old legal niceties, by all means let us always imitate the Lord Himself, and never commune except on a Thursday.

"'You are too good and large-hearted a man to let such questions bother you. It reminds me of catching fleas.—Yours truly, "'C. H. Spurgeon.'

"Here is a characteristic letter I received from him on my consulting him respecting the first invitation I had to settle in Glasgow and there form a new Baptist church. I was then pastor of the Baptist church at Coleraine, Ireland:—

"'Clapham, October 10, 1861.

"'My Dear Mr. Medhurst,—I have not forgotten you and your request, but I thought it by far the best not to answer, for I must in this instance leave you wholly to your own judgment.

"'I always feel honoured when you consult me, but I hope I shall never lose your esteem by offering advice when I know that I am not qualified to give it. These few hints let me offer:—
"'Weigh well your men at Glasgow and know precisely what they intend doing.

"'Act towards Dr. Carson and the church at Coleraine in the most candid and transparent manner.

"'Be quite sure that there is one motive only—and that the Lord's glory—in any step you take.

"'Remember that a man's reputation suffers by frequent removals.

"'Ireland needs more than Scotland the pure Gospel of Christ.

"'Large cities involve competition, criticism, intense labour, and much wisdom.

"'Building of chapels by Baptists in Scotland is awful work.

"'If the Lord calls you to a work He will qualify you for it.

"'Would not the devil be glad to get you out of Ireland?

"'Is there a meeting-house holding 1,500 to be hired?

"'Will the church in Coleraine suffer by your removal?

"'I wish I could guide you, but I dare not lift a finger.

"'I will pray for you. With warmest love.—Yours very truly, "'C. H. Spurgeon.'

"This letter decided me not to accept the invitation. Subsequently, however, on receiving a call to the pastorate of North Frederick Street Baptist Church, Glasgow, I wrote to him again, and here is a truly Spurgeonic letter I received in answer:—

"'Clapham, Saturday evening, July 26, 1862.

"'My Dear Mr. Medhurst,—You know how cautious I must be about advising any removes, for I am sure to be charged with taking you away from Coleraine; therefore act this time on your own responsibility. I would lay it before the Lord, judge deliberately, and act decisively. I have a very strong impression that you will go to Glasgow. I will not venture to say more.

"'You will, I know, quite feel that my love for you is as deep and sincere as ever. I shall ever value my first-born above all the rest. Now I am going to give you a proof of my true love in a very plain remark. I notice that you have fallen into a very bad mannerism in speaking. Where did you catch it? You used to speak roughly, but it was always pleasant to listen to your voice; but several friends have mentioned, what I also noticed, a sort of ministerial tone, a genteel way of pulling the tails of some of the words and cutting the ears of others, till they look like little dogs fresh from the fancier's. Now you must not have a single flaw. You are so good and so manly that I cannot let you fall into these mannerisms. You will do good and be eminent, but this wheel in your carriage, when I tap it with my critical hammer, does not ring right. Just come back to Old John Bull's way of utterance, and be a Paddy no longer.

"'There, don't think this too severe; I only meant to knock a fly off.

"'If you go to Glasgow, the people there ought to treat you handsomely in point of salary. I would suggest, as a sort of set-off to your loss from Coleraine, that the Glasgow church make a handsome donation towards the Coleraine Chapel, if that projected building be erected. I think W------would cheerfully go to Coleraine, and might not be an unsuitable person.

"'Next, in reference to ------'s church, I must beg you, overlooking all shortcomings, to regard him as a brother labourer and his church as one of our fraternity. I hope ever to see all our churches perfectly one in heart. The time approaches for the formation of a distinct body or confederation, and to have two large interests in Glasgow will be noble indeed, if they agree in one.

"'We had such a meeting last night. The Lord is with the College. We only want faith, and that is growing. We will fill the nation with the Gospel, and then send our armies out the wide world over.

"'Big words, but written in faith in a great God.

"'God bless you and yours.—Yours ever lovingly, "'C. H. Spurgeon.'

"If I am not mistaken, the last appearance of Mr. Spurgeon as a preacher at the autumnal meetings of the Baptist Union was at Portsmouth and Southampton. I was acting as one of the secretaries in arranging for these meetings, and succeeded in persuading him to consent to preach. The following is the letter I received:—

"'Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood, "'July 2, 1881.

"'Dear Friend,—Tell the brethren that the will of the Lord must he done. I do not desire to preach, but as His beloved servants compel, I will do it at both places if health permit. I judge it to be unwise to put me thus forward, but the responsibility lies with you, and I yield to your judgments.

"'I am far from unwilling to preach, but you know that on these great occasions I would prefer to see others honoured. It was no want of love to the brethren, but a desire to see others preferred.

"'I hold you all bound to pray down help for me and a blessing on the assemblies at Portsmouth and Southampton.

"'I beseech the Lord to bless the Union meetings at your two towns beyond all that has ever been enjoyed before.—Yours heartily, "'C. H. Spurgeon.'

"'P.S.—If I ought to have sent this letter to someone else, please forward it. I mean no slight to anyone.'

"From a number of letters in my possession I have copied the above, as they are of general interest. I send them for insertion in the forthcoming volume as my personal tribute to the beloved memory of my father in Christ, my beloved tutor, pastor, president, and lifelong friend, to whom, under God, I owe all I am and all I ever shall be as a minister of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If I were to attempt to give my opinion of the dearest friend I ever had on earth, it would be considered by many a fulsome panegyric, so I forbear, only adding: 'He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord' (Acts 11:24)."

It may be added that Mr. Medhurst at regular periods made collections for the Orphanage, and these had reached a total of £1,000 at the time of the pastor's death. I give two letters—samples of many others—which were sent as acknowledgments of such gifts.

"Westwood, Dec. 1, 1883.

"Dear Friend,—A thousand thanks. I have been ill and low all this week; your words cheer me. Oh! for a thousand such as you are!

"How many are falling from the truth! The disease is in the air. By this shall we know the elect of God. Yet it makes me very sad to see so many wander.

"Pray for me. God bless you!—Yours heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon"

"Grand Hotel, Menton, Dec. 12, 1883.

"Dear Friend,—You are at the head of a grand people, and you are a grand fellow yourself. God bless you!

"Please let me say to your collectors and helpers that they are my partners in the blessed work of caring for orphans, and I believe they will share largely with me in the reward which grace will measure out to those who care for the Lord's little ones. Think of £100 for the Orphanage! It is a glorious amount. It astounds me, and endears to me all the dear people at Lake Road. God bless them in His own divine fashion, exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think.

"I am filled with joy, and my rest is even more restful.—Yours lovingly and gratefully, "C. H. Spurgeon." The question has been raised whether Spurgeon was constitutionally fitted for debate, and whether he was competent to hold his own in argument. Those who answer this question in the negative are probably right. To say, as one does, that "he was constitutionally pacific, and would sometimes prefer to sheathe the sword rather than return the blow," is to misapprehend the character of the man altogether. From the first days in London it was not so much returning the blow as aiming the first blow at what was believed to be error, without stopping to take account of possible consequences. As early as 1855 Paxton Hood compared the young preacher to Peter, adding, "He cannot doubt and suffer like Thomas, nor flame like Paul, nor love like John." He was too sure of his own opinions being right to be a good debater of the conventional pattern; and he could at times say strong things, which irritated, rather than convinced, honest opponents. This would be apparent to friends who in all respects agreed with him in doctrine. From his first coming to London there was a strong tendency to initiate an attack on those who differed from him in certain points; and, regarding this as a failing, many who were sincere friends uttered what they meant to be a timely caution. Spurgeon was at his strongest when, in his matchless way, he simply proclaimed the glorious truths of the Gospel without making it his business to chastise those who differed from him. In regard to the controversy which beshrouded the preacher's last years the Rev. Charles Williams, of Accrington, is of opinion that it was the most regrettable incident in Spurgeon's life. He proceeds:—

"Mr. Spurgeon was seen to disadvantage in it. The great preacher was not fitted for such controversies, and he knew it. So far back as 1881 Mr. Spurgeon, in writing to him, said, 'A little anger costs me so much and is so apt to blaze into a battle royal that it is a calamity to me to be aroused, and an event memorably mournful. "Lord, lead me not into temptation," means to me, "bring me not into a committee."' When the controversy began to wax warm, Mr. Spurgeon wrote to him, 'I thought this business would make me ill; it so worries me. I cannot live in pretended union or perpetual conflict.' Mr. Spurgeon was not a fighting man. He had higher and better and nobler work to do than to contend with men about doctrinal opinion. His loving nature shrank from conflict. They might look into Mr. Spurgeon's heart as Mr. Spurgeon pathetically explains, 'How to balance charity with truth and brotherhood with honesty in these days is an intricate question.' Mr. Williams said he wished Mr. Spurgeon had taken counsel of his heart, but a sense of duty, faithfulness to self, and supposed loyalty to Christ constrained Mr. Spurgeon to utter his protest. The controversy was not to Mr. Spurgeon's taste. Mr. Spurgeon truthfully said of himself in another letter to Mr. Williams, 'I am no enemy, no disputant, no caviller. I only want to do the right thing, and if it should seem to be harsh, I want to do it in love and tenderness.' It was complained of Mr. Spurgeon at the time that he said too much or too little. He was so brotherly, so generous, that he would not name the men he suspected, and, with the hand on the hilt of his sword, he refused to smite the offenders." In reference to the oft-debated matter of Spurgeon's success an American paper said in 1875:—

"Judging from our own experiences, we would say that the chief source of power in Mr. Spurgeon's preaching is its substance. The old Gospel that stirred the nations in the first century is still, to him, as new as ever. Its great ideas sway him; they are incarnated in him; they are an ever-present, uplifting force. Not only can he say, 'I believe and therefore speak,' but also, 'While I muse the fire burns,' and I must speak. 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,'

said Jesus; and Mr. Spurgeon has an abundance of heart-power as well as voice-power. Mr. Spurgeon's power in speech is like that of Mr. Sankey in song. Some of the English reporters and critics have been somewhat puzzled over the question, Where lies the secret of this attraction? These, following the crowds to hear, have been somewhat mystified and bewildered on finding that Mr. Sankey is not an original genius or a great artist in the realm of song. But then, an editorial in the London Freeman touched the secret of his power in saying, 'The song expresses the soul of the singer.' Thus melody is subordinated to the inspiration of sentiment. Such, surely, is the power of Mr. Spurgeon; the sermon melodiously articulates the soul of the preacher. His words and tones reveal his inner heart, and thus command responsive feeling. As all his faculties act in harmony, there is no jar or drawback; the unity is perfect. There was a little parenthesis of the sermon that touched us all when Mr. Spurgeon expressed gratitude for his many deliverances granted in hours of weakness and mental agony, when prayers for guidance as for what subject he should take next had been answered. 'Ah!' said a preacher, in view of this allusion, 'he has won our love as well as admiration; he can feel for the weakest of us.'"

One of the most realistic portrayals of Spurgeon appeared in a Society journal in 1876; and some of his peculiar characteristics are well brought out in this passage:—

"It is not within our present scope to dilate on the creed of the Particular Baptists, nor do we purpose to point out the extent of the fusion which has taken place between the Arminian and Calvinistic sections of that community, nor to trace the causes of the decline of the Hyper-Baptists or 'Hard Shells,' as they are called in the United States. Suffice it to say that Mr. Spurgeon is a Particular Baptist of an advanced school of thought, and profoundly versed in Calvinistic theology. In the midst of his early career he aroused a perfect storm of controversy by his sermon on regeneration by baptism, and provoked by a torrent of papers and pamphlets, but held his own against all comers with extraordinary ability. One plan he has ever pursued during his public life. It is never to reply to a personal satire or attack. Not even a statement in print that he had poisoned his own mother would provoke the shadow of a reply. More than this, he keeps not one volume, but several in his library at Nightingale Lane, filled with newspaper cuttings of an abusive character, and takes particular pleasure in pointing out to his guests the virulent attacks in which he is designated mountebank, buffoon, blasphemer, hypocrite, and villain. His dark brown eye lights up with a keen twinkle of enjoyment as he comes upon a particularly savage onslaught, and he actually smacks his lips over the well-known caricatures, 'Brimstone and Treacle' and 'Catch 'em alive.' Praise palls upon him, but the perusal of a virulent personal attack has a pleasant tonic effect. It is difficult to pronounce whether this temper of mind is due to Christian meekness or to utter scorn of his assailants, but the effect is that of amused calmness. In fact, if any man and minister of the Gospel completely enjoys life, that man is Mr. Spurgeon. He has neither doubts nor fears as to this world or the next. His faith is perfectly clear, and quite invulnerable. Possibly this is the secret of his success in swaying the minds of men. He knows exactly what he believes; he has no doubt at all that it is true, and, aided by a talent for lucid exposition, simple and nervous language, a remarkable faculty for varied illustration, and a voice full, melodious, and well-controlled as the stop of a great organ, he exercises immense power over any audience. Let the faith of the listener be what it may, he is certain to listen to the strong, crisp sentences, the apt or sometimes bizarre illustrations, and, above all, he must be impressed by the earnest confidence of the speaker. What is the cynical inquirer to say to a man who, when he is asked—not in public

or within the walls of the Tabernacle, but over a quiet cigar in his own house—how he gets together the large sum of money he disposes of annually in his work, answers, 'I pray for it and it comes?' This, be it noted, not with a sanctimonious twang or a dying-duck upheaval of the eyes, but with a straightforward look into the face of his guest. 'There are times when funds are low,' continues Mr. Spurgeon. 'I pray, and money comes; it comes surely. It has never failed me yet.' This again without violence of assertion, but in the accents of quiet conviction. 'Look at these walls and these tables,' said the great Baptist to the writer one day at the Pastors' College just behind the Tabernacle—' all solid, good stuff, and all paid for. I never go into debt for anything. If I have not got quite enough money I wait till I have. It is sure to come.'"

We then have this reference to what may be called the preacher's recreative studies:—

"The vast field of science is to the pulpit orator a hunting-ground for illustrations. One by one he has read up various sciences—astronomy, chemistry, zoology, ornithology, and others—not merely with a desire for information, but to supply his mind with new images. The movements of the planets and their disturbing influences, the mysteries of chemical affinity, the structure of animals and birds, with reference to the conditions of their existence, habits, and idiosyncrasies, have all delighted Mr. Spurgeon by turns, and all helped to enrich his fund of illustration. Field-sports, too, have helped him. It is not uncommon to find him engaged busily over a pile of technical books on fox-hunting or salmon-fishing, deer-stalking or grouse-shooting. His quarry is an apt and novel illustration to light up his discourse. Now and then, however, he is carried away by a love for his subject, and once copied the eggs of all the British birds as a pleasant exercise calculated to keep his mind sweet. He is a strong believer in the theory of ventilating the mind—of pouring a stream of new ideas constantly through it—to preserve its freshness, and to prevent the stagnation not unfrequently brought about in a strong intellect engrossed in one pursuit. In this respect he singularly resembles Dr. Lyon Playfair, who compared the light of one solitary science to a lamp which only intensifies the darkness around."

Such were some of the chief characteristics of this great man as I understood him. I am well assured that he was so thoroughly conscientious that even when he made mistakes he was still doing what he deemed would best promote the glory of God. Some have thought that he got narrower in his later years; but whether he did so or not, it seems certain that he came more under the influence of men of narrower minds than his own was naturally. He was at his best in the halcyon days which followed the opening of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. From 1861 to 1881 was a period in which some of his best work was done—work which will abide. Despite some hard knocks given here and there he showed no lack of catholicity, being one of the most active members of various associations from which he afterwards thought it his duty to withdraw. He was at heart what he had been all his life; but if mistakes were made, they entailed inconvenience in Spurgeon's case as well as in that of lesser men.

One likes to think of Spurgeon as he was in the days of his strength, when he was, without doubt, the most interesting individuality among the great figures of the Christian world. It is on account of the uncommon interest which attaches itself to the man at this period that one may be allowed to show a preference for his first book, written and published during the ever-memorable period of the services at the Surrey Gardens. The fire of youthful enthusiasm which seems to glow on the pages imparts to them a unique charm, while in some measure the author depicts himself. "The

Saint and his Saviour" is the book to read, or to present to a friend, when the desire is to see, or to show to another, what Spurgeon was in those sanguine days of his early prime when the wide world stretched before him as a domain to be won by the Church for her Lord. When he had received a few scars in the conflict, and had sobered down somewhat, he looked more to the Second Coming of Christ to bring about the final conquest which was so ardently desired.

Another book which must not be overlooked by those who would study the great preacher's characteristics is one which has appeared since his death—"The Pastor in Prayer: Being a Choice Selection of C. H. Spurgeon's Sunday Morning Prayers." The richness and the variety of these devotional utterances strike one as being almost more wonderful than the overflowing wit and wisdom of the sermons. We see that he not only had a gift in prayer, but that it was ardently cultivated. Thus, the editor tells us in his preface:—

"Mr. D. L. Moody, in commencing his first address in the Tabernacle, October 9, 1892, pathetically recalled the time when he first entered the building, twenty-five years ago. He had come four thousand miles to hear Mr. Spurgeon. What impressed him most was not the praise, though he thought he had never heard such grand congregational singing; it was not Mr. Spurgeon's exposition, fine though it was, nor even his sermon; it was his prayer. He seemed to have such access to God that he could bring down the power from heaven. That was the great secret of his influence and his success." In connection with this subject I am glad to give some notes and reminiscences of the great preacher by my friend, Dr. Reynolds, Principal of Cheshunt College. On two occasions Dr. Reynolds addressed his students on Spurgeon, and in a private note he says, "I have had the two addresses copied and thrown together and somewhat enlarged, and now I put the MS. at your disposal." I give in full this valued contribution:— A profoundly impressive event has touched the heart of the English race during the last fortnight. A "door has been opened in heaven," and the Church of Christ has gazed with wistful and loving eyes upon the lifted and fallen veil which now hides from it the brave and holy man of God from whom hundreds of thousands received the assurance and conviction of the Eternal Love. He has left us. His recorded words, his humility before God, his self-oblivion, his boundless charity, his passionate love to souls, will not fade from the memories of this generation. But his lips are silent.

He cannot tell us what his eyes now see or his ears now hear. These are for him and for us unspeakable. An impressive accompaniment of the memorial services held in the Metropolitan Tabernacle was the well-used pulpit Bible, laid "like a dead soldier's sword upon his pall," a silent testimony to the tremendous power with which he was accustomed in that sacred place to wield the two-edged sword of the Spirit. But it was a pathetic reminder that we shall never again see that sword flash fire in his hand, nor have opportunity of knowing the results of his highest experience. The silence of our dead is one of the supreme trials of life. There is, doubtless, reason for it. Some visions granted even on earth are incommunicable and unlawful to describe. The saints of God have no language or symbol by which they can communicate with us. We must wait patiently, being satisfied with the living words of Him who alone has ascended because He first descended that He might learn our language and know our secrets and fathom the sorrows and mysteries of our life. But when our honoured leaders release themselves from our grasp, elude our embrace, enter in by the gate into the City of God, we can but ponder their memory and repeat their words, and dwell upon the life now hidden in God. Still, I cannot but add that the intense conviction that mastered this servant of Christ did unveil for many the reality of unseen and eternal things.

Because he believed he spake. The kindling of heart that followed was a testimony not only to the strange, almost unique, power he wielded, but to the invisible reality itself, to the superhuman life, to the eternal glory of the Lord. On several occasions even down in this quiet retreat, in this very college, we have heard him pray with such extraordinary humility and spiritual force that it became impossible to resist the impression that we had somehow gone near to the veil of the Holiest of All, had lifted it, and, with the awful, holy, precious blood of the great Sacrifice upon us, we had pressed on and up and near to the mercy-seat, and found that the veil had fallen behind us, and that we were for awhile in eternity and face to face with God. The exorcism of fear followed, the courage of self-surrender was augmented, a hope that could not shame us stirred desponding spirits, and all things seemed possible. It was neither his homely diction, nor his wondrous voice, nor his transparent sincerity that did all this. It was God's will to come near to us in these exercises, and we lost sight of Spurgeon altogether in the reality of the Eternal Majesty and the Infinite Love.

It will, perhaps, be profitable to you if I tell you—the present students of this College—of some of these events in the history of the religious life of your predecessors. Twice Mr. Spurgeon has preached at Waltham Abbey, when our entire house was present, and when he took kindly interest in us and addressed special words to us. His text on the first occasion was, "The Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his share and his coulter, his axe and his mattock." What fight, what humour, what intense earnestness he manifested in the great battle with sin! "For this conflict," said he: "(1) we all have a weapon to use for God and His cause, however homely; and (2) every man's weapon needs sharpening; and then (3) if we can secure no other means of sharpening our weapon, we may go down to the Philistines to help us; and, for my part, I would make the old enemy himself turn the grindstone while I sharpen mine." With extraordinary force he routed our lame excuses for cowardice, indolence, and indifference to the mighty strife; and he pleaded passionately with our Cheshunt brotherhood to win the only victory worth obtaining—that of saving souls from sin. He besought us to sharpen every faculty, not for the sake of having a bright and flashing sword or fine accoutrement; but in order to fight God's battle with evil and to save souls from death. "You are preparing for the ministry, but don't wait till you have entered it; you may never live to do that. Win your highest honour, secure your best diploma now. Begin with speed, with fire, with learning and love, to save men now."

Once our honoured friend spent a long afternoon and evening with us. No one who was present will ever forget the racy wit, the intense conviction, and almost awful earnestness with which he called for utter consecration, and hard work and entire conviction, as to the truth of the Gospel and the power of the Cross. The flashes of humour were, of course, received with ringing cheers, and the men earnestly entreated to have our guest for an hour all to themselves, hoping for much more of the same kind of healthy excitement and jubilant enthusiasm. I found afterwards that he had quelled all boisterous mirth, and almost appalled some of them with a new sense of their tremendous responsibility, and of the spirit and the methods and motives with which they should enter upon life's work. In his generous kindness he preached in 1870 our festival sermon, and was undoubtedly the power by which one thousand pounds were contributed towards our building fund. The sermon was based on the text, "A good soldier of Jesus Christ." For an hour every auditor was spell-bound with the analogies he indicated between the work and sacrifice, the courage, discipline, obedience, and daring of the soldier, and the responsibilities of those who aimed at

being soldiers enlisted under the great Captain of Salvation. The discourse sparkled with illustrations, anecdotes, telling epithets, and powerful appeals. It was not till the whole was finished that we remembered that every one of these, from first to last, had been drawn from military prowess, from records of battle, from the discipline, the manoeuvres of warfare and the shock of arms. He prefaced his sermon, however, with a mighty caveat against militarism. Admitting and emphasising the noblest characteristics of soldiery, "Yet rejoice not," said he, "in your blood-stained victories. If you must have banners, drape them in black; if bells must ring, muffle them." Yet from the pomp and obedience, the self-devotion, and the valour of the soldier, he verily thundered down our laziness, selfishness, and lack of enthusiasm in the great work of setting up the kingdom of God upon the earth. On another occasion Mr. Spurgeon preached at Waltham Abbey one of the most soothing and cheerful sermons I ever heard, from the text, "The hairs of your head are all numbered," having previously expounded with tact and wit and flashes of penetrative insight the whole of the thirty-seventh Psalm. At the close of this service the arrangements were made by which the professors and students of this College should pay a visit to the Pastors' College, and that Mr. Spurgeon, with the whole staff and students of his College, should give us the pleasure of welcoming them to Cheshunt. Both occasions were memorable. On the first our honoured friend was in full vigour of body and mind, and delivered a lecture on preaching to his own students and ourselves with the fire of his best days. Many addresses followed, and much mutual interest was felt. When the return visit was paid, Mr. Spurgeon had been suffering from a serious assault of his physical enemy, and begged that the chief burden should devolve upon others. On this occasion we were favoured with telling addresses by the Rev. Dr. Allon, Rev. Dr. Philip Schaff of New York, and by the Rev. J. A. Spurgeon, LL.D.; and with the view of explaining to the members of the Pastors' College some matters of historic interest connected with Cheshunt and its college, as well as some of our feelings when we had been welcomed with rich entertainment at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, I made the following remarks:—

"A Hertfordshire lane when the hawthorns are in blossom and birds are singing on every tree, rivals any depth of the country-side in rural beauty. These byways have witnessed many concerted actions, from the days of the burial of Harold or of Queen Eleanor to those of the Gunpowder Plot or the Petition of Rights, down to the occasion when the friends of this College brought hither the institution which shelters and welcomes us to-day. They are made specially interesting in this year of réunions by the fusion to-day into one loyal brigade of many regiments, which are equally proud of their home rule, their Catholic principles, and their Christian unity. The Cheshunt students and staff will not soon forget the gracious and large-hearted welcome afforded to them by the president, professors, and students of the Pastors' College. We were stirred to the depths of our nature by the vast temple where so many thousands, for a quarter of a century, have listened to one noble voice proclaiming with surpassing earnestness and variety, pathos and strength, the Gospel of the grace of God; where so many have beheld the face of our Father reconciled to them in Jesus Christ our Lord; have seen the door opened into heaven and passed in thereat. But we were also profoundly touched when, by free passes into the inner courts of the temple, we discovered many wonderful things, as Christian did in the Interpreter's house and the House Beautiful.

"The Metropolitan Tabernacle, like the Temple of old, is a fortress as well as a sanctuary. We saw much storage of spiritual force—not' the ox-goad of Shamgar,' or 'the jaw-bone' used by Samson,

but swords of a Goliath and trowels of a Nehemiah—a vast army list, even explosive forces, abundant ammunition, and apparatus of holy influence, which promise high service for our Lord for many years to come. The Christian willinghood, the pure religion and undefiled, of which St. James speaks, the consecrated feeling and incense of prayer which pervade the Pastors' College, must, by the power of the Holy Spirit, summon all that is best, all that is most manly and most Christian to a lifelong energy. May it be so! We cannot feel too grateful that the beloved and honoured founder and president is not prevented by the effects of his recent severe illness from receiving our thanks and our homage this day. I can assure him that bitter as our disappointment would have been if he had been unable to join us, it would be still more grievous to us if he should encounter any risk by a self-denying effort which it is so much a second nature with him to make that it seems he could not resist it. I may assure him in the name of all the authorities and students of this College that in the love and reverence felt towards him we claim to share, and that the work which God has given him to do is part of the joy of our spiritual life. Seeing that he bargains for a small demand to be made upon his strength, I bethought me that this quaint corner of the visible church may be rather enigmatical to some of our visitors. A few words of explanation may help some of you to carry away with you a more vivid memory of a happy day and a cordial welcome.

"There is nothing exactly like the Pastors' College in all Christendom; but I am disposed to think that Cheshunt also is not quite like any other ministerial college. We boast an Episcopalian foundress, early Methodist associations, close relation with the connection of the Countess; we rejoice in a goodly list of Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Independent alumni, and in having representatives in every part of the missionary field. But just a word or two about Cheshunt itself, for it has a varied history which at least embroiders, if it does not enrich, our life here. The famous abbey of Edward the Confessor, the site of the college where Harold trained his monks for educational and evangelistic service; the Eleanor Cross, a memorial of a mighty love that subdued the imperious nature of one of the most doughty of our Plantagenet kings; the house of Wolsey, with its weird dip into the dark doings of the Tudor tyrant; and the whole story of Cecil's noble mansion at Theobalds, where James and Charles held court and carousal, do all add some interest to our surroundings.

"During the Marian persecution, a young hero of the Protestant faith—William Hallewell by name—a resident near Waltham Cross, was one of a group of thirteen who were burnt alive at Stratford-at-Bowe for declaring against the idolatry of the Mass. 'The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians,' and not long afterwards Cecil opened a chapelry in Theobalds for Puritan worship. During more than one hundred years Cheshunt was the home of martyr spirits and the haunt of ejected ministers. Many efforts—Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregational, Quaker—were made to establish Free Churches in this neighbourhood. A Presbyterian community is said to have originated in the needs of the Scotch servants of the Stuart king. The brave Nazing people whom John Eliot left behind when he sought in America the freedom of worship that he could not find at home during the dark hours of the restored monarchy, worshipped with one or more of these Congregational churches. In 1728 the Presbyterian and Congregational churches were fused into one community—it is a great place for réunions! Isaac Watts, who came to pay a visit at Theobalds to his kind friends, Sir Thomas and Lady Abney, intending to remain for a week, resided in their house for thirty-six years. He it was who preached the marriage sermon on the occasion of this blending of Congregational and Presbyterian forces. Here, too, he wrote on logic

and grammar, and produced theological treatises and noble hymns. Here he preached his last sermon, and here some authorities say that he died.

"We claim to have his 'wig,' his 'parlour,' and part of his walk in our very grounds; and though some maintain that the Southampton Water, with the slopes of Itchen and Netley, suggested to him 'Sweet fields,' etc., we are apt to aver that our football field, on the other side of Sir Hugh Myddelton's river, or as seen from our memorable arbour, is the true source of his inspiration. Two years before Watts broke into heavenly song the 'reverend, learned, and pious John Mason, M.A.,' the author of 'Self-Knowledge,' became pastor of the church to which, doubtless, Isaac Watts occasionally ministered. It is somewhat prophetic or typical that Mr. Mason should have here prepared young men for the ministry of the Gospel before our College appeared upon the scene.

"But time would fail me to tell you of Izaak Walton and Richard Cromwell (that foolish Ishbosheth, son of the mighty Oliver), of Christopher Hatton, of Hugh Myddelton, and of Archbishop Tillotson, whose lives and work are more or less associated with this quiet home. One thing more I may mention. About the time of that memorable event to which I refer a celebrated journey was taken through our parish by one whose exploit is known throughout the English-speaking world. A certain 'train-band captain' called John Gilpin, on his wedding-day, rode longer and faster than he intended. 'His wife did dine at Edmonton, and he did dine at Ware,' and therefore, on the authority of no less a man than William Cowper, the hero of that perfect ballad dashed twice through Cheshunt Street, to the edification of little boys, turnpike-keepers, and probably of the first batch of Cheshunt College students.

"Like some of the heroes of the East, we had a history before we were born on this classic soil. We were not grey-headed, like Laotse, when we came into the world, but we were twenty-four years old. I will not tell the oft-told and wonderful story of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon. You all know how a notable member of the highest class of the English aristocracy was brought to Christ and was prompt in informing the Wesleys of her sympathy in their movements. For a while she identified herself with the early Methodists, and opened her several houses to the ministry of her chaplain, Rev. George Whitefield, and that of other clergymen and laymen. Her enthusiasm, her passion for the souls of men, consumed her. She erected houses for worship in many places of public resort; and the story of each is a romance. It is believed that with a slender income she devoted one hundred thousand pounds sterling to promote the preaching of God's Word, and to introduce men of learning, zeal, and Evangelical sentiment into livings and curacies in the Church of England. To accomplish these objects, she originated and supported at her sole expense her college at Trevecca House, Talgarth, Pembrokeshire. There John Fletcher, with his passionate zeal and exalted piety, presided; and there Henderson, a mere youth, but a veritable Mezzofanti in linguistic acquirements, laboured for a time. The Countess was a stiff Calvinist, and, it must be honestly confessed, a female pope as well; and John Fletcher, like John Wesley, was an Arminian; and so they after a time parted with mutual respect and even love. Yet vast good was done. Marked men were educated at this little home of learning and zeal. Thousands gathered at the annual festival to listen to the preachers, and the great movement developed into the Calvinistic Methodist societies of Wales. Mr. Gladstone, in a celebrated essay, directly affiliates to the Evangelical revival of the last century, and to the particular portion of it with which the Countess of Huntingdon, Whitefield, and afterwards Simeon and others, were identified, the subsequent extraordinary quickening of religious life in the Church of England at the present day.

"After the death of one whom I may reasonably and devoutly call Saint Selina, her representatives and trustees resolved to carry the good work forward. In their application for funds, and also in the plan of their operations, they made it possible that the students of this college, at the termination of their college course, should enter the connexion of the Countess, the Church of England, or any of the Christian churches which they might prefer. Their first high, main end was to add to the number of those who could, and would, with all their might preach the Gospel of the grace of God. I have been often asked by Episcopalian friends, How is it possible to conduct a college on such an undenominational basis? My answer has been with MacMahon, 'J'y suis, J'y reste;' or with the logical retort, 'Why not?' The College found itself on this broad, ecclesiastical platform, which is enriched now with the memories of the sainted dead, and after one hundred and eighteen years here we are still. The churches are coming round to us rather than we to them. Serious secular studies themselves have been a bond of brotherhood in every age and nation. The exhilarating life of the College and university has often softened the asperities of social and political strife. The common pursuit of literature and science has often made friends of those who were divided on other grounds. But when the 'letters' that we study spell out the revelation of God, and the science we pursue is the knowledge which is eternal life, their uniting force ought at least to wield an added energy.

"The truths that are most fundamental and vital are equally loved by us all. The intensity with which we grasp this principle leads us to respect the tenacity with which others are prepared to maintain ecclesiastical methods in which we differ from them and from others. To come quite home for illustration, we hold that you can urge our Lord's words, 'Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,' with as much heartiness and tenderness as those of us who have a different way of showing it. On the other hand, we hold that you can give us abundant credit for relishing and glorying in the sublime imagery of being 'buried with Christ in baptism.' The long connection of Mr. Rogers with the Pastors' College is another illustration of the same principle. We love each other too well to despise the differences which arrest some forms of practical organisation for Christian work. But surely days and scenes like this may open our eyes to the loveliness and breadth of the region where we may labour for our Divine Lord side by side.

"Solemn, serious, inspiring are our conceptions of 'the Holy Catholic Church,' but our theology is immensely more to us than our ecclesiastical order. Deeply as we prize the great generalisations which our fathers in the faith (from Jerusalem to Alexandria, from Nicæa to Westminster) have deduced from the Word of God, yet our Bibles are more to us than any system of Divinity. Profoundly as we revere and desire to study, with all available help, and to explore our Bibles, we hold that the Divine life, the consciousness of eternal life wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, seen in all churches, and lighting up the world, is a more vivid and infallible assurance of the Divine Presence than even the Bible itself; and, most of all, we hold that He who is 'the Life,' 'the Truth,' 'the Way' is more to us than any realisation of the blessed life that we have yet attained, or witnessed, or dreamed of. We stretch forward to the things that are before us, when our eyes shall be fully opened and the veil be lifted, and we shall know even as we are known. We have not met to preach at one another, but to love each other; to review some of the commonplaces, the great things which, by their familiarity, may be sometimes forgotten.

"Apart from all minor differences, there is a wide field of letters to cultivate in common, an immense range of history to travel together, vast mines of thought to penetrate, practical methods

of useful service common to the prelate, the village pastor, the missionary, and the class-leader, if we would be 'workmen,' 'servants' of God, or 'stewards' of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. If we wish, as soldiers of Christ, to fight His battle with sin, if we would lead His armies into the thickest dangers, and 'cast down the imaginations and high things' which dispute His rule, we must know the mind of our great Captain, con well His marching orders, seek to understand His strategy, measure, and not underrate, the plans and resources of our enemies, and, moreover, be implicitly obedient to His commands. To adopt another familiar illustration, if we hope to take upon us the task of the 'Physician of Souls,' then we must ponder hard and long the nature of souls. We must study with our might, not only in the sick room, but in the dead room—i.e., not only by practical sympathy with human need, but by prolonged study of human history, the nature of the diseases of the human soul, and the reasons of the sovereign remedy. We must know why the nostrums of cupidity and ignorance kill and do not cure. Mere goodwill will not heal disease, untrained loyalty can fight no successful battles with revolted provinces of the King of Kings. Let us take what illustration we choose to denote the nature of our life-work. Each figurative expression becomes in its turn a call to earnest study, to diligent, strenuous work, wisely directed, steadily and enthusiastically pursued. Our college time is so precious that if it be lost it can with great difficulty, if ever, be redeemed. If we stray from the pilgrim path of high endeavour into the byways of fairy or of fancy or of self-indulgence, we may fall into the vaults of certain giants, who will belabour us well for our folly, and we shall not find it so easy as Christian and Hopeful did to escape from the clutches of 'Diffidence' and 'Despair.'

"We none of us call a day like this a lost day. 'All work and no play,' says an old adage, 'makes------.' But there are no 'dull boys' either at the Pastors' College or at Cheshunt; at all events, if there are—I can speak for Cheshunt—it is not because they have 'no play.'" At length Mr. Spurgeon rose to speak. None will ever forget his address. Some of his professors told me that they had hardly ever heard him take his audience so obviously into his confidence, or give so much of his personal history, as he did for the advantage, inspiration, and stimulus of his young brethren of this and of his own College. He was suffering acute pain, and from distressing weakness. It seemed as if he might be delivering his last message. He described some of his deep heart-sorrows, and told us of the darkness and despondency which had overcome him, leading him to tremble lest he might become himself "a castaway." Once in this very frame he ascended the platform of his Tabernacle, and could preach from no other text than "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee." No light broke upon him until he returned to his vestry, where he was accosted by a man whose face was wild with a terrible despair, yet over which there was breaking a tearful smile. "Why have you been directing this whole service and sermon to me? "said the man, from whom a very devil had been cast out. More of the conversation was detailed in the speaker's own straightforward fashion, which had all the force of pathetic and realistic drama. "Now," said Mr. Spurgeon, "I knew why I had been led down into the very belly of hell." This passion for the saving and healing of men was burning within him like a fire. He was ready to suffer any agony or sacrifice his life if thereby he might win a solitary soul. The words fell softly and tenderly upon us. I have witnessed many wonderful scenes in this and other lands, solemn functions in crowded cathedrals, have seen vast congregations melted to tears, but never felt the sense of the reality and presence of God, the fact of a spiritual world, the certainty of judgment to come, and the glory of redemption, more intensely than I did in that memorable service. His peculiar function in the Church of God was not speculative novelty, nor fresh generalisation of the law of the spirit of life.

He told some of us, on one of the occasions of our intercourse, that the highest compliment that had been paid him came from the lips of an open enemy, who had said, "Here is a man who has not moved an inch forward in all his ministry, and at the close of the nineteenth century is teaching the theology of the first century, and in Newington Butts is proclaiming the doctrines of Nazareth and Jerusalem current eighteen hundred years ago." "Those words," said he, "did please me!" and verily no teacher had ransacked literature and history and human life as he had done to supply illustration and proof of the fundamental facts of Divine revelation, and to persuade men to be reconciled to God. His volumes of exposition and homily furnish a vast quarry from which those who believe with him in the infinite righteousness and love of God will be able for many a generation to draw material for their work. So long as any of you, my brethren, can remember, this great star has been burning in the heaven. Be thankful, then, that you have the memories of the past weeks to illumine all your future ministry, and continue to glorify God in Him.

Chapter 90: Work and Progress in 1873

Chapter 90.

Work And Progress In 1873

Dr. Matthews—Wesleyans—Colportage—The Orphanage—A Holiday in Sussex—Testimonial to Mr. Rogers—At Bradford—Mr. W. J. Orsman—College Buildings—"Signs of the Times"—Evangelical Alliance—Ill-Health—Edinburgh—Missionaries for India.

Although Spurgeon was at this time only in his fortieth year, he had laboured in London during half his lifetime; and the growth of his popularity and far-reaching influence had been shown by the development of one great enterprise after another, which had for its object the relief of the needy, the enlightenment of the ignorant, or the bringing into the Gospel fold those who were out of the way. The man as he stood up Sunday after Sunday to give his message to the multitude was still an enigma to the outer world, while he was also something of a phenomenon to many within the Church. When visiting London in the early part of this year Dr. Matthews looked on the preacher at the Metropolitan Tabernacle with wonder and admiration. It was seen that he fervently believed with all his soul the truths he preached, while he was troubled with "none of those lurking doubts, that semi-scepticism, which so often paralyses the pulpit in our day." On the contrary, he was heard to proclaim continually "without abatement, mincing, or softening," the truths which Paul, Augustine, and Calvin preached before him. The result was too striking to be explained away. After taking careful note of the preacher, Dr. Matthews added, "He is a living refutation of the statement so often and confidently made, that the preacher of our day who stays in what are called 'the old ruts of theology,' and who takes no stock in the modern 'progressive ideas,' has lost his hold upon the people, and proves, beyond all gainsaying, that, even in this age of Darwins and Huxleys and Mills, the most popular pulpit orator is not he who panders to their love of excitement, novelty, or rhetoric, but he who thunders forth with ceaseless reiteration those grand old truisms which even in this day of new theologies are still the best things left upon the earth." In the early part of August a visit was paid to Eastbourne on behalf of the chapel in Ceylon Place, which was encumbered with a debt it was desirable to clear off. The preacher, being in a cheerful mood, gave one of his racy talks on bazaars, chapel debts, and some other matters. At this time he showed a strong liking for Wesleyans on account of their warm-heartedness and diligence in service. The Wesleyans had the fire, Baptists had the water; to have both combined was the way to get the steam up.

"We must have a warm-hearted people, and a people of practical common-sense, everybody doing something, and then there will be a great deal done. A simple gospel is a thing that is wanted. There is so much nowadays of decorations, of ornamental crosses and of hanging up flowers; but we do not want it. A celebrated artist painted a picture of the Lord's Supper, and in the foreground he put a beautiful vase and some fruit splendidly painted. People came to look at the picture, and they said, 'What splendid vases! What magnificent fruit!' The painter said, 'I wanted people to admire the loving Lord and Saviour. These things I put in as accessories, not to take off

the attention from the grand central figure.' So he painted them out. There is a great deal that is pretty and ornamental in religious worship which I should like to see painted out. I have heard of a preacher who desired to stand behind the Master's chair, so that not so much as a little finger of his own should be seen. May we have such preaching, and as a people may wo have such a doctrine as may spread throughout the land."

It was in August of this year that Spurgeon lost by death the steadfast friend of his youth and later years—Cornelius Elven, of Bury St. Edmunds. A giant in stature, he laboured throughout his long life in the town of his birth, and was generally regarded as a model of pastoral industry and Christian aggressiveness. Spurgeon loved him till the end as a father in the faith. When he had visited Waterbeach about thirty years previously, Elven's discernment told him that a great genius had arisen in the English pulpit. The death about the same time, through a fall from his horse, of Dr.

Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Winchester, had the effect of reviving the memory of the attack on the popular preacher which had been made in the House of Lords on a memorable occasion already referred to. All parties naturally regretted the sad accident which had suddenly ended the career of an able man; but, at the same time, when far-gone fanatics reminded Spurgeon that the gout from which he suffered came as a judgment on account of his intolerance, false teaching, and so on, he did not overstep the bounds of charity when he asked such censors to account for this calamity. At the annual meeting of the Colportage Association Mr. Spurgeon ventured to express the opinion that the reports concerning the extensive circulation of pernicious literature were exaggerated; and, by way of proving his assertion, he pointed to the insignificant-looking shops in which the poisonous garbage was for the most part sold. In taking such a view of the matter the preacher, it is to be feared, was altogether mistaken. A better-informed onlooker very truly wrote: "We fear that a more careful investigation of the matter would have speedily convinced him how utterly fallacious is such a test, as the conditions under which the trade is mainly carried on not only render palatial buildings unnecessary, but absolutely worthless. It is a fact, with which those behind the scenes are well acquainted, that the profits of a vile illustrated broadsheet, which is issued from an office that would appear to largely partake of its unwholesome-ness, enable the proprietor to maintain a princely private ménage, and live in a style that, to the majority of Baptist ministers, and even religious publishers, would seem little short of incredible." The Stockwell Orphanage continued to prosper, and at the annual meeting or festival the President again explained the origin of the institution, and recounted some incidents which had not been told in quite the same way before. He related how some years before he had written an article for The Sword and the Trowel, which was accompanied by an engraving representing Arnold, the Swiss patriot, thrusting himself like a wedge into the Austrian army. The engraving was so badly executed that few persons could understand what it meant; but it turned out to be one of the best engravings he ever saw, for, in order to find out what it meant, people read the article who might not otherwise have done so. Amongst others, a "female Plymouth Brother" read it, and she conceived from it the idea that she had found a person who could carry out the project of her life—the establishment of an orphanage. Hence, Mrs. Hillyard's letter saying that she would place twenty thousand pounds at his disposal for such a purpose.

There were parts of the southern counties which seemed always greatly to refresh the preacher when he was able to get about in genial weather. In August of this year he made one of these

favourite tours, and The Sussex Daily News remarked:—

"Mr. Spurgeon is spending his summer holiday in a way which his friend and admirer, Mr. Ruskin, would be sure to approve. A gentleman having placed his carriage at the preacher's service, the two are travelling from place to place in Kent, viewing its scenery and conversing with its people; and there being plenty of room for another, Mr. Spurgeon has taken with him the hard-working secretary of one of the home mission societies, whom he knew to be much in need of a rest. There could not be a nicer or more sensible way of spending a holiday. A story is told of a gentleman who, having boasted that he had travelled far to see a celebrated landscape on the Continent, was put to the blush by being compelled to own that he had never visited a scene of superior loveliness to be seen upon his own estate, and near which he had spent the greater part of his life. The error of this individual is one of which too many are guilty. Admiration, like charity, should begin at home, and in travelling, as Mr. Spurgeon is doing, through one of our own counties, the English pleasure-seeker might find pure sources of information and amusement such as he would, perhaps, fail to find in distant lands." At this time Mr. George Rogers, the Principal of the Pastors' College, had been engaged during sixteen years in the work. He was seventy-five years of age, and had been married fifty years. The President, the other tutors, and the past and present students, thought they ought to offer the veteran some token of their regard, and accordingly, on Friday, August 29, they presented Mr. Rogers with a gold watch and his wife with a silver tea-urn. Mr. Spurgeon was apparently overflowing with gratitude and bonhomie. He offered prayer and then said:—

"We have met for a special purpose. Mr. Rogers has been married fifty years, and it is right that we should celebrate 'golden weddings.' We congratulate ourselves on his being still so full of vigour, and that we ever met him. (Turning to Mr. Rogers) 'I cannot imagine what I should have done without you. We started together with a one-horse chaise and now we have an express train; and the only accidents that have occurred were because certain heretics would cross the line and were smashed. There were some who talked about annihilation and you annihilated them.' Mr. Rogers has been a regular Joab, for he has smitten the enemies of the king. No man has done more work for the College, and yet no one has wanted to see me so little, or talked so little, or bothered me so little. He has pleased me by doing as he liked. I think we must have been created together, but I was kept back for a time, and when we coalesced we were of the same mind, though, of course, he was more boyish, and he always had a larkishness about him, so that it was my work to sober him. He has always spoken with firmness, calmness, and confidence. When once the funds failed, and I contemplated the sale of my carriage to keep the work going, he would not hear of it, but ceased to draw his salary until the necessary funds came in. My wife describes him as 'a grand man,' and says he will be sure to remember the College when he gets to heaven, and I fancy he will sometimes get down to the gate to see whether a student is coming. But if prayer can keep him alive he sha'n't go yet." The members of the London Baptist Association assembled on October 7 in the handsome chapel which they had been the means of erecting in York Road, Battersea. Mr. Spurgeon took part in the discussion on "The Pastor in the Pulpit." During the following week he was at Bradford, preaching in connection with the opening services of Sion Jubilee Chapel. The services took place in St. George's Hall, the Rev. J. P. Chown taking part. As the chapel was not in debt, about one hundred and twenty-five pounds of the collection was given to the Stockwell Orphanage. The crowds attracted were, as usual, overwhelming, especially in the

evening. Thus "the crush in the galleries was so great that at one time before the commencement of the service there were symptoms of a disturbance." This extra service was got through, despite frequent indisposition, during the early autumn of this year.

It was in 1873 that the present Mr. William J. Orsman received a windfall for his philanthropic work in Golden Lane. One day, when I called at Helensburgh House, I found Mr. Spurgeon alone in his study, and was asked to prepare a special account of Mr. Orsman's mission for The Sword and the Trowel. This was done at once, and the article was illustrated with several engravings. The editor added a short note of his own at the end, in which he intimated that he knew of no similar service in London which was conducted with so much wisdom, and which was so permanently useful. The result was that an unknown friend, a reader of the magazine, sent Mr. Orsman a bank-note for one thousand pounds, and that became the nucleus of the fund for erecting the present Costers' Hall. The 14th of October was a high day at the Tabernacle both with pastor and with people; for it was then that the memorial-stone of the present College building was laid. Mr. Spurgeon himself performed the ceremony, arriving in time for the prayer-meeting at seven o'clock a.m. Up to this date the classes of the College had been held beneath the great chapel, but this had become so darkened by the erection of new buildings that gas had generally to be burned even during the daytime. The Sunday-school was also hampered for want of additional class-rooms, which the College building would supply, while one part of the house was to be allotted to the Colportage Association. The friends who now assembled were enthusiastic in the work; for the pastor wished them to regard the new enterprise as a memorial of his twenty years' work in London. The cost appears to have been about five thousand pounds, and it was desired to have sufficient money sunk in an investment to pay the rates in perpetuity. A sum of four hundred and twenty-five pounds towards this object was announced as given on the day of the stone-laying. The general building fund received one gift of three thousand pounds from a lady, who desired that it should be in part a memorial of her late husband; and another friend gave one thousand pounds. A large contribution also came from the Baptists of America, which country was described as the Goshen of the denomination. In the course of the brief address he gave at the stone-laying, Mr. Spurgeon said that it was some twenty years since he had been first summoned from his quiet country village to preach his first sermon in Park Street Chapel. Many reminiscences were given of early days in Cambridgeshire and the Fens, rounds of laughter being excited when, as has been already shown, the preacher rebuked a grey-headed pastor for incivility to "the boy," in return winning the appreciated distinction of being called "the sauciest dog that ever barked in a pulpit."

Spurgeon appears to have been too ailing to attend the autumnal session of the Baptist Union at Nottingham under the presidency of Dr. Underhill. Had it been otherwise, he might possibly have been the guest of Canon Morse, Vicar of Nottingham, who entertained two ministers. The reading of the accounts of the meetings yielded great satisfaction, however; but, on the other hand, it was just at this time that the death of Dr. Candlish of Edinburgh occurred. This distinguished preacher and theologian had been an old and valued friend of Spurgeon's; and, born in 1807, he commenced work in his first pastorate some six years before the latter was born. A controversy on Infant Baptism and its effects arose at this time; but it could hardly serve any good purpose to enter fully into particulars. The dispute was originated by Spurgeon's discourse on "The Signs of the Times," and by an address on Ritualism in the Church by Dr. Landels at Nottingham. The former felt aggrieved by an adverse criticism in the paper edited by his old friend, Mr. James

Clarke, and especially by some questions which in some cases were probably too readily understood as positive statements. In his sermon Spurgeon had represented the ordinance as applied to children to be superstition founded on Romanism, the more pernicious because people went away with the idea that the child received some benefit from the rite. Mr. Clarke's comment was as follows:—

"It is unnecessary to say more of this than that it is utterly unworthy of Mr. Spurgeon. As to the fact, we would refer to the history of the Congregationalists, the Wesleyans, and the Presbyterians in England, Scotland, and America for its complete disproof. As for the theory, we maintain that the recognition of the infants born in Christian households as Christians has not the remotest tendency to breed Popery. What right has Mr. Spurgeon to point with his finger at those of whom Christ said that 'of such is the kingdom of heaven,' and call them unregenerate? And does Mr. Spurgeon think that only the regenerate are saved? Does he, then, actually believe that departed infants, baptised or unbaptised, are eternally tormented in hell? If he does, we would rather accept all the absurdities of Popery than so monstrous and excruciating a belief. We beg to turn the tables on Mr. Spurgeon. It is the exaggeration of the importance of baptism which is apt to produce superstition and idolatry. A parson and a few deacons investigate the spiritual state of a young man or woman, question and cross-question, and peer and pry, pronounce him or her in the odour of sanctity, and permit immersion. Is not the subject of this ceremony extremely apt to think that some mystic rite has been performed on his or her person, and to trust in it rather than in Christ for salvation?" This was plain speaking on the Pædobaptist side; but when it was suggested that possibly Spurgeon believed in the condemnation of infants, he insisted that those who thought so were mistaken. The discussion waxed warm, the pastor of the Tabernacle had many ardent sympathisers and defenders; but their conclusions were not allowed to go forth unchallenged by such as held more moderate views. Thus a well-known leading Baptist minister at the West-End of London wrote:—

"Who will venture to doubt that the manifest high religious character of our Pædo-baptist Nonconformists is quite equal to that of Baptists in general? Our brethren do not ignore Scriptural authority, but at the worst are in error in their interpretation of it on this subject. And when I hear our noble-hearted Spurgeon impulsively asserting that we Baptists only can fairly and fully meet the dogmas of Popery, I demur to it altogether.... Who were the men who fought its battles (i.e., Protestantism) and assured its triumphs? Not Baptists, assuredly! Were the Lollards and all their fellows Baptists? Were the chief Waldenses and Albigenses Baptists? Is it quite clear that Wickliffe and Huss were Baptists? Were the first translators of the Scriptures Baptists? All the holy army of martyrs Baptists? Luther, Melancthon, Zwingle, and the immortal Calvin Baptists? Were the Puritan Fathers and the holy Nonconformists all Baptists? Shall we put John Knox and the faithful Covenanters as only half-and-half Protestants? The Henrys—Philip and Matthew—the latter of whom is Mr. Spurgeon's favourite commentator, were they Baptists? And yet these men were as genuine Protestants as either Dr. Landels or Mr. Spurgeon himself. Take many of the Evangelical clergy of the day, whether Episcopal, Lutheran, or of the Reformed Churches, and to suppose they are unfitted for doing warfare with the Pope or his dogmas is simply absurd. I do wish, therefore, that a little more candour and less invective, a little more charity and less declamation, might distinguish our Baptist brethren in the war now pending on Ritualism and its results." The pastor gave an encouraging address to the members of the Country Mission, which held its annual

meeting at the Tabernacle on October 24. The object of this association is still to carry on aggressive Christian work in country places, as well as to assist weak causes by sending preachers free of expense to places that need them. It was also in the autumn of this year that the Jubilee Singers from the Southern States of America were attracting some notice in the United Kingdom. When they appeared at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in the summer the singing of these coloured vocalists so pleased the pastor and all who were present, that they were promised the use of the great building after their return from their Scotch tour. The meeting of the Evangelical Alliance in New York in the autumn of this year was a notable occurrence; it was regarded as an Œcumenical gathering, such as had assembled in the great capitals on five occasions successively. The names of many of the leading preachers and theologians of the world were down in the programme. Yet perhaps the most remarkable feature of the reunion was the absence of Spurgeon; but, notwithstanding, one prominent doctor of divinity, who is still living, was so charmed with all he saw in the "United States, both in the pulpit and out of it, that his glowing accounts and prophecies of the happy things which were coming to pass in the future excited no little interest, among his extensive following. Desirous that Spurgeon's absence should not be misunderstood, and above all that it should not damp the ardour of those who were promoting the objects of the Alliance, an American denominational paper published an article which would have the effect of scattering the mists of misapprehension:—

"It has been urged as a reason why Baptists should be chary of regard for the Alliance that Mr. Spurgeon was censured by the executive for speaking his mind concerning the Evangelical clergy of the Church of England, and that in consequence he withdrew himself from the society. It is perfectly true that a coterie of sensitive Evangelicals did move one of the secretaries to write to Mr. Spurgeon, complaining of his denunciations to their inconsistency in denying baptismal regeneration, while subscribing willingly and ex animo to the statement 'that the Book of Common Prayer containeth in it nothing contrary to the Word of God.' Mr. Spurgeon did withdraw. It was a most happy blunder. The movers in this business did not know what they were fatuously doing when they wrote that letter. It made a sturdy Nonconformist of Mr. Spurgeon, and secured his powerful voice for the platform of the Liberation Society. His downright and uncompromising anti-State Churchism dates from that time. It also bound him more closely to his own denomination. He became a better Baptist when he became more deeply sensible of the mischiefs caused by a State Church. With heart and soul he has thrown himself into every denominational movement, and the last nine or ten years have witnessed a grand advance of the Baptists of London and the suburbs. Although, however, Mr. Spurgeon could not but withdraw from the Alliance, his sympathy with its objects remained intact, and his secession was not imitated by others. His case was peculiar. He had been treated with marked attention by the Evangelical party. Even bishops and high dignitaries of the Church had joined in these attentions. He was in their eyes the beau idéal of a 'religious Dissenter,' a good and able man who wouldn't meddle with politics! and different from his brethren in that particular. This fond delusion was shattered when he preached his famous sermon on Baptismal Regeneration. Their disappointment was hard for them to bear, and hence sprung up the feeling which found vent, amongst other channels, in the fussy letter of the Alliance official."

During November Spurgeon was in a very ailing state of health, and was accordingly unable to keep many of his engagements, including several at the Tabernacle. There was one reunion more

particularly at which he would have liked to be present—the opening soirée of Regent's Park College, on Friday, the 21st day of the month. Dr. Angus, the students, and friends, who mustered in strong force on the inclement winter night, were naturally much disappointed at not hearing the great preacher give an address to the students; but they were hardly more sorry than the preacher himself. He always seemed to enjoy the opportunity of stirring up the enthusiasm of those who were studying for the ministry; and when on this occasion his letter was read, intimating that he was reluctantly compelled to stay at home through serious indisposition, a strong feeling of sympathy must have been awakened. Though one body of students missed this address, a characteristic letter, showing the writer's solicitude for students as a class, was penned about this time and sent to Mr. A. H. Stote, a Pastors' College man, who was settled at Logansport, Indiana. Mr. Spurgeon wrote:—

"I feel sure, my beloved brother, that your growing experience must have endeared to you the Gospel of the grace of God. I feel more and more every day that nothing but salvation by grace will ever bring me to heaven, and therefore I desire more and more explicitly to teach the grand truths of electing love, covenant security, justification by faith, effectual calling, and immutable faithfulness. Love to souls as it burns in our own hearts will also lead us to preach a free as well as a full salvation, and so we shall be saved at once from the baseness of those who have no doctrine, and from the bitterness of those to whom creed is everything. The happy via media of a balanced ministry we have aimed at, and succeeding years confirm us in the correctness of our views. I pray you in these evil days be firm, close, and decided in your testimony for the truth as it is in Jesus; nothing else will keep us clear of the blood of men's souls. May the Holy Ghost anoint you anew for the struggle which lies before you. By the love which has long existed between us, I beseech you be faithful unto death. I reach my hand across the flood to grasp you lovingly, and my heart goes with the word. The Lord bless thee, my brother, and keep thee and lift up the light of His countenance upon thee and give thee peace. I pray you, dear, brother, do not look upon these lines as mere official writing. I love you in my heart; accept that love and the hearty greetings of all our brotherhood at home. Remember us in your prayers, especially remember me. By the memory of happy days in the past, when we looked each other in the face, do not forget us, and, far more, do not forget your allegiance to our common Lord." From the first the sermons as published weekly had been chiefly those which were preached on Sunday mornings; but a desire was expressed by a number of friends to have at least a selection from the discourses which were given on Sunday and Thursday evenings. The opinion was that, on the whole, these were quite equal to any that the preacher ever gave, although in some respects those of Sunday evening differed from the sermons of the morning by being more especially addressed to the multitude. To satisfy the want, the volume "Types and Emblems" was issued. The issue of "The Interpreter" was also continued in monthly parts; but, on account of Mr. Spurgeon's determination not to write prayers, this aid for family worship was never so successful as he had hoped it would be.

While such works as these were accomplished, a determined effort was made to maintain The Sword and the Trowel at a high standard of value and interest. How pleased the editor was when any friend whose opinion was entitled to respect told him that the current number was up to the mark! Then the candour of the Chief himself when speaking of the quality of any articles was always trustworthy. If he commended a writer he never spoke in the language of mere compliment. If he said, "You are unequal," or "That is not up to the mark," there was no doubt about the

necessity of making some extra effort. Thus persons who worked with him had the advantage of knowing at all times where they were and what satisfaction they were giving.

Perhaps the President of the College was never happier than when it fell to his lot to bid God-speed to men who were about to depart for the foreign mission field. Such an occasion was Monday, December 1, when Messrs. Charles Brown, son of a late elder, and Robert Spurgeon, a distant relation of his own, took their leave for India. One student of promise was also at Edinburgh, studying medicine for service in the foreign mission-field. It was at this time that Spurgeon declared that his life was crowded with incident; while, at the same time, it was full of trouble and difficulty, toil and trial. The difficulty and trial were explained by many incidents in the history of the Stockwell Orphanage. Thus in the last month of this year the treasury of the Stockwell Orphanage had a surplus of only three pounds after all expenses were paid. The general expenditure was then altogether about ten or twelve pounds a day, or about a third of what it is at present. Since that time the girls' houses have been erected, thus more than doubling the accommodation.

Chapter 91: The Opening of 1874

Chapter 91.

The Opening Of 1874

Watch-Night Address—At the London Tavern—Death of Livingstone—Holiday on the Continent—Letter from Paris—The New Forest—The College—Spurgeon and the Evangelical Alliance—Jubilee Singers—Spurgeon and Dr. Dale—Spurgeon from the Deacons' Seats—The Conference of 1874—A Whitsuntide Excursion—Baptist Union—Gout a Judgment—Accrington.

From the first, Christmas at the Stockwell Orphanage was always celebrated in genuine Old English style, and when in England the President seemed to think that it was his duty to dine in the midst of his numerous family of orphans, and to give up the day for the purpose. At Christmas, 1873, there were two hundred and twenty boys in the homes, and not one was absent from the festivities through sickness. The gifts which came in by way of response to the appeals made were from all parts of the country. Thus Canterbury sent potatoes, Cambridge two hundredweight of fruit preserve, the Principality Welsh mutton, Scotland cakes and marmalade; while from other quarters there came nuts and oranges, flour, fruit, cakes and sweets. An album, containing portraits of two hundred of the boys, was on this occasion presented to Mr. William Harrison, a benefactor of the institution. On Wednesday, December 31, the Watch-night Service at the Tabernacle was so crowded that even the aisles were thronged. After singing and prayer a passage from Matthew xxv. was read and expounded. The short address was founded on Exo 12:42 : "It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations." The night referred to was that of the Passover—"a night of salvation, decision, emigration, and exultation; and I pray God that this night, the last of a memorable year, may be the same for you, my friends," said the preacher; who then added, "Oh, for a grand emigration among you like that of the departure of the people of Israel, an emptying out of Old Egypt, a robbing of Pharaoh of his slaves and the devil of his dupes." The. preacher was supposed to be suffering from illness; but no one would have suspected this who heard him, with uplifted hands, apostrophise the dying year:—

"Eighteen hundred and seventy-three! thou art almost gone, and if thou goest now, thy tidings to the throne of God will be that such-and-such a soul is yet unsaved. Oh, stay yet awhile, Year, that thou mayest carry with thee glad tidings that the soul is saved! Thy life is measured now by seconds; but all things are possible with God, and there is still time in 1873 for the salvation of many souls."

When, after the benediction, the pastor wished all of his friends "A happy New Year," the reply of "The same to you!" came from area and galleries. Then "the congregation passed out into a New Year's morning so soft and light that it seemed as if the seasons were out of joint, and that 1874 had been born in the spring-time."

During the opening week of 1874 Mr. Spurgeon attended a meeting at the London Tavern in connection with the Lombard Street daily prayer-meeting, and we find his address described as earnest and thrilling. He said that there had been much prayer during the year that had closed, but he did not consider 1873 to have been a satisfactory year. That was because prayer had not been accompanied by a sufficient amount of earnestness and faith in action. Skeleton prayer, or prayer for sinners without action to convert them, would not do; what was wanted was living, active, earnest prayer. He then continued:—

"It seems to me that if a man is a Christian, Christianity ought to eat him right up. It ought to go right through him, and he should be known to be first and foremost a Christian man. Let him be all the rest on an equality with his fellow-men, and I think he may even be superior to them in business tact and capacity. I believe that religion will even sharpen his intellect, and that often communion with God in prayer will give him that calm frame of mind which will enable him to do his business all the better. Where is the self-sacrifice of the early days? Here is a great army of us, interesting one another, amusing one another, pleasing one another, perhaps edifying one another, and there is the great world outside, with only here and there a struggling missionary preaching the Gospel."

News of the death of Dr. Livingstone, which arrived in England about this time, probably occasioned as much sorrow at the Metropolitan Tabernacle as anywhere in the country. Among the treasures of Helensburgh House, at a later period, was a worn copy of one of Spurgeon's Sermons which the great missionary and traveller had carried about till the last. The church at the Tabernacle, having 4,366 members, now ranked as the largest in the world; the second largest was said to be the First African congregation at Richmond, Virginia, the next largest in the city of Ongole, India. The pastor was now again feeling the need of rest and change, and so, after preaching on Sunday, January 11, on the words, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty," etc. (Isaiah xliv.), he started for the Continent. The more genial weather, relief from the pressure of toil, and the refreshing change of scenery soon had a beneficial effect, so that the work which had been a burden too heavy to be borne again became a pleasure in anticipation. In Paris he wrote the following characteristic letter:—

"To the Young Friends who meet at the Monday Six o'Clock Meeting.

"Dear Young Friends,—I have your welfare continually upon my heart, and therefore thought I would pen a few sentences to you. I have been greatly encouraged by the prayerful attention and deep feeling which I saw last Monday in many of you. It filled me with great hope concerning you. I see that you desire to have your sins forgiven and to escape from the wrath of God, and I am therefore rejoiced. But I pray God that the signs of good may not end with these mere beginnings and desires. Buds are beautiful, but we cannot be satisfied with them; they are only good because blossoms often become fruit. Mere blooms on the trees and no fruit would be a mockery of expectation. May it not be so with you!

"I am writing in my chamber in Paris at midnight. I could not sleep till I had said to you, Put your whole trust in Jesus at once, for He will save you now. All that you want of merit He will give you; all that you need of help in the heavenly life He will bestow. Only believe Him.

"You who are saved be sure to wrestle with God for the salvation of other young people, and try to make our new meeting a great means for good.

"You who are unawakened—we pray continually for you, for you are sleeping over hell's mouth, and we see your danger, though you do not. It is time for you to awake out of sleep.

"I send my earnest love to you all, praying that we may meet on earth in much happiness, and then at last in heaven for ever.—Your anxious friend, "Paris, January 16."

"C. H. Spurgeon. The preacher was again in his place at the Tabernacle on Sunday, February 22, and, though reported to be in capital health, he had suffered somewhat from illness during his sojourn on the Continent. We find him correcting printers' proofs both at Cannes and Menton. At the annual meeting of the friends and supporters of the Pastors' College on March 3, the President gave an account of a visit to the New Forest in the preceding June. The tour was described as most delightful. English people, he considered, thought too little of their own country and too much of the Continent. At Winchester he found himself in the centre of Old Saxon England; and the preacher as well as his companions took their dole of bread and beer at the hospital of St. Cross, but found that larger pieces of bread were given to poor persons than to gentlemen. The pensioners in the hospital enjoyed an allowance of two quarts of beer daily, and that was thought to be a subject for Good Templars to inquire into. They put up at "The Crown" at Lyndhurst; "and oh, what a place to put up at!" said Mr. Spurgeon, while adding that he would not attempt to explain the surrounding beauty. He referred to the people and to their obstinate refusal to perceive the justice and righteousness of the Game Laws, and of their desire to lessen the number of deer which were to be found grazing in the forest, and to prevent the overgrowth of the timber therein. He was very much struck with the oak that sends out green leaves at Christmas, and connected with which there is the prettiest story that it does this for joy because Christ was born. The old beech tree which would break any knife put him in mind of the hardened sinner, and among the trees he found many a parable. At this time very satisfactory accounts of the College were given; and it was openly stated that during the pastor's absence no preachers gave such general satisfaction as was given by men trained in the institution. It was even stated that when a church got down into a very low condition they sent to Spurgeon's College, and the general. experience was that the men were among the best labourers in the denomination.

Spurgeon's attitude towards the Evangelical Alliance was shown in various ways from time to time. In 1874 Professor John Lovell published two papers in an American newspaper on the Alliance, and thus referred to a visit to the Metropolitan Tabernacle:—

"I remember being in London a few years ago and hearing Mr. Spurgeon preach on the first Sunday in the new year. Before closing he read a notice which he said had been sent him, with the request that he would 'give it out,' of a succession of prayer-meetings to be held on each night, perhaps, of the current week, under the especial auspices of this same Evangelical Alliance, each meeting to be presided over by somebody that was mighty or noble, and all to be held at some aristocratic 'tavern' in the aristocratic 'West End.' For each night a specific object was named which was to give character to the exercises. On one particular night, I remember, the subject set down was 'Confession of the Sins of the Churches.' 'Now,' said Mr. Spurgeon, 'if anyone should dare to confess one-half of the darling sins of the Episcopal Church he would be kicked out of the meeting for his pains.' And he then proceeded to characterise in strong terms the hypocrisy of

country 'parish priests' coming up to London and making fine speeches about 'brotherly love,' when to his certain knowledge these same men would, upon occasion, bring all the weight of their social influence to bear against some poor faithful Baptist minister labouring in the same village, who sometimes was fated to become the victim of their hostility and compelled to abandon his charge." The pastor of the Tabernacle did something to befriend the indigent blind of South London by assisting in a mission which one of his own converts had established. On one occasion about this time I was present at a large party of these afflicted people, who, after being entertained with tea, bread-and-butter, and cake, were addressed by Mr. Spurgeon and his brother. The Jubilee Singers, who had realised two hundred and fourteen pounds by their first visit to the Tabernacle, now repeated their visit, the building being crowded in every part. Mr. Spurgeon presented the singers with the nineteen volumes of his Sermons, as well as an encyclopædia for the library of the university, for the building fund of which they were collecting. It was expected that these two concerts alone would yield a sum of five hundred pounds. Dr. Moffat was present, and made some appropriate allusions to the death of Dr. Livingstone.

It was customary at this time to have an annual assembly of butchers at the Tabernacle, the originator of the festival being Mr. Henry Varley. A substantial tea preceded the more public gathering in the chapel, and, when well enough to do so, Mr. Spurgeon usually gave an address. An article by Mr. (now Dr.) R. W. Dale appeared in The Daily Telegraph on Christmas Day, 1873, in which the assertion was made that Calvinism would be almost obsolete among Baptists but for the influence of Mr. Spurgeon. The latter replied to this, and some farther notice was taken of the matter during the spring. The preacher at the Tabernacle differed considerably from his friend at Birmingham, and believed the main body of Dissenters to be true to the Calvinistic faith. In thanking Mr. Spurgeon for his testimony, one editor said that his own experience confirmed it:—

"We may seldom hear a formal discussion of the Five Points, but they reign in the spirit of the ministration. It pervades the worship, gives solemnity to the means of grace, and alone touches some of the deeper fountains and springs of human feeling. When one of our greatest historians has so recently recognised and recorded the wonderful triumphs of Calvinism, it might well expect a more generous treatment from one of its supposed defenders. Calvinism, we believe, is still regarded as the creed of Congregationalism, and if any departure is intended, the subject asks a more formal and serious investigation than the bye-play of an effective lecture on another subject can admit.... We are Calvinists, not as followers of Calvin, but as disciples of Him who selected Calvin to give prominence to a neglected part of the Word of God." On a Sunday morning in March of this year I specially visited the Metropolitan Tabernacle for the purpose of taking a sketch of the preacher from one of the deacons' seats at the back of the platform. It is half-past ten, or thereabouts, when I take possession of a seat in the favoured precincts referred to, and commence studying the extraordinary scene. Though the spring sun is already high in the heavens, the gas is alight, and a thin mist hangs about the building, in sympathy with the fog without. The immense area, which appears to be already nearly filled, is in reality merely undergoing the process of filling, and the movements of the people exactly resemble the motions of a swarm of insects, eager and impatient. At 10.49 the scene undergoes a transformation. Hitherto people had entered by side doors leisurely to secure their places; now all the main front entrances are opened, and broad, living streams of people pour in to cover the standing room of what appears to be an already crowded building, and until you can only just distinguish which are

aisles and which are pews. The new comers are manifestly a little excited, because all are anxious to find seats, and the bustle strikes the stranger as being a novelty of its kind. The coughing, talking, and shuffling about with the feet produce a peculiar compound sound, which, however, is instantly hushed when Mr. Spurgeon appears on the platform.

Now the multitude of faces are all turned in one direction, and the service commences. Those who sit close to the preacher's table will, perhaps, have observed that his tones of voice apparently adapt themselves to the circumstances of those who are near as well as to those who are farther away. To persons near at hand they are not unpleasantly loud, while to those in the distance they are loud enough—not that the vast concourse are made to hear without an effort, even by the most powerful lungs, but the necessary strain is visible only to those who are in proximity to the preacher. As seen from the platform, it is also interesting to note how the leviathan congregation allows itself to be managed; it is subject to influences as if it were one leviathan instead of six thousand atoms. It has its coughing times; in response to a touch of humour it smiles like one vast sensitive creature. Then it sings "faster" or "softer," according to instructions, and is in all respects most adroitly managed.

While reading the concluding verse of "Rock of Ages," the pastor is visibly affected, just as a few minutes ago he admirably entered into the spirit of "that wonderful Gospel chapter," Isaiah lv. Anon, the flaming earnestness thrown into the sermon seems to diffuse itself throughout the whole space of the building, until the rapt attention of the host as they listen to appeals founded on the words "Without money and without price" is sufficient to inspire one with awe. To handle what are called hackneyed texts in a striking and original manner is the mark of a great man, and the ability to do this is certainly a characteristic of Mr. Spurgeon.

Mr. Spurgeon In His Study

Mr. Spurgeon At Mentone

I attended the Conference of the Pastors' College for the first time in April, 1874. Of the Conference itself I had read glowing accounts; but, of course, imagination could not equal the reality. To all visitors the occasion could not fail to be a tempting one; for while a then well-known deacon—"the man in the shirt-sleeves"—looked well after the commissariat and the tables, Mr. Spurgeon never failed to provide rare entertainment in other kinds.

I went because I was specially invited by the President himself. He wrote to me at Enfield, enclosing a programme of the week's doings, and asked me to attend. Mr. Cuff had then only a short time before settled in his crowded district of Shoreditch and Hackney Road, and the preliminary meeting was held in Old Providence Chapel on Monday, April 13. The Pastors' College buildings were not then completed, so that the President's address of the following morning was given in Walworth Road Chapel. As was usual, the first hour was devoted to prayer—"a solemn, hearty, unanimous appeal to the Lord our God"—and Mr. Spurgeon reminded the members of the Conference of the general expectancy there was in the Church that a rich blessing was about to be showered down from heaven upon the world. Though none were called upon by name, about thirty engaged in prayer, after which the President pronounced the experience of the hour to be an omen for good. Two or three were delegated to speak to the boys of the Stockwell Orphanage. During the business proceedings mention was made of a brother who, on renouncing Baptist

views, took farewell of his congregation by enlarging on the text, "A little while and ye shall not see me." The great event of the morning was, of course, the address from the chair by the President; and, sitting just behind the great preacher on the platform, I could see the profound impression which his words produced upon his audience. Though in excellent health, he confessed to feeling a little unnerved while engaged in this responsible task; but whatever shrinking he experienced at the outset must have been overcome as he proceeded. His features became illumined, as it were, with the ideas which crowded his mind, and during an hour and a quarter he spoke with all his wonted force, commanding the rapt attention of the audience. The text was "Forward." As soldiers of Christ they knew nothing of retreating; it was death to turn back, and the only unconquerable difficulties lay in the rear. At the Stockwell Orphanage, in the evening, papers were read by Professor Gracey and Principal Rogers, the latter being introduced by the President as "this young fellow." Mr. George Wheeler, a Birmingham manufacturer, and an occasional preacher, presented Mr. Spurgeon with a handsome dinner service in fifty pieces. At the supper on the following evening a sum of £1,800 was collected. On Whit Tuesday, May 26, Mr. W. Olney and I accompanied Spurgeon to Willingham in Cambridgeshire. As we neared Cambridge the ground became familiar to him, and one thing after another he pointed out as objects belonging to, or reminding him of, early experiences. On arriving at Willingham we found the little town en fête—people were flocking together from all parts of the surrounding country, the Great Eastern Railway Company having made special arrangements for the accommodation of excursionists. The scene in the streets and at the afternoon service in a meadow was sufficiently novel; but perhaps even more striking was our private gathering at the house of a tradesman of the town. The garden behind his house, on account of its natural surroundings and the care bestowed on its culture, was a beautiful scene of natural seclusion. The tea-tables were arranged in the open air; and almost as distinctly as though the scene were actually before my eyes at this moment, I seem to see the company who, on that calm, memorable, summer-like evening, congregated in this retired garden. The preacher of the day reclined at ease, enjoying the balmy air, with the élite of the neighbourhood listening to his conversation, which was never inferior to his public teaching. On the next morning I left St. Ives and met him in company with Deacon Olney at Longstanton, the nearest station to Willingham, proceeding with him to Bedford, where a preaching engagement had to be kept on behalf of the Christian Union. We were met at the station by Mr. F. Howard, of the Britannia Iron Works, in whose waggonette Mr. Spurgeon and several others took a long drive together into the country around Bedford. At dinner a lively conversation was kept up by Mr. Spurgeon and a distinguished Wesleyan divine. The latter spoke in high praise of a certain preacher whom I knew to be lightly esteemed by Mr. Spurgeon. At this his brow darkened, and it was plain that he did not see eye to eye with his companion. The business part of the programme was gone through in the afternoon; but, of course, the main attraction centred in the evening service, at which Mr. Spurgeon was to preach. Bedford contained no assembly-room sufficient to accommodate an extra large congregation, and hence it was arranged that the evening meeting should be held in a shed at the Britannia Iron Works. The shed was provided throughout with temporary forms, and the large platform was decorated -with plants and flowers. When Mr. Spurgeon appeared at half-past six, both seats and standing-room were occupied by a dense expectant multitude, the number present probably being not less than three thousand. It had been the intention of the preacher to address himself more especially to preachers and ministers, as a large number were present; but just before coming out he felt an irresistible impulse to abandon

this design for the sake of appealing to those who were more needy. Indeed, he felt an inclination, he said, to leave off speaking to saints for seven years, and address himself wholly to sinners. The sermon, which lasted for an hour and ten minutes, was founded on 1Ch 27:9 : "If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee." The divisions were: (1) man's need, (2) the source of supply, and (3) the certainty of their success who seek God aright. The sermon was listened to throughout with rapt attention; and hundreds of people lingered behind to take a farewell glance at the preacher as he drove away to his lodgings. On Thursday, April 30, the members of the Baptist Union met at Walworth Road Chapel, and three hundred and fifty were afterwards entertained at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. In giving a word of welcome, Spurgeon said he should like to see the denominational feeling intensified. He expressed himself as delighted with the outlook all round, and maintained that a good hearty laugh after dinner was preferable to a row. The scattering of Baptist tracts was advocated, as well as preaching at times so as to tempt their opponents to take up the challenge. The Union did not encourage the drinking of healths, but, in expressing a sentiment, he said he was delighted to see Charles Stovel their chairman. "Have not I heard him speak sometimes like Demosthenes and Cicero rolled into one?" he added. Sometimes Mr. Stovel went like a steam-engine, and it was not easy to see what he was at; but when he came up out of his working "there was nobody who could touch him." When the annual meeting of the colporteurs was held on May 11 the number of men employed had increased to twenty-nine. The President spoke of the importance and success of the work, and then "the King of the Colporteurs"—Mr. S. King—who had been seven years in the service, and who still occupies his district at Warminster, was presented with Offor's edition of Bunyan's Works.

It was in the summer of 1874 that a certain clergyman wrote to Spurgeon to convey the pleasant and brotherly intimation that gout was sent as a Divine judgment for opposing the Established Church. In the course of a leading article The Sussex Daily News took a different view of the matter:—

"We say nothing of the anti-Christian character of this clergyman's communication, and merely content ourselves with remarking that he seems to have forgotten all about the Tower of Siloam and the lesson which the Great Teacher, whom he ought to reverence, drew from it. What we would more particularly point out is, how strange it is that the clergyman, who is, no doubt, a fine old Tory of the ancient school, should have considered Mr. Spurgeon's gout a judgment upon him. Why, the gout is simply the most aristocratic and most Conservative institution in the country. It was a companion of Pitt, it was the intimate associate of the late Lord Derby. No church dignitary lower than a dean, or a canon at the very lowest, would presume to say that he had the gout. Instead of taunting Mr. Spurgeon with being tormented with it, we feel much more inclined to chide him for his impertinence in venturing to claim acquaintance with it. What levelling, radical, democratic times these are! We shall be having Mr. Arch laid up with a swollen foot next and Mr. Odger taking to crutches and colchicum!"

Much interest was felt in Mr. Spurgeon's views on prophecy, and perhaps this interest was the more keen on account of his not preaching so often on prophetical themes as some of his brethren in the ministry. In a letter written to the editor of Messiah's Herald, however, the pastor of the Tabernacle made some striking remarks on the subject. He said:—

"The more I read the Scriptures as to the future, the less I am able to dogmatise. I see conversion of the world, and the personal pre-millennial reign, and the sudden coming, and the judgment, and several other grand points; but I cannot put them into order, nor has anyone else done so yet. I believe every prophetical work I have ever seen (and I have read very many) to be wrong in some points. I feel more at home in preaching Christ crucified than upon any other theme, and I do believe He will draw all men unto Him."

Mr. James Spurgeon suffered from a severe attack of illness during this summer, but otherwise the work prospered on all sides. The Baptist congregation at Cannon Street, Accrington, had recently entered into possession of a fine new chapel; and, in order to befriend the pastor, Mr. Charles Williams, and his people, Spurgeon visited the town on July 8, having found himself unable to preach at the opening of the chapel. It was decided to hold the service in the market-hall, as that would afford accommodation for four thousand persons. Some stallholders had to be compensated, while about eighty pounds had to be expended in preparing the place for the service. The doors were opened to ticket-holders at ten o'clock, and in the course of half-an-hour the entire space was wholly occupied by an eager throng. It was a singular and striking scene; and the preacher stood in the gallery on the right of the clock-tower. The sermon, founded on 1Ch 23:8-9, was the same that had been given at Rochdale on the evening before. The evening discourse was on Psa 70:4 : "Let all that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee," etc. In enlarging on the latter clause of his text, "Let God be magnified," the preacher gave some most characteristic passages:—

"If ever there was a time when Christians ought to be awake it is now. What is being done? Ladies and gentlemen have been to the Continent; they have gone into heathen temples, and have seen the gods and goddesses stuck up there; and, not liking that this Christian country should remain as it is, have come home and said to their priests, 'Make us gods like unto the gods of the heathen'; and the priests have set to work and have made them. Now we are fast getting to be a heathen country. A heathenism of the worst kind is coming over us. I will tell you what it is; the heathen of old used to take a tree and cut from it a piece, and out of that piece would make a fire which should boil the kettle and bake bread; and another piece they would stick up, pray to it, and call it a god. Now the heathens of the present day do this; they take a piece of dough—one part of the miller's sack they make a pudding of, and of the other they make a wafer; then they say, 'This is our God,' and they worship it; and when they have worshipped it they eat it—what I never heard of any other heathen ever doing. They have gone to a length that I think must provoke God to send great judgments on this land ere long, unless we be purged from it. They call themselves Protestants still. When a Papist does it I can understand it; but when a man who calls himself a Protestant does it, he is a traitor to his country and to his Church. The way to meet it is not by appealing to Parliament. What does Parliament know about it? What is the use of Parliament in the matter of religion? Go and appeal to God; and you, Christian people, go and preach Jesus Christ better than you have done. You ministers who have got to be fine and intellectual, clear your throats and preach Jesus Christ; pull the velvet out of your mouths, ye gentlemen who use fine words, and speak so that the people can understand you; and mind Christ and Christ crucified."

Chapter 92: Opening of the College Building

Chapter 92.

Opening Of The College Building

First Meeting at the College—The Orphanage—Dr. Pentecost—Baptism of the Pastor's Sons—"Smoking to the Glory of God"—Spurgeon and Pentecost—Conference on Preaching—"Sermons in Candles"—Illness—Letter to the Congregation—The Supplies—Spurgeon's Return to the Tabernacle—The Americans—Mr. W. E. Forster—Baptism.

Early in September the College building was opened in presence of some denominational leaders and a party of four hundred invited friends. Mr. Spurgeon, who presided, said he had made the arrangements himself. He had not divided the responsibility with a committee of six; for his opinion was that if one man made a mistake, half-a-dozen would make six times as many, and on comparing his own work with that of others, he found that he was not more than one-sixth as stupid as others. It was then shown how necessary those rooms had become; for it was intolerable to study beneath the Tabernacle in dark winter days, and some of the students had been laid aside. The President went on to say that he had not mentioned the project to anybody until he had received some nine thousand pounds, except to those who asked him for advice respecting an investment for their money. For instance, one lady said to him she wanted to give a memorial to her late husband, and he suggested this cause to her, which she said was the very thing to meet her wishes, and handed to him three thousand pounds. He wanted to put a bust of the husband upon the walls, but she said her husband would have been vexed at that, and accordingly it was not done, nor was his name mentioned.

It was explained that though the work had been done with little trouble to anybody, two thousand pounds would still be required to complete the furnishing. It was intended to have a good library, and to make the College second to no Nonconformist institution of the kind in the universe. Someone, in looking over the building, had said to Spurgeon, "You must be rich." "Oh yes, I am richer than any Jew," was the reply; "I have more than Rothschilds' bank to fall back upon, for I can have all that it will be good for me to have, and no more." He added that he intended to make the trust-deed of such a character that in case his death should occur—of which he was always being reminded by his anxious friends—any other College might be enabled to come and occupy the building, so that it might be used for any purpose promotive of the honour and glory of God. Should any similar college in London want a building, there it would be. Some would, no doubt, say, "Poor stupid old Spurgeon is dead and gone, though, after all, he was a vigorous sort of fellow, and had things his own way." He would not trouble about the future, although so long as he lived he intended to carry on the work in his own way, and he was sanguine that when he was gone what had been done would be almost forgotten when compared with what God would then do in raising up somebody else to continue the undertaking. To that date it appeared that some twenty thousand persons had been baptised by pastors educated in the College. In a subsequent short address he explained how providentially money came in for the carrying on of his work.

Three weeks before, at the Orphanage, there were the bills to pay, and they had no money. He said they could not ask God for it until they had given themselves, and he put down twenty-five pounds, and several others did the same. He then prayed to God and said: "These are Thy children, and this is Thy work; send us this day a considerable sum of money, if that be Thy will." He went home and wrote a letter and sent it to be lithographed; but within twenty-four hours the eight hundred pounds that they wanted came, and he had to send to stop the printing of that letter, and it never was printed. God had sent it all. There was not a man among the trustees but who would bear witness that no one knew about that till the money came. They did not tell anybody. One gentleman sent him a post-card requesting him to see him at the post-office. He went, and the gentleman said he thought he ought to give something to the cause of God, and he handed him three hundred pounds. And yet there were those who told them that God never answered prayer; but these were persons who never prayed themselves. The chairman's address was followed by speeches by Dr. Burns, Messrs. Tucker, Kirtland, and Orsman; and all, save the last named, have now passed away.

Perhaps the far-reaching influence of Spurgeon's preaching was-most singularly seen in the diversified character of those who came forward to join the church at the Tabernacle. Thus we find it announced: "Among the recent converts have been several Roman Catholics and Ritualists, who have become weary of the emptiness of sacramentarianism, and are glad to find rest in the full and finished salvation of Jesus Christ. On the 24th ult. there was held a noble meeting of the Bermondsey Mission, conducted by Mr. W. Olney, jun. By this effort one hundred and two persons have been added to the church." The Stockwell Orphanage then cost a little over five thousand pounds a year. There were two hundred and sixteen boys in the Orphanage; and of these only fifty-one were of Baptist parentage, sixty-nine being Church of England. A gentleman who had only attended the Tabernacle for a short time died and left a sum of ten thousand pounds to be divided between the College and the Orphanage.

Among the American visitors to England during the summer was Dr. Pentecost, who, besides being a welcome guest at Helensburgh House, was also welcomed as a brother preacher at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. In a private letter the American visitor wrote:—

"Yesterday I spent with Mr. Spurgeon at his home, and had a most delightful time. He certainly is a wonderful man. He had his College boys or men—some eighty in all—at his house, entertaining them before they began their fall term of study. He was bubbling over with humour and wisdom all the time. I never saw such a combination of genius in one man. He is a perfect master in the midst of his stupendous work. Everybody respects and loves him who has anything to do with him. He has that rare tact of being perfectly familiar with everybody while allowing no one to be familiar with him. He lives inside a charmed circle that no one enters, out of which he steps to touch and bless others. He received me most cordially, and invited me to open his service on Sunday evening with prayer. He had six thousand people in his congregation, and half as many more turned away unable to gain admission. At the close of the sermon he gave the hand of fellowship to forty persons, converted and baptised during the month. Then the Lord's Supper was administered to more than three thousand communicants. I had the pleasure and honour of assisting him at the service. Thirty elders served with sixty cups and sixty plates. Oh, it was a grand sight, and good to be there!" On Monday, September 21, the baptism of the pastor's twin sons, who were then eighteen years of age, took place at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. After

several prayers had been offered, Mr. Spurgeon gave an address on Baptism, in the course of which he expressed the hope that, as ministers of the Gospel, or as men of business, his two sons might be useful in the church. The chapel was densely crowded, and Dr. Brock gave an address to the young.

It was just about this time that a passage-at-arms on the subject of smoking occurred between Spurgeon and Dr. Pentecost. As already shown, the latter had been received as a brother preacher at the chapel and as a guest at Clapham. After visiting the Continent, the Tabernacle was revisited. "On this occasion Mr. Spurgeon invited him to divide the sermon, proposing that one should lay down the doctrine, and that the other should close by enforcing and illustrating the subject. With no thought beyond the illustration of the subject, Dr. Pentecost related his own struggle with the cigar. Mr. Spurgeon, as a smoker, made the application personal, and, when the brother sat down, immediately arose and combated what had been said." Perhaps the most graphic description of what took place within the Tabernacle, however, was given by a morning newspaper:—

"Last Sunday evening, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, the deservedly popular, unquestionably benevolent, and eminently shrewd Mr. Spurgeon was preaching a sermon on the sinfulness of little sins—a somewhat favourite topic among Nonconformist clergymen, and on which, under the title of 'The Little Foxes,' some curious lay-sermons have been written by Mrs. Harriet Beecher-Stowe. The gist of Mr. Spurgeon's discourse was that habitual indulgence in little sins leads to the commission of great ones—a position enforced by one of the most famous English divines in the illustration of the 'boy who plays with the devil's rattles.' At the close of his useful sermon the minister introduced an American clergyman who, he said, was anxious to address a few words to the congregation. This reverend gentleman 'improved the opportunity' by inveighing fiercely against the sin of smoking tobacco, especially in the form of cigars, and told his hearers how he had struggled and fought against the pernicious habit, and how at last, by the blessing and with the assistance of Providence, he had conquered his addiction to the weed. Then uprose Mr. Spurgeon and, with quiet humour, remarked that he would not allow the congregation to separate without telling them that he did not consider smoking to be a sin, and that, by the grace of God, he hoped to enjoy a good cigar before going to bed that night. Hyper-criticism should discern no irreverence in the conclusion of those remarks. We should be thankful for all things; and in observing that he hoped to enjoy a cigar through the Divine grace, he was but echoing the natural piety of Charles Lamb, who asked why we should not say grace before going out for a walk in the fields as well as before and after meat. Dr. Johnson said grace before he began the 'Rambler'; and if Mr. Spurgeon be a smoker, he only adds another and most excellent name to the long catalogue of distinguished English divines of the Established and the Dissenting Churches who have solaced themselves with that Indian weed." The matter was widely discussed both in the newspapers and in private circles; and as the phrase "smoking to the glory of God" became associated with his name, Spurgeon addressed a letter to The Daily Telegraph with a view of scattering any misapprehension which might arise. The pastor of the Tabernacle wrote:—

"I demur altogether and most positively to the statement that to smoke tobacco is in itself a sin. It may become so, as any other indifferent action may, but as an action it is no sin. Together with hundreds of thousands of my fellow-Christians I have smoked, and, with them, I am under the condemnation of living in habitual sin, if certain accusers are to be believed. As I would not

knowingly live even in the smallest violation of the law of God, and sin in the transgression of the law, I will not own to sin when I am not conscious of it. There is growing up in society a Pharisaic system which adds to the commands of God the precepts of men; to that system I will not yield for an hour. The preservation of my liberty may bring upon me the upbraidings of many good men, and the sneers of the self-righteous; but I shall endure both with serenity so long as I feel clear in my conscience before God. The expression 'smoking to the glory of God' standing alone has an ill sound, and I do not justify it; but in the sense in which I employed it I still stand to it. No Christian should do anything in which he cannot glorify God; and this may be done, according to Scripture, in eating and drinking and the common actions of life. When I have found intense pain relieved, a weary brain soothed, and calm, refreshing sleep obtained by a cigar, I have felt grateful to God, and have blessed His name; this is what I meant, and by no means did I use sacred words triflingly. If through smoking I had wasted an hour of my time—if I had stinted my gifts to the poor—if I had rendered my mind less vigorous—I trust I should see my fault and turn from it; but he who charges me with these things shall have no answer but my forgiveness. I am told that my open avowal will lessen my influence, and my reply is that if I have gained any influence through being thought different from what I am, I have no wish to retain it. I will do nothing upon the sly, and nothing about which I have a doubt."

Among the non-smokers who had no sympathy with Spurgeon in this smoking controversy was the preacher's old friend, James Clarke, who remarked in The Christian World: "To ourselves this tobacco pest is a daily martyrdom, and we could earnestly wish that every Christian teacher, at all events, felt no desire to indulge in a habit... which is unquestionably most fearfully destructive both to the bodies and souls of tens of thousands of our young men." On November 27 there was a conference of Christian workers at the Tabernacle, at which a number of distinguished persons were present. Spurgeon's address was on "What to Preach, and How." The first part of the question chiefly concerned the more elderly men, the last those who were older. Perhaps, however, older preachers thought too little of how to preach, and it was possible to become too careless. There should be not merely the right food; it needed to be properly cooked. Truth was the main thing, but preparation and delivery had much more to do with it than was commonly supposed. Better not preach at all than be uncertain what to preach. Preach Christ and Him crucified—Christ as a substitutionary sacrifice. In the course of this address the pastor succinctly gave his views on the important subject in hand:—

"They were bound to preach Christ risen and Christ yet to come—to let all men know that He lived to make intercession for them. They must also preach the Gospel; and justification by faith they must preach in almost every sermon. If they had to preach as evangelists, they must preach the simple Word; if as pastors, then their range was as wide as the Word of God. They must preach repentance, repentance being to many believers almost as sweet as faith. How to preach? If anyone would tell him how, he would go to school to him. He did not think that any man who preached with success had any notion that he had begun to preach yet. He would tell them when he thought he could preach well—it was on a Sunday night, after he had gone to bed, because then he thought of what he did not say, but ought to have said, and of what he might have said better. "When a man could preach no better than he had done, then he had finished, for there was nothing more beyond. If they wished to do any good they must preach naturally. Some men had been heard to say that when they got into the pulpit they felt quite other men. He hoped they were,

for when there they seemed all arms and legs. Many congregations, he believed, thought their ministers were not sincere because they talked in such a whining way." In the fall of this year there were some threatenings of another severe attack of gout; hut the symptoms seemed to pass away with so much less suffering than formerly that some hopes were entertained that the disease might even pass away from the system. The church at the Tabernacle was said to have one hundred and twenty-five lay preachers among its members. The itinerant evangelist of the College was Mr. William Higgins, who is now settled at Haddenham, Isle of Ely. In time the number of evangelists was increased, Messrs. A. J. Clarke (now of Australia and settled in a pastorate), J. Manton Smith, W. Y. Fullerton, and others, being of the number. The number of persons added to the church continued to be large. About one hundred and fifty were added in a few weeks, and fifty of these were received into fellowship on the first Sabbath of December. The whole of the two hundred and fifty men of various trades who had assisted in building the College were entertained at supper, and were suitably addressed by Mr. Spurgeon and others. On December 30 the friends of the College mustered in strong force, when the President expressed gratitude for the new building. He stated that forty-seven men had left the College during the year, and again answered those who gave out that too many preachers were being sent forth. Twenty-three were already settled in the United States. Too many ministers? In London alone there were nearly four million people for whom scarcely any spiritual provision was made compared with the terrible need; and when he saw fresh churches being built everywhere around, and congregations found for them, he felt ashamed of Dissenters in allowing a State Church to outstrip them. It was on this occasion that the bust of Spurgeon, now in the Conference Hall of the College, and executed by Mr.

Adams-Acton, was uncovered. A few gentlemen subscribed the cost, and the work was considered to be an excellent likeness. The lecture, "Sermons in Candles," which had now been frequently given, appears to have been suggested in the lecture-room of the College. When urged to use illustrations in preaching, one of the students asked where these were to be found, and the answer was, "I would not give twopence for a man who could not preach for six months from a tallow candle." That incident set in motion a train of ideas about candles. The lecture probably differed on all occasions of its being given. The form it took on this occasion may be judged from the following:—

"Here a round lantern was exhibited, about a foot high and with coloured divisions, and the lecturer observed that similar lanterns to that were used in the East. He had been recently looking up the history of candles, to see if he could find something fresh, but he confessed that he could not. Seven candles having been placed on the table, which ran down gradually from full length to almost nothing, the lecturer remarked that that was the emblem by which old Quarles illustrated the seven stages of life. He then held up before the audience a black japanned candle-box, observing that, though it might contain excellent wax candles, there could be no light unless they were illuminated, and that it might represent the case of a very respectable congregation, either of the Established Church or of some Dissenting denomination—a very respectable Independent, or Baptist, or Wesleyan congregation. They had got a very respectable minister, but nobody could understand him. The deacons were very respectable, but nothing else. If asked whether they had a ragged-school, such men would reply that it would shock their wives to think of such a thing. Many persons were prevented from being useful by the notion of dignity or respectability. People must be got at somehow, and if it could not be done in the genteelest manner, it must be done in

some other manner. What was wanted was light to lead the ignorant to Christ. Some persons were born on the wrong day or in the wrong age to be of any use. One gentleman fancied that he might have been an Oliver Cromwell, and as an Oliver Cromwell was not wanted in his time, he became a loafer on his father and mother. If such a person were set up in business he soon came down again. He was like a candle which had too fine a candlestick, the truth being that it was not the candlestick, but the candle that was wrong. He had had a member of his church who had previously left the Church of England, as he told him, because he disliked the Prayer-book; who then joined the Wesleyans, and left them because they ranted; who next went to the Presbyterians, and left because they were high and dry; and who then came there. If a man who joined the Baptists could not be satisfied, nothing more could be done with him. That man, however, said they were the most bigoted and quarrelsome set he ever met with. From them he went to the Independents, and the last time that he heard of him he was a Plymouth Brother. According to himself he might have been a useful man but for his bad surroundings."

Spurgeon was now again laid low by illness, and he was confined to his bed on Tuesday, January 5, when, according to arrangement, he was to have presided at the New Year's prayer-meeting at the London Tavern. He had been able to preach at, the Tabernacle on the first Sunday morning of the year, the text being "Keep silence before me, O islands," etc. (Isa 41:1), but after that he had to be content for some time to be a prisoner at home. Many plans could not be carried out, and some depression and disappointment came as a result. Even the journey to a warmer climate had to be postponed; and while readers of newspapers were led to believe that Spurgeon was on the way to the sunny south, he was suffering at Clapham. He was necessarily absent from the annual Church meeting on January 8, but there was no lack of enthusiasm. Well-meaning but mistaken persons sent prescriptions for the gout; but the sufferer assured his friends that the readiest means of ensuring, his restoration was to relieve him of all anxiety about the institutions. Meanwhile certain journals were so ill-informed in respect to Spurgeon's movements that he was spoken of as though he were in Italy, while the date of his probable return was mentioned. In point of fact the sufferer was not able to go to Menton, as he had anticipated; but he visited Brighton and Folkestone, Boulogne and Paris. The letter read to the congregation on the last Sunday of January gave painful evidence of suffering endured:—

"My Dear Friends,—Having weathered a second furious storm, I trust I am now fairly on the way to recovery. For this I desire to render thanks unto our healing Lord.

"My worst pain has been that of feeling useless, and shut out from the service of God. My instincts suggest that I begin work at once, and my heart prompts me thereto; but all the wise ones around me say that it would be madness to plunge myself into another illness by return to labour, and they urge me to increase rather than diminish the rest which I had allotted to myself in a warmer region. I feel that in this I am very much in your hands. Together with the past four Sabbaths it will make a long time of absence, very trying to a congregation. Can you bear it for my sake? If so, you will not leave unoccupied seats, but will maintain the number of the assembly, while the prayer-meetings, the week-night services, and the various departments of holy labour will be maintained in full force. I have this confidence in you that so it will be, and that if, in my presence, you have watched over the interests of the church, you will do so much more in my absence.

"Possibly in a week's time I may be able to remove, and I should wish to leave behind me the earnest assurance of my love to you in Christ Jesus, and also to ask this token of you, that you will seek to promote the work of the Lord more than ever while I am away. A week of special services has been planned; may the Holy Spirit make them seasons of great power. But the success of the meetings must in a large measure depend upon you. Your hearty sympathy, your prayers, your presence—all will help. Your bringing unconverted persons with you to the meetings, and personally pressing home the truths heard, will be a main instrument in the hands of God for conversion. Last year the blessing came in a large measure—shall it be withheld this year? O Lord, send, send even now prosperity.

"May you have the full ears of corn to-day and the fat kine, and may you be filled with all the fulness of God!—Yours in truest unity of heart, "C.H. Spurgeon."

It was during this long and trying illness that an article, which I wrote for The Christian World on "Hearing the Supplies" at the Tabernacle, created far more commotion than was pleasant; for an impression got abroad that the state of things was made to appear worse than it really was. A reference to what a certain American preacher said about coming "for the purpose of worshipping Mr. Spurgeon" was especially resented, and nothing would have made the pastor believe that such a thing ever occurred, although there was convincing proof that the fact was correctly stated. The matter was mentioned in The Sword and the Trowel, but the editor sent me a very kind and characteristic private letter, and thus the matter ended.

Mr. Spurgeon's absence from the Tabernacle extended through twelve Sundays, the longest break in his labours that had ever occurred. At length on Easter Sunday, March 28, the familiar voice was once more heard. During the long interval all things had gone on well. Henry Vincent gave a lecture on behalf of the Liberation Society on January 26; in February special evangelistic services were held, aided by the College evangelist, Mr. William Higgins; and then the chapel was closed for cleaning and repairs. The occasion was really a reopening of the building, and the news that Spurgeon would be in his place again had the effect of attracting an eager throng from all directions. On the following Tuesday evening there was a festive kind of gathering to welcome Mr. Spurgeon back. An illuminated address was presented to him; and after this had been read by his secretary, Mr. Blackshaw, the pastor said that he occupied a most unusual position in being himself the audience and the people being the preacher. "You preach with great sweetness and power, and affect the heart," he added. "Of the Tabernacle I can say, 'There my best friends, my kindred dwell.'" Some had expressed a desire to supplement the address with a large sum of money; but while so much was needed for the Orphanage and the College that would not have been received. When he first came to London a certain good old deacon prayed that he might be kept from "the bleating of the sheep"—i.e., from the crotchets of cantankerous persons; and the prayer was said to have been answered in the unity and peace which had characterised the church for twenty years.

Meanwhile Spurgeon and Pentecost appear to have been talked of more on the other side of the Atlantic than in the British Isles. Attention was specially drawn to an article in The Watchman and Reflector of Boston, in which one writer seems to have overstepped the bounds of allowable sensationalism:—

"He reports a conversation between a certain personage who 'goes to and fro in the earth,' and who on receiving 'over the wires' from his agent the following message, 'Spurgeon is winged; no time to be lost,' hastened over from Brooklyn, where he was very busy, and interviewed Mr. Spurgeon in his study, who, 'never taken by surprise, eyed him through his jug of ale, and begged him to be seated.' We shall not follow the writer through a paper conceived in such a spirit, and showing such a want of acquaintance with the habits of the man whom it affects to criticise. The feature which has struck us most in it is the writer's familiarity with Satan's mode of thought—a familiarity which suggests that this is not the first time he has had the honour of acting as amanuensis to the 'Prince of darkness.'... We are sorry that the cause, 'Pentecost v. Spurgeon,' should ever have arisen. We pointed out at the time what we felt to be its danger; but if we are called upon to give judgment in the matter, it must be in favour of the defendant. Much as it may surprise our American friends- whose sense of right seems strangely different from our own—we would much rather in this matter be Spurgeon than Pentecost." The fourth volume of "The Treasury of David" now appeared, embracing Psalms 79-103, or those which had been least commented upon. "It is strange how many of the Psalms have been overlooked or left without full exposition," remarked The Freeman in noticing this volume, "and this fact makes Mr. Spurgeon's work the more valuable, as it makes it also the more difficult to write." A lecture syndicate at Boston (U.S.) made another attempt to induce Spurgeon to visit the New World; and his reply was still a refusal:—

"It is not possible for me to leave my work except for a short interval to rest. I have no one to occupy my pulpit, preside over my church, look after the College, govern the Orphanage, superintend the colporteurs, edit the magazine, etc. I must keep my hand on the oar till I die. I see no hope of my visiting America, much as I would like to greet the brethren there. Compensation is not an item of consideration. Nothing, indeed, could compensate my conscience if I left my work and any harm came of it. I know, within a little, what I can do, and I feel that I cannot conscientiously attempt a work in America to which I am not called to the injury of that which now engrosses all my time and every faculty I possess." As a statesman the late Mr. W. E. Forster occupied only a low place in the estimation of advanced Nonconformists; but Spurgeon had a good word for him, thinking that he was harshly used. In this opinion the great preacher had few followers among his own people, however. The Freeman declared that Forster had set Dissenters and their principles at defiance; that through the Education fight he had sought Tory support; that he was regarded as a Liberal statesman who could be relied upon for the support of the Anglican Establishment; that, though the son of a Quaker, he supported a Ritualistic church; and, finally, that the electors of Bradford had shown that they no longer believed in him. From time to time American visitors went away to put exaggerated reports in circulation; but the assertion of one would be counteracted by the contradiction of another. The controversy on smoking had hardly died away when Spurgeon was accused of being a coward. It was given out that the Established Church in England was "so cowing that even Spurgeon is afraid to baptise on the Sabbath; and skulks into the clandestineness of a week-day service!" That was what one writer said; but another replied: "Mr. Spurgeon may do many things which we condemn, but he does not 'skulk' in anything."

Chapter 93: First Conference in the College

Chapter 93.

First Conference In The College A Remarkable Address—Illness—Moody and Sankey at the Tabernacle—Meeting the Colporteurs—Bible Society Meeting—Spurgeon meets Archbishop Tait—Wedding at Enfield—The Orphanage—At Nantwich—Students' Holiday—An Adventure—Spurgeon and the Church—At Kettering.

The eleventh Conference, that of 1875, was the first that was held in the new College building. It had been said that the President was always well at the time of the annual reunion of his men; but this year it was otherwise. He took part in the opening services on Monday, April 12; he gave the address on Tuesday; he was present at the annual supper on the following evening, after which strength failed, and a severe cold in the head, as well as an inflamed eye, confined him to his bed. When all were assembled on Tuesday morning, April 13, Mr. Spurgeon intimated that if any were present who were not members of the Conference, they must consider themselves as not being there. When a question arose as to whether seceders from Baptist principles should be retained on the roll of membership, it was decided that the names of such should be erased. The President intimated that the College was pre-eminently a denominational institution, and said there was such a disease as enlargement of the heart. One who had seceded and wished to return was readmitted amid hearty cheers. We were all grieved to hear Mr. Spurgeon commence his address by confessing that he felt weak, both mentally and physically. The subject was "Individuality and its Opposite;" but as no one word, either in English or in Latin, gave the idea he had in his mind, he fell back on the Apostle Paul's expression—"I and yet not I." The subject was then more fully defined:—"I to the very full, every bit of me—Paul, once a Pharisee, a blasphemer, a persecutor—called to be an apostle, who finds a cause of joy that 'this grace is given to me to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.' I, not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles, yet not I; I feel myself to be nothing, yea, and less than nothing, and yet, in Christ, lost and found; so it is I and not I." The subject was worked out with great force and clearness. It was shown that ministers should be as far removed as possible from egotism, as that was detestable in a preacher. Ministers should likewise have a firm conviction of their own personal commission to preach the Gospel. Then they should feel great respect for their own individual spheres of labour. Next, they should pay special regard to their own personal adaptation to the work. They must have great regard also for their own personal responsibility. When he came to what he called "the opposite"—self-negation—the President added: "I am not going to confute and then change sides, and then confute again, for what I have to say is not exactly about the opposite, but the correlative, or what is the word? If anybody who is a word-maker can give me a word that stands in apposition and opposition to individuality, I should be glad. I mean the sense of our being one by ourselves, having for its opposite the sense of our not being by ourselves. I want you all to feel that though you have the work to do, yet you are not the only person in the world, not the only lamp and trumpet God has. He has other men besides you. You are only one member of a great body, one soldier of a great army." The address abounded with telling passages, and two or three may be

selected. He insisted that it was the pastor's duty to stick to his calling:—

"A dear brother said to me once, 'I wish you would go out everywhere more frequently,' and he urged as a reason that my people would love me better if they had less of me. I replied that I did not want my people to appreciate me any more, for if they went further they would be grossly guilty of idolatry, and I meant to stop at home for fear they should. His argument did not answer. I might have rambled all the world over, and done great good, if my calling were to do so; but if I am a pastor I must see that my pastoral work is done first. Brother, when you have God's work to do, and you know the part God has given you, stick to it." The necessity of doing little things well, and of always doing the best possible, was well enforced:—

"I went through a china factory the other day, and saw a man painting very delicately. He did not look at me; I do not think he knew anything about me; and though other parties were round, the man's eye was never raised. He had to paint his picture, and he stuck to it. I like to see that abstraction from everything in a man having a work to do. 'This one thing I do'—some frown, some smile—this one thing I do—some think they could do it better; but this one thing I am at. Remember, if you do that, and give your soul to it, it does not much matter about its appearing to be a somewhat small and insignificant work. There is as much skill displayed in the manufacture of a very minute watch as in the dial which sends its sound all over the city. Have any of you seen the famous picture in the Hague, called Paul Potter's Bull—one of the famous pictures of the world? There is not very much about it—there is a tree and a frog. 'But it is only a bull,' you say. Ah! but there is not another bull in the world like it. Many a man has attempted to depict some marvellous piece of natural scenery on the Alps or in Cumberland, some magnificent sea-piece, with a fleet of yachts, and he has not succeeded. The subject was infinitely superior to the art. So will it always be in our workmanship; but, at the same time, we must never think that because the particular work we have seems small, therefore we cannot or should not do it thoroughly well. If you sweep a crossing it were well to do it better than anybody else." An encouraging anecdote was told about the Hamburg Mission:—

"Mr. Oncken, in the early days of his preaching in Hamburg, was brought before the burgomaster, and imprisoned many times. Once he said to Mr. Oncken, 'Do you see that little finger? As long as that can be held up I will put you down.' Said Mr. Oncken,' I do not suppose you see what I see. I see not a little finger, but a great arm, and as long as that can move you will never put me down.' The opposition which is waged against the true minister does not, after all, amount to a burgomaster's little finger, while all the forces which sustain heaven and earth are at his call."

Though still suffering from inflammation of the left eye, Mr. Spurgeon seemed to be in one of his happiest moods when describing the work of the College to the party of friends and subscribers who met at tea and supper on Wednesday, April 14. Mr. Samuel Morley, M.P., presided, and the collection amounted to nearly two thousand pounds. In giving an account of the foreign work of the College, the President relates the following anecdote:—

"There are two brethren in Madrid. I do not know who provides for them, except that their trust is in the living God. I have sometimes given them help from my private purse, but not much. It is their practice to go out and sing in the streets, and then they address the crowd attracted by their singing. They also preach in the prisons. Some time ago they came into contact with a Romish priest, who said to them, 'Can you tell me how to make money?' 'Yes.' 'Well, then, I'll listen.' They

sat down together upon chairs in the public park, and the two young evangelists spoke to the priest about Jesus Christ. He said that was not what he wanted to hear; could they tell him how to make money? They replied, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.' To this they added an account of their own experience. However, this mode of money-making did not suit the priest, and he went on his way, but not rejoicing."

It was mentioned that there were many of the men in America, and one was Moderator of the Nebraska Association:—

"I may tell you the story of another brother who came over to see me not long ago, and who stayed at my house. The position of this brother is somewhat better than my own. He gets seven hundred pounds a year, and has the best house in the town in which he is settled. Besides, his people give him a three months' holiday every year. He has been over in England twice. Now that young man's father was an Irishman, who, when he did work, pursued one of the very humblest manual occupations, but who generally did not work at all, being too much of a gentleman to work. This lad was in the Sunday-school at the Tabernacle, and his sister too; and at that time they were in the very depths of poverty. From the Sunday-school he passed on to the College, where he studied hard. Now he has risen to the most honourable and influential position which he occupies in America. But for our College I really do not see how it could have been possible for that man to rise as he has done."

During this Conference Messrs. Moody and Sankey were holding meetings in London, and they visited the Metropolitan Tabernacle on Friday morning, April 16. As Mr. Spurgeon had shown the greatest interest in the work of these evangelists, he was much disappointed at not being well enough to be present at the great assembly in his own chapel. He seemed soon to be laid low and speedily to recover. Thus he preached twice at the Tabernacle on Sunday, April 18. Still, he was overworked, and sorely needed rest; and, as was remarked at the time, he looked like one whose duty it was to spend six months among the mountains of Switzerland. In Spurgeon's case rest merely meant change of work, so long as he was able to do anything, however. He attended the Baptist Union meeting at Walworth Road Chapel on April 29, and gave a short address on evangelistic work, showing that it would be a noble thing if such a union as that could have evangelists of its own. On the 3rd of May he attended the annual meeting of the Colportage Association, when he spoke in his accustomed pointed manner. He advised the men to cultivate good manners as well as the "push" of the enterprising tradesman. He also presided at the annual public gathering in the evening, when the colporteurs themselves gave some interesting pieces of experience. In The Sword and the Trowel for this year will be found full descriptions of this colportage work, the results of a few days' observation in the Warminster district which I made in company with Mr. Jones, the secretary of the Association. The colporteurs employed appeared to be of a hardy race, well qualified for their arduous calling, and, like all members of the Tabernacle Church, they showed a strong attachment to their President. When I entered the room the secretary was addressing the men; and when Mr. Spurgeon himself appeared in one of the passages, he was pressed into service. Though he had nothing prepared, he, with his usual readiness, undertook the task, and spoke with wit and piquancy for half an hour on the importance of the work, its encouragements and discouragements. While the spirit was willing, he likened the weak flesh to a broken-kneed horse that was not always willing to go. He showed that the colporteur's success did not depend on the amount of goods sold, because a comparatively small

sale might represent a great amount of good done. So far as he was concerned he confessed to be good neither at buying nor selling, for a successful trafficker required to be a cross between a Yankee, a Scotsman, and a Jew, each being representative of shrewdness, dogged perseverance, and business tact. There were two Americans who, on being confined in a certain place, were reported to have cleared five shillings each by exchanging their waistcoats; but such cuteness was not to be emulated. He then told a good story, while impressing upon the men the necessity of always having one deaf ear and one blind eye. He once encountered a very abusive woman in the village of Waterbeach; but to all her raving he returned only gentle answers. "Yes, it's a very fine day," he said; and then, as the scold continued her harangue, he added, "No, I don't think it will rain." The woman stopped short in her violence, concluding that the young gentleman who had offended her was either deaf or too amiable to be further insulted. At the after meeting in the chapel we were much amused with the homely earnestness of the speakers, one of whom stood on the platform, wearing a knapsack. A climax of merriment was reached when Mr. Spurgeon called out to a certain speaker whose arms were beating time to his stentorian utterances, "Mr.------, you'll hurt yourself!" "Oh no, sir, no fear," was the reply; "I'm used to the hopen air!" On Friday, May 7, 1875, Spurgeon preached in the Bow Road Hall, erected for Messrs. Moody and Sankey, to the largest congregation I ever witnessed within doors. He was quite equal to the occasion, and the whole service was striking. "Come and walk the wards of this great hospital," he petitioned in his prayer, "and cure the sin-sick souls. Make a battle-field of this place. If there be a publican not daring to lift his eyes to Thee, cast Thine eyes on him. Let the fire of heaven come down, and let the conflagration be like the Fire of London, setting even the churches on fire." The congregation was likened to a great casket of jewels; and when the plea arose, "Oh, God the Father, give Jesus this casket to night!" "Amen! Amen!" came from all sides. On May 14 he opened the Mission Chapel in Little Wild Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields; an historical building, which, after a distinguished history as the home of a flourishing Church, was handed over to Mr. George Hatton for the headquarters of the St. Giles's Christian Mission, one of the most effective philanthropic agencies in London, and one which has done eminent service in reclaiming the criminal classes. Spurgeon had the greatest admiration for Mr. Hatton and his work. Mr. Hatton is now invalided, but the various departments of the Mission are still efficiently superintended by Mr. William Wheatley. On the 14th of May a kind of students' reunion was held at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The young men of the Bow Training Institute were invited to a conference. After tea Mr. A. G. Brown, Dr. Barnardo, and others spoke, and Mr. Spurgeon gave us his lecture on "The Voice," when he proved himself to be possessed of powers of mimicry which a Garrick might have admired. Roars of laughter greeted the lecturer as he gave examples—obsolete and otherwise—of various styles of preaching. We heard something about those irreproachable "gentlemen," the Claytons; something of Dr.------, the exordium of whose sermons was never heard by anyone; and something of those who "squeak the everlasting Gospel." Among the visitors was a well-known Edinburgh surgeon, now dead, who at this particular juncture was extremely anxious to interest Londoners, and especially Spurgeon, in the Medical Mission. The good doctor made his speech, and, by way of illustrating the influence wielded by medical missionaries, he said that the heathen were even ready to worship those devoted men after death, such was the gratitude they felt for the service done them. Indeed, there was one who had to be buried by stealth to prevent the people from committing idolatry over his remains. The pastor listened to all this, and, when he spoke, showed that he thought it very reasonable. It would

manifestly be hard work to worship a lawyer, for instance; but a surgeon—a man who had eased your pain and had done you good in every way—was a different kind of being. To reverence him was the most harmless form of devil-worship. The annual meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society for this year was an exceptionally brilliant affair; for, besides Spurgeon, Dr. Tait, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Dr. Morley Punshon were among the speakers. I believe that the good Archbishop very highly appreciated this opportunity of hearing the great preacher, and he spoke very kindly to Mr. Spurgeon while sitting on the platform. The speech of the latter was in his happiest manner, and in one or two passages references were made to the evangelistic meetings of Moody and Sankey:—

"The danger of an excited time of revival is, of course, fanaticism. Somebody said, 'The fanatics of London are having a fine field-day just now.' Now, there is a difference of opinion about that. In the services I have been at I have observed nothing like fanaticism. In fact, my lord, at one service that I attended I rather found fault that there was not enough heat in it. It happened to be a bitterly cold day and a very draughty place, and we did not seem to get into a thorough glow. Certainly we did not reach a red heat, and I prefer a white heat—I am rather a salamander. I have been at Primitive Methodist meetings when the fire has burned, indeed, like coals of juniper; but on this occasion we did not come near it. I thought it was the coldness of heart of the people of London that would not let the fire burn as much as it might. Fanaticism I saw no traces of. I long for the time to come when the less friendly part of the newspaper press will call us fanatics. I should like to hear the critics hiss between their teeth, 'You are fanatics and fools.' I should think we were getting to be both warm and wise then, and getting something near the right point. It is an evil day when men speak too well of us; but when they talk of us disparagingly, it may be that we are having honour in the sight of God. There is no fear, however, of fanaticism ever doing mischief if we keep the Bible always to the front; that will be the master of the fire; and the fire will be a good servant to us."

Then came a passage about the Bible being the best antidote to the spread and influence of Popery:—

"You have perhaps seen upon the Arch of Titus, in Rome, the seven-branched candlestick of the Temple. We are told that, after the triumph, that sacred light-bearer was lost in the Tiber. The Church of Rome has no love for that seven-branched candlestick; she has lost it. I am rather glad of the idea of purifying that muddy stream; perhaps they will find it by-and-by. I should not wonder that, by God's blessing, by the help of Garibaldi, they may find out several little things that they have lost; and now that the Bible Society has a house in the Corso, the way to find out the true seven-branched golden candlestick which is to illuminate the world is straight before the eyes of the Romans. We have got the lamp; let us carry it. Do not find fault with the darkness—light the candle. Do not complain about there being error in the world—proclaim the Truth. And by what means can we better proclaim it than by scattering the Word of God on all hands?"

It seemed to be necessary that the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle should stand forward as defender of the doctrines taught by the American evangelists. On Sunday evening, May 16, therefore, he defended Moody's teaching in regard to immediate salvation through faith in Christ. "We do not want to allow our friends to stand in the front of the battle, and to be looked upon as targets," said the preacher. "They preach nothing but what we have preached all our lives. They preach nothing but what has the general consent of Protestant Christendom." The preacher's

interest in the campaign was shown by his attendance at some of the meetings. Thus the great congregation he addressed in Dr. Donald Fraser's church in Marylebone on June 1 was represented as quite a mixed assembly, including many of the very poor. Perhaps the most discouraging fact about this effort was the "almost instantaneous collapse of the meetings" as soon as the evangelists removed to another district. Mr. Spurgeon rebuked the people who followed their favourite preacher and singer from one station to another; and it is safe to say that his common-sense could not have allowed of his endorsing all that was done or said on every occasion. The hearty sympathy he had with them on the whole, however, was well expressed when he spoke at the opening of the hall near Camberwell Green in June:—

"We are happy to have our friends here, because, somehow or other, they manage to get the popular ear. Our brethren have got a grip upon the masses, and they preach the Gospel. We have it not very distinct from a great many voices, and sometimes when I am invited to a conference I have to ask what is the exact thing they mean. But I know what Mr. Moody means when he speaks, and what Mr. Sankey means when he sings. I have never seen men carry their meaning more fully upon their lips. I know what they have to say. They do not come to battle with errors, they do not indulge themselves in exposing sophistries and the like. When the Grotto del Cane is shown, they plunge a dog into the carbonic acid until he is nearly dead, and then fling him into cold water, and he comes round again. So it is with some ministers—they like to dip one into error to let us know what it is, and then put us into the water of life to bring us round again. I do not think Mr. Moody knows anything about this, and let us, for these reasons, heartily unite with the brethren." On June 8 Mr. Spurgeon drove from Clapham to officiate at the marriage of the writer and Miss Ellen Logsdon: A minister present afterwards wrote—"Those whose privilege it was to be present are never likely to forget the service, and it is much to be regretted that the pen of some ready writer did not record some of the remarks which Mr. Spurgeon made; at one time there was certainly more than the smile, and at another the tears were not few. The blessing with which Mr. Spurgeon closed the service was worth going many miles to hear. Altogether a friend was not far wrong who said that 'the service made you wish to be married over again, to be married in such a fashion.'"

Later in the same day he attended a meeting of the London Baptist Association at Tottenham. Here he read a paper, which occupied three-quarters of an hour. "Its illustrations were drawn mostly from the writer's own experience," remarked one who was present. In reference to impromptu speaking, he warned his hearers against supposing that the thing could be easily acquired. "The true speaker, like the poet, must be born, not made. Yet even the born speaker could only hope to attain perfection by dint of incessant and unceasing toil. Mr. Spurgeon's references to Tacitus and Virgil showed how thoroughly he must have carried out the principles he suggested for the development of this gift." The festival at the Stockwell Orphanage on June 18 had Lord Shaftesbury for chairman, and, notwithstanding the rain, there was a large attendance and a good collection. It was the President's forty-first birthday, and he was in good spirits, while he showed in the course of his address that the institution was succeeding as well as its best friends could reasonably expect.

Having received a legacy of £1,000 for the Orphanage from a family in the neighbourhood, Mr. Spurgeon visited Nantwich on July 28 and preached there for the removal of a debt on a small Baptist chapel in the town. The services were held in the market-hall, which was specially fitted up

for the occasion. According to a contemporary account, "Every available point in the interior was occupied, even the ladder leading to the roof having its occupants, and the vegetable-stalls themselves boasting unaccustomed display. Everyone in the market-hall could hear Mr. Spurgeon's voice distinctly, even in the remotest corners of the building, though the hall, with its pillars and timbers, is by no means adapted to acoustic purposes. Galleries were put up above the butchers' stalls by the chapel committee." On August 3 the session of the Pastors' College was opened in the usual festive manner in the grounds surrounding Sir Charles Forbes's mansion of Broomwood, near Clapham Common, a house intimately associated with Wilberforce, the philanthropist. By the time that the two hundred visitors had arrived the grounds presented the aspect of a little fair. Different kinds of games were engaged in by bands of hilarious players; in the great tent the tables were being furnished for a recherché feast; the commissariat department, with its large cooking furnace, was near at hand, while piles upon piles of plates, and various good things of an edible kind on the greensward, imparted to the whole scene a gipsy-like appearance. In the morning the sun shone brightly, and though Mr. Spurgeon had his left hand in a warm glove to protect that lately-afflicted member from the atmosphere, his cheery voice seemed to impart a holiday tone to all the good-humoured speeches that followed throughout the day. He walked hither and thither about the meadow, like one who knew what was expected of him, now speaking to well-known friends, now welcoming new-comers, and now conversing with certain distinguished visitors from America. In the meantime, the deacons and their large staff of helpers are actively alive in the marquee, "serving tables;" for, as one of them pointedly remarks, "it's no fool of a job" to dine two hundred people in first-class style in a field. At three o'clock the company assembled in the canvas dining-hall with its carpet of emerald green; and ample justice was done to the liberal fare. Then followed what the President called a "middle-dinner speech," after-dinner speeches bearing the character of being dull and profitless. While old students were welcomed, new ones were warned of the ordeal in store for them. The class-rooms of Messrs. Gracey, Rogers, James Spurgeon, and Fergusson were represented as so many chambers of torture to new beginners, who, however, it was hoped, would survive the horrors daily inflicted. The youths just up from the country received some well-timed hints that it would be well not to judge of the prospect before them by what they saw on what was really a day of transfiguration. The young men who hoped to be aught in the world, and to do aught for Christ, must prepare themselves for hard work. They must believe in God, but they must work—work like troopers—would they succeed in life. In response to certain cheers, the President said cheers had greeted him all his life; deacons and elders had cheered him, and if they would only believe in a broomstick as they did in him, they would get along. The shades of night were gathering before the company separated, all conscious of having passed a delightful day.

Spurgeon frequently met with adventures in the streets, such as supplied the materials for good stories. He maintained, contrary to the opinion of some others, that it was a good custom to give the Scriptures away; and an experience that he met with about this time had the effect of confirming him in his belief. "A cabman drove me home," he said, "and when I paid him his fare he said, 'It's a long time since I drove you last, sir.' 'But,' said I, 'I do not recollect you.' 'Well,' he said, 'I think it's fourteen years ago; but,' he added, 'perhaps you will know this Testament?' pulling one out of his pocket. 'What!' I said; 'did I give you that?' 'Oh yes,' he said, 'and you spoke to me about my soul, and nobody had done that before, and I have never forgotten it.' 'What,' said I; 'haven't you worn it out?' 'No,' he said, 'I would not wear it out; I have had it bound,' and he had kept it very

carefully indeed. It encourages one to give books when they are so valued," added Mr. Spurgeon. "Sometimes people won't value a tract. I believe it is often the cheapest to give a better thing; that which costs you rather more will be the more highly treasured." On August 15 the pastor preached a sermon at the Tabernacle, the subject being "The Priest Dispensed With," and the text 1Jn 5:10 : "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." The Freeman wished that the discourse could be given on every village green in England; but The Church Times suggested the addition of "and brimstone" to what the Baptist organ called "words of fire." In the opinion of the High Church journal, Spurgeon preached "an all but avowed Antinomianism;" the Nonconformist paper remarked in reply, "The Ritualists wince under the home-thrusts of the greatest preacher of our time." The losses and gains of this year were remarkable. On the one hand the preacher himself was made to realise that he was burning the candle at both ends; and his own sufferings were from time to time increased by the loss of earnest co-workers or friends. Mrs. Bartlett, Dr. Brock, James Mursell, and Henry Olney were among the losses by death. On the other hand, Mr.

Matthews's legacy of ten thousand pounds was a timely supply for the Orphanage and the College. On September 1 the preacher was at Devonshire Square Chapel, Stoke Newington. He preached twice to delighted crowds, and between the services was the life of a select company in the house of his friend Mr. Henderson, the pastor. This visit had been pat off repeatedly through ill-health. On Saturday afternoon, the 18th of September, I went over to Clapham. Though the weather was exceedingly warm he told me that he had been so busy all the morning as not to know whether it was sultry or otherwise. We walked together into the garden, which was always skilfully cultivated, and now presented a really charming aspect in its autumnal dress. Being presently joined by Messrs. Charlesworth, Blackshaw, and another, we lingered on the lawn and played a couple of games of bowls. A few minutes before the pastor had told me that he was in one sense the most unlucky man alive, though in another sense so fortunate, on account of the vast amount of work he was compelled to get through. After hearing such a confession, I was glad to see how heartily he could forget his cares and enter into the spirit of a game. He and I won both games; and throughout the contest he was apparently as anxious to excel as though great things depended on his skill. When our sport was ended we loitered in the grounds, when, plucking an "everlasting flower," he presented it to me. I was to carry it to my wife, and we were to keep it for ever and ever. This is, of course, preserved, and I trust will long be treasured by those who may come after us.

Mr. Blackshaw and myself drank tea with him shortly afterwards, when, in reference to the absence of Mrs. Spurgeon, he remarked, "When a man's wife is away from home everybody is away." He seemed rather surprised to hear that a new Life of himself was in preparation by a Wesleyan admirer. He did not appear to feel flattered by the news. He mentioned with considerable satisfaction that the pictures were all engraved for his new "History of the Tabernacle," which was published in the ensuing spring. A copy was, I believe, presented to each guest at the College supper on the 6th of April, 1876. On the morning of Michaelmas Day, 1875, I went with him to Kettering in company with Mr. Mills, a deacon at the Tabernacle. The event of the day was the celebration of the Toller Centenary. The sermon was to be preached in the open air. We were to leave St. Pancras at 8.55 a.m.; and five or ten minutes before that time the easily recognised brougham was descried coming down the Euston Road. On the way he spoke well of the Midland Railway. He thought that if we were to take a map of England and mark out a system

of lines best calculated to pay, we could not do better than this company had already done. As we neared our destination, the aspect of the stations bore witness to the public excitement; and on arriving at Kettering the station was thronged with persons who were anxious to catch a first glimpse of "a distinguished Englishman," as one of the spectators designated Mr. Spurgeon. Though in the town itself business was not entirely suspended, it was easy to see that everybody was absorbed with the great event of the day. Each train as it arrived brought a fresh shoal of visitors, and the roads leading into Kettering seemed to pour each its living stream into the town, a dozen people behind one horse being no uncommon load. How the hotel-keepers contrived to accommodate with stable-room their four-footed visitors it were idle to conjecture; it was well that they were not required to feed the multitude as well. In private houses were found long tables liberally supplied with the viands of the season, of which large numbers partook, and the Town Hall was made to serve as a great refreshment-booth. The chapels were open, the "Great Meeting" of the Independents, as it was formerly called, being especially a central object of interest. There were the Toller medals in the shops; there were the tomb and pulpit of Andrew Fuller; and, besides these, there was the old white mansion—"Missionary House"—where the Baptist Missionary Society was formed. By two o'clock a vast congregation had assembled in the meadow, around a little platform which was erected to accommodate the preacher and a few select friends. Some thought there were six or seven thousand persons present; others more accustomed to judge of London crowds put down the number at ten thousand. Mr. Spurgeon referred in touching terms to the occasion, and to the young heart which their friend, Mr. Toller, carried in his bosom. A hymn was sung, after which followed a reading and exposition of Psalm lxxi.—"the old man's psalm," the very number seeming to suit those who have passed three score and ten. None need fear to go through a second childhood if they would remember how well they were brought through the first; and it was not likely that there lived a happier man than Mr. Toller. The text was Psa 71:17-18 : "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous work," etc.

We left Kettering by the morning express train, which happened to be fifteen minutes behind time. A number of persons congregated on the platform to see the pastor off, and these, doubtless, were obliged to the company for allowing them this extra time. He spoke about the preaching engagements of leading ministers. He had himself lately been requested to fulfil an engagement to preach which it was alleged he had made. The engagement was denied; but still the brother, on the other side, stuck to his affirmation. "You said when we got a new chapel you would preach for us; and now the building is up." Still no promise of the kind could be remembered. "How long was it ago?" "How long? oh, twenty years." "Twenty years!" exclaimed Mr. Spurgeon, much relieved. Then the promise was given under totally different circumstances from those under which they were then living. "I believe in the Statute of Limitations!"

Chapter 94: The Baptist Union At Plymouth

Chapter 94.

The Baptist Union At Plymouth

Six Hundred Ministers and Delegates at Plymouth—Illness of Mrs. Spurgeon—The Augmentation Fund—Bazaar at Reading—Letter on the Annuity Fund—At Brighton—Christmas at the Orphanage—London Baptist Association—Open-Air Preachers—Maze Pond—With the Baptist Fundees—Tutors and Students—A Spelling-Bee—Interest in Ragged-Schools.

The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland held its autumnal session at Plymouth in 1875, when nearly six hundred visitors, being ministers, delegates, etc., were entertained by friends belonging to local congregations. Dr. Alexander Maclaren was president. Mr. Spurgeon gave one of his greatest sermons in the Guildhall on Tuesday afternoon, October 5, from "The Angels hastened Lot." The picture of Lot in Sodom and his deliverance was vividly drawn; but probably the passage which most affected the congregation was that in which occurred the reference to those who had died in the year:—

"This year an angel has been among us that may well hasten us; it is the angel of death. I will not try to mention those names of goodly fellowship. They have been names of men removed from us to swell the ranks of the triumphant. I have stood astonished—I should think you have, my brethren—as the shots have been flying right and left among us. We have felt almost like the squadron at the charge of Balaklava, the saddles have been emptied so far around us. If we do not serve our Master, and this does not make us do it, nothing will. If this next year be not the best that the Baptist churches ever had, it ought to be, for the Lord has spoken to us with His voice, once, twice, thrice, and then again.... The days are very short just now; our fathers had long summer days, but some of us will only have short winter days. Let us get done. Look at the fields. Oh, how white they are! How much they need reaping, and how few reapers there are; and they get fewer, and some of them are fainting already. I hear them say, 'I must lie down awhile.' We have some grand reapers among us that reap mighty sheaves, who cannot do more, and they are fainting. Come, brothers, let us do all we can, then; let us help them, and let it never be said of us, whether we are in a little village or a large town, that we failed even for a moment in this great harvest-field. I see another angel that ought to hasten us. I will not try to picture him, but I can see him, with these very eyes. He is lifting the trumpet to his lips; it almost touches his lip, and when it does you will hear the blast that time shall be no more—'Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment.' The days of mercy to the sinners will be over, and the days of reckoning for us, the ambassadors of Christ, will have come. If that angel does not hasten you, then are you loiterers indeed!"

Some of Spurgeon's greatest efforts seem to have been made when the surrounding circumstances were such as would have excused him from preaching at all. He would give a sermon in a style which quite prevented the congregation from supposing that he was in pain; and on this great occasion at Plymouth his domestic trials were of a most distressing kind, as the

following, by one who was present at Plymouth, will show:—

"Mr. Spurgeon's references to the many Baptist ministers in the prime of life whose careers had during the past year been suddenly cut short by death told powerfully on many present who had numbered these dead among their intimate friends; and the tenderest emotions of the congregation were evoked when, at the close of the address, the Rev. J. Aldis besought for Mr. Spurgeon the sympathy and prayers of the congregation. In coming to Plymouth he had left behind him in London a dearly-loved but greatly-suffering wife, whose long-continued and most painful affliction would have caused deep sorrow and anxiety to an even less affectionate husband than he who had just spoken. Her condition was now eminently critical, but from her dying bed she had that day telegraphed to her husband not to return home, but to go forward with his work at Plymouth. For this noble and self-denying wife and for her anxious husband, Mr. Aldis then offered a few touching words of prayer, to which there was a hearty and general response."

Happily the fears entertained were not realised; for shortly afterwards the invalid was reported to be decidedly better, and out of immediate danger. The meetings altogether seem to have been full of life and interest. In the course of a stirring speech on Wednesday, October 6, Mr. Spurgeon made some references to the Augmentation Fund:—

"I am afraid I am rather worldly. I calculate very much a man's love to Christ by the quantity of money he is willing to give in proportion to what he has got, and up to the present moment I have never found a test more available. It generally comes to the correct thing in the long run, for I find that the great talker and even the wonderful gusher does not last nearly as long as the person who gives the two mites that make a farthing, being all her living. The money matter somehow puts metal into grace—and makes it last all the longer.... We want to create a public opinion upon this matter. Mr. Maclaren has created it this morning, I believe. There are some members of our churches who pay more to black their shoes than to support their ministers. I am certain there are many farmers who pay more for their licence to shoot than they ever subscribed per annum to listen to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is really to me scandalous that we should have to subscribe to this society, since in some cases there is no necessity whatever that the pastor should receive any aid. The system of pew-rents has been the death of us on account of fixing a shilling a quarter—a shilling a quarter! Two sermons every Sabbath-day—give them the week-days in—a halfpenny a sermon! Brethren, I am astonished at you that your sermons are not worth more than that. I do not hear you, but those people who do should be able to appreciate you, and show what the value of your discourses must be." At an evangelistic meeting at King Street Wesleyan Chapel the address on "There go the ships" was given. This was full of striking and searching passages. At the great meeting in the Guildhall on the evening of Thursday, October 7, Spurgeon delivered one of his most characteristic speeches, the subject being, "A Church all Alive." How he continued still to draw illustrations from his own varied experience, and even from the men of his own College, may be seen from what follows:—

"I was preaching some time ago in a certain chapel, and I knew that everything was dull and dead, and when I went down into the vestry I saw two gentlemen standing one against the other. When I got inside, I said, 'Are you the deacons here?' They said, 'Yes.' I said, 'Ah! I thought you were the pillars of the church. Brethren,' I said, 'the cause of God does not prosper here, does it?' They said 'No.' I said, 'Do you know that I think the reason why it does not prosper is within half a mile of both

of you?' and there I left it. And I believe that often the reason why churches do not prosper will be found in the fact that there is not enough life. A man can be alive, but what a different thing he is when he gets all alive! Now, look at me trying to address you in this steady, solemn way. Now look at my friend Cuff, who spoke just now, tearing about at the rate he did. Why, there was enough life in my brother Cuff's little finger to last some of us a month. I should like to see a church worked up into a fury of Divine life." In the interest which his visit to the West excited it once more became evident that the preacher's popularity was unique. When other men of eminence were announced for special occasions the interest they excited was sectional; in the case of Spurgeon it appeared to be universal. It was so at Plymouth, and it was so in all other great centres of population. Thus it was said at this time:—

"The coming of Mr. Spurgeon to any city, town, or village, either in England, Wales, or Scotland, is an event which moves the entire population, Church and Nonconforming, rich and poor, churchgoing and non-churchgoing. In such a city as Manchester, the 'upper ten' talk of it on 'Change, while down to the cabmen and the shoeblacks it is the theme of conversation. And Mr. Spurgeon's audiences are everywhere of the most composite character. The nobility come incog. to hear him, and the poorest waifs from the slums are attracted to listen to his voice. No other preacher of the age wields such a power; and it may be questioned whether anyone else has ever done it in these Islands save John Knox in Scotland and Christmas Evans in Wales." In the week following the Plymouth meetings a great bazaar, which realised £115, was held at Reading, and Mr. Spurgeon preached in the town. In the course of his remarks at the opening of the bazaar, he said that he came to London for £40 a year; and though he had had many opportunities of enriching himself he had not done so, and when he died the world would see how disinterestedly he had lived for God and His people. He added that he had then in trust for various charitable objects money, houses, and lands of the value of £120,000. Before he died he hoped to see the Orphanage established on a sound foundation, so that it might stand alone. He did not like endowments for religious foundations, but it was different in the case of charities. The success of this bazaar was cheerful news to the friends who gathered in large numbers at the Stockwell Orphanage on October 22, when Mr. Spurgeon gave an account of the Thames from Westminster to Oxford as he had himself seen the river a few weeks previously. He thought that this excursion, which had been taken with several friends, was as beautiful as any in the world, the Thames excelling even the Rhine in loveliness.

During this same week he opened the new mission-house, Ragged-and Sunday-schools in Richmond Street, Walworth, which his assistant, Mr. J. T. Dunn, had founded and still superintended. The cost was nearly £900, and the new premises stood close to the site of the old building, the lease of which had expired. As this was regarded as an outpost of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, the pastor gave £150 to the fund for the new building, and promised £50 additional if the whole sum was at once subscribed. His interest in the annuity fund for aged ministers was shown at this time in the following letter to the editor of The Baptist:—

"Dear Sir,—At the close of the Plymouth meetings I suggested to our friends, Sir S. M. Peto and Mr. E. S. Robinson, of Bristol, that we should at once propose to raise a capital for the annuity fund, and that our constituency should be asked to give so much a year for five years. I said I would give £100 for the first year, and do the same for four years if God prospered me. This proviso I am compelled to put in, for perhaps it may not be in my power to pay, since I have no

property to draw upon. Mr. Robinson at once said that he would give £500 either at once or in instalments. It seems to me that if all our wealthier brethren will come up to the mark nobly, and at once, we might very speedily have £20,000 promised. This would be a good corner-stone, and others would in after years build thereon.

"I do not intend to give the amount I mentioned to a poor little fund of skeleton dimensions and haggard appearance; the offer is made cheerfully, but on the condition that others do the same. Surely we have forty men to whom it would be pleasure to do as much; and if not, those who could give twice or ten times the sum must make a point of seeing the £20,000 raised.

"A like amount ought then to be forthcoming from one universal collection from all the churches in the Union on some one set day. I do not mean annually, but once for all. This taken up with spirit by all would be an occasion for special joyful consecration, and the amounts given might go up to pay the sums expected from ministers. What a blessing it would be to all our poorer brethren to have themselves made free of the Society from the commencement. This would so endear the fund to the whole denomination that free contributions would come in spontaneously, and legacies would be left.

"As soon as the basis is laid down an earnest pamphlet should be scattered 'thick as leaves in Vallombrosa,' the trumpet-call should sound forth from the papers, magazines, and pulpits, and as one man we ought to arise and put away from our Israel the reproach of neglecting age and widowhood.

"I may be too fast, but if so, I will wait till the rear-guard come up.—Yours heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon.

"Nightingale Lane, Clapham, October 23, 1875."

Just about this time a visit was paid to Brighton, a sermon being preached in the afternoon at Clifton Road Church, and in the evening in the Dome. The Sussex Daily News appears to have given a verbatim report of the evening discourse, the text of which was 1Ch 28:9 : "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." The mayor, the ex-mayor, several Russian gentlemen, and other distinguished persons were present. It was on this occasion that a famous passage specially addressed to old people was given; I believe it was Dr. Doddridge who made the calculation to which the great preacher took exception:—

"While I speak to the young I should also like to hold up the finger to the old people present. I would say to the old man of seventy or eighty, 'If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.' I read the other day a statement which I often hear, but which I never believe—a statement made by a minister to his people, that if persons were not converted before they were forty they were never likely to be. And then some statistics were given. It is very easy to lie in figures—easier to lie in figures, perhaps, than in any other way. I never believe in statistics, or in statements based upon statistics, at any rate, But this thing I will say: my Lord and Master never sent me to preach to sinners only under forty. I know of nothing in the Gospel like it. Which text talks about people being converted who are not more than forty-five? What I find is that I have to preach the Gospel to those who are old as I would to those who are young, to those who are only ten or a dozen. 'Go and preach the Gospel to every creature' is the Divine command; to Methuselah if he was alive on the face of the earth. Besides, the statement is not true. The brother who makes such an assertion

is probably a small minister with a small congregation, who does not preach so that old people care to listen to him. But some of us who extend over a broad area have come to a different conclusion. I stand up here and say that 1 have received as new converts in church fellowship as many persons of one age as of another. Only understand that this must be taken proportionately—there are not so many persons of old age as of young. But in proportion I have baptised as many people of eighty as I have children of twelve—and I have had hundreds of children of twelve brought to the Cross. I speak without the slightest exaggeration as to numbers—I have had tens of people of eighty, and that is the same number if you look at the proportionate age of those who exist on the face of the earth. There is nothing in the Word of God to allow any man to make anything like a speciality of denunciation against persons of any age." On Friday, November 5, the friends of the College filled the Tabernacle to hear an account of the year's work, and also to be entertained with the pastor's description of his trip up the Thames. It was mentioned by the way that the range taken by the College was becoming extremely wide, as they were receiving applications from Canada, the United States, and the Continent of Europe. A Portuguese had just left, and an application had come from Central Russia.

Soon after this, or early in November, he went to Menton, and it was understood that he derived great benefit from the change. At the Christmas festival of the Stockwell Orphanage he referred in a general way to the good that was being done by the institution, reminding the working staff that for aught they knew to the contrary they might be educating a Knibb. Hence they were not living for nothing, as was the case of those who laboured only to amass wealth or heap together the fool's pence. He observed in a jocular way that the time might even come when the "old boys" would endow the Orphanage, and then both the President and the Master might also receive pensions from the same source. He spoke well of the "old boys," thinking them very likely people to make way in the world—people with heads on their shoulders, and heads that were put on the right way. It was also hinted that these might perhaps find the money wherewith to found an orphanage for girls. Then he related the well-known anecdotes of George Herbert assisting a carter whose load had broken down, and of the old Scotsman who spent his days in recutting the tombstones of the Covenanters until it grew into a popular belief that the inscriptions of Scotland's godly sons never became obscured. When Herbert was reproached for be-meaning himself, he said that the memory of what he had done would be music in his soul at midnight. That was to be imitated, so that our memories also might remain green for ever.

After dinner the presents were distributed. The rule was for each to choose what he or she would best like for a present, the cost having been chiefly met by the pastor himself, who would write his autograph in the books. This year Christmas Day happened to fall on a Saturday, so that at about four o'clock Mr. Spurgeon drove away to his study in Nightingale Lane, to get some food together, as he expressed it, for his "chickens" on the morrow. The Watch Night service of this year fully equalled in interest any previous meeting of the kind. The late meeting was preceded by one for prayer, and the 1,500 persons who were in the chapel at ten o'clock were reinforced by others, so that by eleven o'clock the great building was densely crowded. The prayer, brief comments, and sermon of twenty minutes were all well suited to the occasion. The preacher told a somewhat touching little story which was intended to illustrate the justice and tenderness of God:—

"I knew a minister who once threatened his boy that if he repeated an offence he would visit him with such a punishment that he would remember it if he lived for a hundred years. He regretted the

rash threat; but when his boy was detected in the forbidden act he called him aside for prayer, and then told him he must proceed to inflict the threatened punishment. He bade him follow him to the corner of a corn-field, beyond the reach of hearing. The trembling culprit obeyed, and conjectured every conceivable form of punishment it was possible his father might inflict. Arrived at the chosen spot, the father bade him kneel, and then with two stalks of wheat lightly brushed his cheek. 'There,' said he, 'I have kept my word; you will never forget that punishment.' And he never has; for that boy was my own father, and he repeated the story to me only a few days ago." The London Baptist Association assembled at the Tabernacle on Tuesday, January 11, 1876, and in the evening Mr. Spurgeon made an earnest appeal to the churches on behalf of London, his remarks being founded on Num 13:30 : "Let us go up at once, and possess it," etc. He showed that if the city was to be won, there must be action; the action must be on their part; the action must be immediate; there must be a real doing of the work, and they must work believingly. Under the last head he said:—

"We have plenty of strength, and perhaps a little to spare. The work of the conversion of London would be impossible indeed if we had no more than our own strength; but if we have the help of God we need not despair, for if it were the conversion of as many worlds as stud the heavens at night it would be an easy thing for God. Do you think we get near enough to this Divine energy? Alas! it is here too often that we do not remember God! I wish that to-night something would happen to make us think more of the debt of obligation under which we are laid to the Master, and to feel His love in all its power. Then He would put such strength into you that from this moment your weakness would become irresistible. The Church would not want for men if she only believed in God; nor for money, though we are a poor people—perhaps one of the poorest of the denominations. If you have got truth in your knowledge, and grace in your experience, and a warm heart in your bosom, then you have got the major, and the minor will come by-and-by. Some may say we are ignorant and poor. Yes; we are a long row of noughts. Our brother Wigner is a large nought, and Mr. Brown is a nought, and I am a nought; but put a one before them! The noughts themselves are the means of developing the possibilities of the one. Up, then, and let not your hands be slack in the day of battle." The seventy-five members added at the opening of the year made a total of over 4,800 names on the roll of membership at the Tabernacle. Next to this increase of his own church Mr. Spurgeon was interested in the progress of the London Baptist Association. He thus gave a sermon at the Downs Chapel, Clapton, on January 25, 1876, on the Superiority of Christ to the Temple (St. Mat 12:6), and at the evening meeting was able to rejoice with others over the extinction of the debt. He remarked that he always liked to see a chapel debt buried, especially when the last joint of the tail disappeared, for then they could dance on its grave. When the tail had not been quite buried, a debt had risen again; but the debt there would have no resurrection. It was well to call in neighbours and friends to rejoice with them over the debt which was found but was now lost. He trusted that the church might grow as fast as a mushroom and be as strong as an oak. The collections were given to the building fund of the Shoreditch Tabernacle, representing the great home mission work of Mr. Cuff and his friends. On behalf of this work a poor man in the Isle of Wight had sent Mr. Spurgeon a crown-piece with a hole punched in it, and a ribbon put through the hole; and this he now handed to Mr. Cuff, hoping that someone might like to give £5 for such a curiosity. At the prayer-meeting on the last night of January a large number of open-air preachers and Christian workers assembled at the Tabernacle, Mr. John Macgregor (Rob Roy) being in the chair. Mr. Spurgeon referred to the title Reverend, and showed that the terms

clergy and laity were not what he believed in. Nobody had ordained him, and nobody ever should. He claimed for open-air preaching a long pedigree, going back to the time of Adam, and having the countenance of Christ Himself. He gave some good advice, especially when he showed how not to preach:—

"He had known preachers whose manners were simply execrable, and he had seen men on that platform whose assumed attitudes had tickled him. Some men, for instance, always displayed their fists when they were preaching 'Come unto Me,' leading one to suppose that it was a black eye they had to give. Some must go sawing and chopping the air like a soldier on the top of an adjacent chimney, showing the way of the wind. Others put their hands behind them under their coats, and looked like birds with tails. They might laugh, but let them remember that others had laughed at their practices thus referred to. He might not have hit their peculiar foible, but he pressed upon them the importance of avoiding such apparently trivial things, as they were sufficient to mar their work. They should stand like Paul stood at Athens, and as graceful as Nature would have them stand; so might it be with their physical mannerisms. Further, let them not fall into imitations." On January 30 the old Maze Pond Chapel was used for the last time by the congregation, and at their meeting in January the following was read:—

"Resolved by the Church at the Metropolitan Tabernacle: Being informed that our sister church at Maze Pond is now holding a final service in their ancient house of prayer; in the church in the Tabernacle, we seize the opportunity to salute our brethren, and to congratulate them upon the long and cheering history which it has pleased the Lord to accord them. Bound to us by near ties of consanguinity as a church, which was once a part of the same congregation, we would express our interest in the future welfare of the church, our regard and Christian love for the pastor, officers, and church members, and our prayer that in the movement on which they have now entered they may be under the Divine direction, may sustain no loss or injury, and may prosper in years to come. May the presence of the Lord abide with you all in the power of His Spirit is our fervent prayer. To the Triune God, the covenant God of Israel, we earnestly commend you. Asking an interest in your daily prayers,—Yours for the whole church, "C. H. Spurgeon "James A. Spurgeon—Pastors.

"Resolved also, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded at once by our trusty brother and elder, Hillier, with our Christian salutations." On the 7th of March he dined with the Baptist Fundees at the Guildhall Tavern. Three years before, as has been shown, he had sat down with his brethren in the same place, when he occupied the chair. This time, however, he sent a note to say that he should not be able to attend in consequence of a bazaar engagement at the Agricultural Hall. It was therefore a pleasant surprise when at ten minutes after four he entered the room "to see the lions fed," as he observed by way of apology while walking to a seat. For some time he spoke about an accident that had occurred at the Stockwell Orphanage, and which but for a special providence might have culminated in a disastrous fire. In a speech immediately afterwards on the work of the Fund he showed that there was great poverty abroad among rural pastors; and letters received in connection with Mrs. Spurgeon's book distribution were often of too harrowing a nature for publication. He withdrew before the close of the proceedings; and something occurred at the door of the room which, though unobserved by the general company, was too characteristic to be left unmentioned. A friend stood near whose son and heir had just been born. Suddenly a £5 note was thrust into this person's hand—a gift to the little boy, which was to be duly invested on the

child's behalf in the Post Office Savings Bank. On Friday, March 17, I attended a reunion of tutors and students which took place at the Pastors' College, men from Regent's Park and the Training Institute in the Bow Road being present. Dr. Angus, in the course of a forcible speech, showed how great a need there was of boldness in preachers, characterising that quality as forgetfulness of self. He held that a preacher ought to preach all the Calvinism and all the Arminianism to be found in the Bible, leaving the difficulties to be reconciled by the senior deacon when he got home.

Remarking, "If that is a little talk, what must a regular lecture be like?" Mr. Spurgeon proceeded to give an address. Though the noblest of callings, he thought the preacher's was the most difficult, and that it was easier to be a minister of State than a minister of the Gospel. A useful minister necessarily needed to be a well-furnished man; but as literary culture tended to drain the heart, there was need for much praying together. They had to beware of being stiff and unapproachable. From what he added, however, it seemed that there was really some improvement in the times. At all events, the old-fashioned race of stiff ministers had died out with the white-choker era. J. A. Spurgeon, the late Mr. Birrell, and the late venerable George Rogers were all present. The first of these broached a theory that no one ever preached long sermons until Paul did so, and the young man was taken up dead. Mr. Rogers, who would not have been himself if he had not said something quaint and witty, declared that he felt like a black sheep among a washed flock.

Spelling-bees were now in fashion, and on Friday evening, March 24, Spurgeon presided at one of these competitions between boys of the Orphanage and those of the Tabernacle school. That spelling was not universally understood, he remarked, was evident from the people who commenced a letter with "Deer Cur," and to whom Nightingale Lane was a puzzle. He told of a boy in the Highlands who read the newspaper with the same twang as he did the Bible, and his grandmother had boxed his ears for reading the newspaper "in that holy way." He insisted that the Scriptures should be read in the best possible way—i.e., the most natural. He went on to speak of the numbers of people who could not write. "Great people write illegibly," he remarked. "Let them be greater and write better." He then related an anecdote about an Irish mayor who once sent a note of which no single word could be deciphered. Mr. Spurgeon cut the supposed name and address from this missive and put it in the post with the intimation that it had not been read. Strange to say, the letter reached the hands of its writer. In a few days another letter arrived from the same quarter, this time written quite legibly, and containing the request that Mr. Spurgeon would preach in a certain place. The great preacher complied with the request. He dined with the mayor referred to, and at table his worship was candid enough to confess that he really wrote two hands—one that he could not read himself, and one that was quite illegible to other people. In the spelling competition the Tabernacle day-school boys were the winners.

It was at this time that he published his book on Commenting—a work which involved a vast amount of labour as well as of expense. Between three and four thousand volumes were looked through, and from these a selection is made, and their characteristics are pointed out to the student. Of this production one critic wrote:—

"Those who might suppose that the catalogue is a dry production will find on turning to it that it is the very reverse, for the compiler has lighted it up with a delicious vein of pleasantry. Indeed, many of his shrewdest observations are put in a mirth-provoking form. Of Dr. Cumming, for example, he remarks that he is usually preaching the Gospel when he is not prophesying, and he

congratulates the prophet of Crown Court on the facility with which 'he puts other men's thoughts into pleasing language.' Some other contemporary divines will find edifying observations about themselves which may do them good. Veracity is stamped on the whole performance, and we are amazed at the obviously vast extent of Mr. Spurgeon's reading, and the soundness which pervades the most of his judgments. He is just a little too hard, perhaps, on our German brethren."

I could give many proofs of Mr. Spurgeon's interest in ragged-school work. Mr. John Kirk, Secretary of the Ragged School Union, 37, Norfolk Street, Strand, supplies the following:—

"From the earliest days of Mr. Spurgeon's coming to London he recognised the value and importance of ragged schools; hence he was ever ready to render service to the cause, and in his death the Ragged School Union and every ragged-school worker lost a true and sympathetic friend.

"His undoubted fondness for children and deep pity for the poor and suffering led him to see in this service on behalf of neglected children the most effective and kindly means of reaching the lapsed masses. As has been already stated, his career as a preacher began with addresses to children—poor children in a Sunday-school—and to the last he always sought to stimulate and stir others to similar effort. The result of this sympathy may be seen in the fact that not a few of our ragged-schools in South London owe their existence and maintenance to the members of the Metropolitan Tabernacle; while it is not too much to say that scarce a school or mission fails to number amongst its workers some representatives of the great church over which he so long presided.

"Moreover, in any difficulty we were ever able to reckon freely on Mr. Spurgeon's warm sympathy, wise counsel, and ready aid. The great leader of the ragged-school enterprise, the late Earl of Shaftesbury, was for many years, and indeed until his death, on terms of closest friendship with Mr. Spurgeon, and between the two there was at all times the frankest interchange of views in matters relating to the movement which both had so deeply at heart. Similarly the Council of the Ragged School Union might always rely on the Metropolitan Tabernacle pastor in any emergency or unforeseen difficulty which might arise. Full often have I gone frankly to him at some such crisis, and never have I failed to obtain the word of counsel required or the practical help desiderated.

"It was for many years his custom to call together annually—generally in the week of prayer for ragged- and Sunday-schools—the Sunday-school teachers associated with the Tabernacle who were privileged to listen to wise and helpful words. On several occasions the workers of ragged-schools were also specially invited, and representatives were asked to take part in the proceedings and give some information as to the movement. At such times teachers and workers, superintendents and secretaries, assembled from all parts of London. At the anniversary tea Mr. Spurgeon was in the habit of joining the company and making himself thoroughly and happily at home amongst them. On the last occasion of this kind, friends mustered so numerously that he found it inconvenient, if not impossible, to have a chat with each. He solved the difficulty by saying in his happy way, 'Let us have a meeting. Here you are, Mr. Kirk; lead off, and others will follow.' The result was a pleasant and profitable conference, closed with some improvised words from the pastor himself. The last address delivered by Mr. Spurgeon on such an occasion was, in spite of his evident weakness, marked by much geniality and that strong and genuine reality so characteristic of him we have lost.

"Personally, I shall never forget Mr. Spurgeon's hearty and brotherly kindness on all occasions when I had to ask his aid in any matter. It was indeed like going to see a friend, and he had the knack of making one feel as if one were bestowing a favour rather than receiving one. When I was about to visit America, I received from Mr. Spurgeon a letter of introduction which, like the magic wand, seemed to open doors wherever I went on the other side of the sea. I close with a brief quotation from 'In His Name,' the organ of the Ragged School Union—penned while the great loss was still fresh:—

"'As ardent admirers of the great man who has gone to his rest and reward, and as labourers who still continue in the field of ragged-school work, our teachers, while thanking God for such a one as Mr. Spurgeon, will rejoice that "he, being dead, yet speaketh." Such words as we have quoted will live, and they will stimulate friends to support the work which Mr. Spurgeon loved. We shall miss our departed friend's cheery smile and forcible addresses at some of our meetings in the future; but we shall still praise God that we knew him, that he understood and aided us, and that our workers were encouraged by his words just at the time when such good cheer was most needed.'"

Chapter 95: The Book Fund and Pastors' Aid

Chapter 95.

The Book Fund And Pastors' Aid

How the Book Fund originated—Conference of 1876—Illness—Still urged to visit America—Friends at the Orphanage—Domestic Servants—Party at Helensburgh House—A Clergyman and Disestablishment—Advice to Students—At Minster Lovell—In Scotland—Ned Wright—At Portsmouth—The Daily News on Spurgeon.

The establishment of the Book Fund and Pastors' Aid belongs to the period at which we have now arrived. On a certain day I received a note from the pastor, in which he said that Mrs. Spurgeon wished me to do a little service. Some time before, when "Lectures to My Students "appeared, the author asked his wife how she liked the book, and when she replied by expressing a wish that every minister in the land could have a copy, the author further asked, "What will you give? "That was an appeal not to be resisted, and when it had been well thought over, Mrs. Spurgeon determined to surrender a number of crown-pieces which she had shown a fancy to collect. A hundred copies were distributed; but to make a beginning in such a work was to do far more than was at first suspected. When one hundred poor preachers had been supplied with the Lectures there was another hundred who were quite as anxious to possess the book, and behind them there were hundreds and thousands of others in a like position. In a word, one thing led to another, until the Book Fund was really founded in a most providential manner. There were further distributions, and when friends saw what was being done, many sent gifts of money, so that the work might be still further extended. Then there came from certain recipients letters giving accounts, not only of want of books, but of a famine which extended to the bare necessaries of life. Depths of poverty and of suffering were revealed which had been little suspected: preachers who were expected to present a genteel appearance, with stipends amounting to only about the wages of day-labourers, while their wives were wearing themselves out in a kind of domestic slavery. Hence the Pastors' Aid Fund was instituted to supplement books 'with gifts of money, wearing apparel, etc. During some years the Pastors' Aid has distributed about £300 in money annually, while the annual expenditure of the Book Fund has reached to or about £1,200. At the end of 1893 close upon 150,000 volumes had been distributed among all churches and sects, orthodox and heterodox, without any distinction whatsoever. The duty which I was asked to undertake in the year 1876 was to write the first Report of this service. Mrs. Spurgeon had then recently passed through a severe illness, and felt some misgivings in regard to undertaking the work. Since then, however, the founder of the Fund has generally prepared the annual statements. At the Conference at the College during the first week in April Spurgeon appeared pretty well, and spoke with extraordinary power on "The Holy Spirit in connection with the Christian Ministry." The address was believed to have been as solemnly searching as anything he ever delivered. The President seemed to find more and more delight in these annual gatherings year by year; and the Conference was the place both to see and hear him at his best. At the annual meeting in the

chapel he was surprisingly affected by the reports from Spain. The Earl of Shaftesbury presided at the annual supper to subscribers, and a sum of £1,870 was collected. On the last day of the Conference Mr. Spurgeon preached from Psa 81:10 : "I am the Lord thy God," etc. Not long after these happy meetings he was laid aside by illness, and thus, as it seemed to many, the excitement had proved too much for him. He was not able to attend the annual meeting of the colporteurs in the middle of May; but at the annual gathering of the Orphanage, on his forty-second birthday, in June, he spoke with his usual spirit and power. The meeting assembled on the lawn; and in the waggon were three generations of Spurgeons.

Some time before this a sermon was preached at the Tabernacle by a leading divine; and the editor of a certain journal of extreme views—both editor and paper are now dead—thought he saw something so exceedingly indecorous in this arrangement that he published a series of articles calling the managers of the Tabernacle church to account, and demanding an apology or explanation from the pastor himself. Why? might be asked. Because Mr. ------ was supposed to be not quite sound in some of the fundamentals—he accepted the annihilation theory. Had Mr. Spurgeon replied, as was expected, there might have been a second Rivulet controversy; but he assured me that he intended to take no notice, and hoped the newspapers would do the same. This hope was realised. In the spring of this year the preacher again received a very pressing invitation to visit the United States; but his reply to the Boston Lecture Bureau was similar to what it had been before: "I am placed where I am by highest orders, and dare not leave. When permitted a furlough I must seek rest, not fresh work. I thank you for your courteous invitation, but I am unable to accept it." Notwithstanding, The Boston Transcript circulated the report that Spurgeon was really coming, which, however, The Freeman of July 14 contradicted on authority. Mr. Spurgeon himself referred to the subject in a letter to The Watchman and Reflector: "Here I am and here I must be till I go to another and yet more glorious land than yours. I am still weak, but free from my complaint. All goes on gloriously with the Tabernacle and its works; 'for the Lord is our helper.'"

It was still some time before this matter was set at rest. The managers of a leading agency sent the news paragraph announcing Spurgeon's coming visit to America with this note:—

"Boston, Mass., June 22, 1876.

"Dear Sir,—Is the above paragraph true? We have tried so long and so hard for many years to secure you that we thought it impossible, and long since gave up all hope. We are the exclusive agents of all the leading lecturers in America. We will give you one thousand dollars in gold for every lecture you deliver in America, and pay all your expenses to and from your home, and place you under the most popular auspices in the country. Will you come?—Yours truly, "The Redpath Lyceum Bureau.

"To the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, London, England." To the above this reply was sent:—

"Clapham, London, England, July 6.

"Gentlemen,—I cannot imagine how such a paragraph should appear in your papers except by deliberate invention of a hard-up editor, for I have never had any idea of leaving home for America for some time to come. I am not a lecturer, nor would I receive money for preaching.—Yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon." The anniversary of the Orphanage took place on June 20, Sir Henry Havelock,

Bart., presiding. Mr. Spurgeon spoke of the fat and healthy appearance of the boys. During the past year they had spent less and received more, and were in a better position than in any previous year. The Orphanage was full; they had hundreds of applications, and had selected as many as they should be likely to take for the next twelve months; and they could not take more than the place would hold. He had thought of a girls' orphanage, bat did not know when that would come. In attending a meeting of the Female Servants' Home Society about this time he gave forth some sentiments which were misunderstood. Indeed, one leading journal said that if such views were carried out "the world of domestic service would rise in justifiable rebellion." What he did say was that happiness did not come from the union of a Christian woman and a man who was otherwise, and that such marriages were a constant source of trouble at the Tabernacle. He went on to say that there were many things that affected the character of servants and the happiness of households. Some were too quick-tempered—and so were many people besides servants; others were negligent; some too gossipy; and many were too fond of reading stupid novels—and so were many of their mistresses. Some of these novels he would not like to carry with a pair of tongs to the fire, and yet, from the reviews which he saw in the newspapers, he supposed they had a large circulation. No wonder, then, that the Divorce Court was pretty well occupied. For his part, he could not benefit by reading fiction, and the large majority of such works only gave one stilted notions of things which "are not as they seem." On July 11 a company which had been brought together by special invitation assembled on the lawn at Helensburgh House to hear an address from Dr. Landels on the fund which was being collected to provide annuities for poor ministers. The collection amounted to £2,400. I believe it was on this occasion that a friend gave Mr. Spurgeon £100 to be divided among a dozen poor ministers who needed a holiday. Such a gift pleased him almost as much as the sixpence he once received from a woman in a workhouse on behalf of the Stockwell Orphanage. On the 1st of August the President took the chair at the annual dinner of the College in the grounds of Sir Charles Forbes, at Clapham. He appeared to be in excellent health and spirits as he turned to one and another. A cluster of friends gathered around him and spoke about his sermons, and the use they were made of by the High Church clergy. It appeared that they were preached all over the country by these gentlemen, and were, of course, very generally approved by the congregations.

It was always interesting on such an occasion to take notice of the "freshmen," or new students. There were now twenty of these, and the President cautioned them that this was not to be taken as a specimen of their work in general, but rather as a trial of their industry. The freshmen had their usual good word, though some of them may probably have been a little startled at the intimation that the tutors always reckoned to "kill off" a few of their new hands—that is to say, some broke down, or were otherwise discouraged, and returned to their work and homes. Any man had to get through an immense amount of work if he wished to succeed, and at the same time he had to be, as it were, of the very salt of the earth.

While he would thus set before the students the harder phases of the service to be undertaken, he still never failed to give that word of encouragement which the rank-and-file had a right to look for from their leader. Hence to-day he spoke with admiration of the hard underground service which some of their number were doing, adding that the honour might possibly be reaped by some who came after them. He then declared that he would rather be a preacher of the Gospel than the angel Gabriel; and he would rather have a pastorate at Slowcombe-in-the-Marsh than not preach

at all. This was the afternoon that Sir Charles Forbes showed Mr. Spurgeon some of the most interesting rooms of his historical residence. In one of these Wilberforce had presided at the first anti-slavery meeting, while in another the late Bishop Samuel Wilberforce was born.

It was about this time that Spurgeon preached for Mr. Newman Hall at Christ Church, Lambeth, what was, I believe, the last sermon of the opening series. At the students' dinner on the first of the month he referred to this engagement, speaking of it to a number of friends. I understood him to say that he had written to Mr. Hall in a pleasant strain on his "sacerdotal tendencies," and this note brought a more lengthy reply by way of justification. In a word, "Christ Church" was not liked by some so well as "Surrey Chapel," and they thought that the old name should have been retained.

He preached on the first Sunday in August, and then started off to Scotland on a visit to Mr. James Duncan, of Benmore, whose residence, being at the head of Holy Loch, allowed of some good yachting being enjoyed. On Sunday, the 20th of the month, he preached to over 3,000 people, the congregation being picturesquely accommodated on a hill-side overlooking the Firth of Clyde. It was noticed that his matchless voice carried his words to a great distance. On August 21 he arrived at Greenock on his way home, having come across from Kilmun in the steamer Benmore, accompanied by his sons and his host, Mr. Duncan.

Just before he returned from this tour, Mr. Spurgeon lost by death his old friend, Dr. Robert Halley, of New College, and the historian of Lancashire Nonconformity. Another afflictive dispensation was the somewhat sudden death of Mrs. A. G. Brown, on account of which Mr. Brown's evangelistic work in connection with the London Baptist Association was interrupted. A resolution of regret and sympathy was passed at the meeting of the Association held on September 25, when Mr. Spurgeon gave an address on the conditions of successful preaching.

Soon afterwards he took part in the proceedings in connection with the stone-laying of a large hall in George Street, Camberwell, for the congregation of Ned Wright, making some telling remarks on getting the people into churches and chapels to hear the Gospel:—

"I am always hearing it said the great problem is to get the working classes to listen to the Gospel. I do not believe that to be the problem at all, and I deny altogether that the working classes of London attend less at the house of God than any other classes in London. In proportion to their numbers they attend as well as any other class—at least, that is my experience. People come to the Tabernacle, and when they see the congregation coming out they say no working classes go there, because they would not be so well dressed. But why should not a working-man wear as good a suit of clothes as he can possibly get? Do you expect that on Sunday he would wear the same clothes in which during the week he is bricklaying or carpentering, in which he is up to his neck in dust, or in which he goes down a sewer? One of the first things I notice about a man when he turns from his evil ways is that he gets a decent suit of clothes, and if he ever had such a thing before, I am afraid he was in the habit of leaving them rather long at his uncle's. I don't believe anyone in Europe could tell the difference between a working-man in his best clothes and any other swell. I suppose two-thirds of my congregation at the Tabernacle are working-men, and wherever you have a vigorous living church you will find that the bulk of it is made up of the very men whom it is said to be the problem to get to go to the house of God. There is a problem I should like to see solved, and that is, how to get the people of the West-end into church, because, although there are many places in connection with the Church of England in which the Gospel is

truly preached, I must say I do not call it going to the house of God when a man goes to witness processions and pomps and shows." In the fall of 1876 I was with Spurgeon at Portsmouth. Immense posters in the streets had announced his coming, the result being that there was great eagerness to secure tickets for the service in Lake Road Chapel, Landport, where "the first student" was then pastor. The spacious sanctuary which had been erected for the present pastor of Regent's Park Chapel, Mr. E. G. Gange, was on this occasion densely crowded with representatives of all sections of the population. For the time being the gentry of Southsea were mixed up with the tradespeople of Portsea and Portsmouth town and the workpeople and Government officials of the Dockyard.

Mr. Spurgeon preached in the afternoon from a text I had heard him enlarge upon before on special occasions similar to the one now referred to—"If thou seek him, he will be found of thee" (1Ch 28:9). The evening service was, if possible, still more densely crowded, and there was a larger proportion of men. At the conclusion the preacher expressed the pleasure it afforded him to visit Portsmouth, and thanked those who gave money to support the 240 boys who were then in the Orphanage as well as the 116 men who were being trained in the College. It will be observed that there were many more students in 1876 than at present, when the total may probably not exceed more than about two-thirds of the number then in training.

Spurgeon attended the meetings of the Baptist Union at Birmingham in October, Dr. Landels being President. On Thursday, the 5th of the month, he preached in Graham Street Chapel on 1Sa 17:47—"The battle is the Lord's." This service was announced to commence at seven o'clock, but at half-past five the eager throng besieging the entrance was so great that the doors had to be opened, and it was only with difficulty that those with delegates' tickets could gain admittance. The sermon is given entire in the reports of the proceedings. The second free night at the Tabernacle came off on Sunday, Oct. 22, the regular congregation staying away to allow of "strangers" taking their places. A daily paper thus describes the scene:—

"The doors of the Tabernacle are usually thrown open at six o'clock, but last night a crowd began to assemble at half-past five, and by ten minutes to six it had grown so dense that in order to prevent it overflowing beyond the railings, and so interfering with the street traffic, the doors were straightway opened. In little more than a quarter of an hour every seat appeared to be occupied, and by a quarter-past six the aisles were thronged, and, to the inexperienced observer, the problem of what was to be done with the stream that still poured in through a dozen open doors seemed insoluble. But the deacons and pew-openers at the Tabernacle have by constant practice obtained a remarkable degree of perfection in packing a crowd. They found odd seats here and there in the long rows of pews; they filled the benches running all round the walls; they got a few more on the platform beneath the preacher's desk; and, all this done, flaps were let down from either side of the benches opening in the various aisles, and hereon alone were disposed a number of people who, in one of the old churches now disappearing from the City, would comprise a startlingly large Sunday congregation. All classes were represented, from the lady in silk to the wearer of carefully-preserved print-calico, and from the man in broadcloth and fine linen to the costermonger ineffectually disguised in a frock-coat. At half-past six precisely Mr. Spurgeon appeared, making his way through the crowd that blocked the approaches to the platform level with the lower gallery from which he preaches. At this moment the interior presented a spectacle such as it would be difficult to match amongst Sunday-evening gatherings. The Tabernacle was

built to seat 6,000 persons. Last night the numbers present were nearer 7,000, for up and down, from ground floor to the spacious galleries, there was not a square yard of available room unoccupied. This was at half-past six, and for nearly half an hour later a constant stream of people arrived at the gates, taking a desperate chance of finding admission. In the hope of catching some of these a prayer-meeting was held in the lecture-hall, which speedily became full to its utmost capacity." At the beginning of November the pastor of the Tabernacle was laid aside by an attack of his old complaint, and his place had to be taken by others. On the first Sunday of the month an unusual scene had been anticipated. The announcement was made that "it was the intention of the Lord Mayor, Alderman Cotton, to attend the morning service in state, and preparations were accordingly being made for his reception, when an intimation was received on Saturday afternoon from the Mansion House that his lordship was unable to be present through unforeseen circumstances."

Though his illness was severe the pain went off, and though he was unable to preach for Mr. George Hatton in St. Giles's, he managed to visit the northern suburbs towards the end of November, preaching at Tottenham and twice at Enfield. On December 12 he preached at the Nottingham Tabernacle, and on the 15th he and the College students visited Regent's Park College. Mr. Spurgeon gave an address on "Culture," while Dr. Angus's theme was "Go." His sentiments on the Eastern Question, which was now attracting much attention, were well expressed in a letter to Mr. J. C. Thomson, of Kensington:—

"Dear Sir,—I view the Eastern matter as a question between a bitterly oppressed people and a barbarous despotism which overrides them. I perceive that Turkish rule means oppression, fraud, cruelty, and the crushing down of every principle of liberty, and therefore I long to see the power of the Turks broken to pieces. War by us on behalf of the Turk cannot, I hope, be ventured upon; but Lord Beaconsfield's speech at the Mansion House was a boastful provocation of Russia, and proved that the man who could speak in such a fashion is not fit to be trusted with the destinies of our nation at such a time as this. I trust that the whole question can be reasonably settled, without going to war, by such an arrangement as shall secure a measure of liberty to the non-Mohammedan populations. If it cannot be so settled, I must needs consider that the bragging speech I allude to has been the chief means of creating that impossibility. The national interests will always be best conserved by our doing that which is just and right, and it can never be just or right for us to support a despotism which could tolerate and even reward atrocities which no man can even think of without just indignation. My politics are simply these: England is the friend of liberty and right, at all hazards.—Yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon.

"Nightingale Lane, Clapham, Dec. 4" The year 1876 finished pleasantly. On Christmas Eve the post brought me a note in Mr. Spurgeon's familiar writing, giving an invitation to the Orphanage. On that occasion the President appeared to be in good health and spirits, and the speeches at table were of the usual cheerful and stimulating kind. In the play-room after dinner the children scrambled for halfpence with great liveliness, Mr. Spurgeon himself stimulating the uproarious merriment by the showers of coppers he threw amongst the youngsters. The usual presents to the staff were given in the afternoon, and in each instance this was supplemented by the addition of a sovereign from the President himself. In regard to this he once remarked to me that those who served at the Orphanage did not receive very high wages.

He was now worn and thoroughly tired, and in need of rest and change. On the 2nd of January he attended the annual meeting of the College, and gave an address on "Strange Scenes," one of which was an adventure of his own. He was asked to attend a Welsh meeting, and after reading a chapter was begged to preach, which he did, and such was the enthusiasm created that he had to keep on preaching again and again until midnight, as the people would not leave. Some eighty conversions resulted, and as a singular instance of God's providence, he noticed that many of these converts the very next week lost their lives in the Risca Colliery explosion. A week later he was with the Wesleyans at the Centenary Hall, Bishopsgate Street, when a large number of City men and others assembled to hear an address on the "Deliverance of the Church from Error and Corruption, and its Increase in Faith and Activity." At the annual meeting of the London Baptist Association, held in the Tabernacle, he also gave an address, on the "Importance of the Churches undertaking more Evangelistic Work." He showed that it was a kind of Protestant-Romanism to leave so much to be done by ministers: all should work for the spread of the Gospel.

Chapter 96: Illness In Paris

Chapter 96.

Illness In Paris

Holiday at Menton—Taken ill at Paris on the way Home—Return to the Tabernacle—The Conference of 1877—Baptist Union Meetings—Liberation Society.

On the 22nd of January, 1877, he started for Menton in good spirits. He benefited by the rest and change after staying in his winter retreat for about six weeks, when the sudden transition from a warm to a cold climate brought on a rheumatic relapse and confined him an invalid at Paris for some days. His place at the Tabernacle on Sunday, the 11th of March, was occupied by the present Dr. Clifford in the morning, and by Mr. J. A. Spurgeon in the evening. The following letter from him was read:—

"Hotel Meurice, Friday.

"To my dear Church and People.

"My Dearly Beloved Brethren,—You will share in the bitter disappointment which has befallen me, and will sorrow in my sorrow. I never felt better than when I left Menton, where I had really rested and gained refreshment. I hoped to be with you in bodily, mental, and spiritual vigour. On the first day of leaving my warm retreat a fierce wind and sharp frost chilled me to the bone. I travelled home in great pain until I reached this city, and now since Sunday I have been unable to move. Rheumatic pains seemed to paralyse the muscles, and I cannot stand. This is not what I looked for, and is unutterably painful to me. Away from wife and home, I have had to spend sleepless nights in fierce anguish; but I desire publicly to express my gratitude to my heavenly Father for it all. I cannot see any good in it, nor perceive the love that ordained it; but I am sure my Lord has done for me the best and kindest thing possible, and so I would say, and do say, Bless the Lord, O my soul.

"This will soon be over, and I shall be among you in answer to your loving prayers. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.

"C.H. Spurgeon" On the 18th of March I again attended at the Tabernacle, and found that he had reached home on the Wednesday preceding, having stayed a night at Boulogne. After a night's rest he rose considerably refreshed on the Thursday; but on Friday he was the subject of a relapse, and, being visited by his deacons, he received them in his bedroom. On Saturday he was better, and able to come downstairs. When he entered the vestry on Sunday before the service he was warmly greeted by a number of friends, the deacons being of the number. What seemed to please him best was the good news that the services had been well sustained during his absence. The gratitude of his heart found expression in an article in the magazine for April: "A Church We Know of." There was one occurrence, however, which was an occasion of pain. Mrs. Pasfield, the wife of an old servant at the Tabernacle, had died on the previous Friday, while making ready for a

tea-meeting. Though a very humble servant of the establishment, his personal happiness was as much studied as though he had occupied the highest station. Mr. Spurgeon's opinion of his staff of helpers was that they were the best the world could supply, and a man who thinks thus, and acts according to his belief, is not in danger of being badly served.

Before the service commenced Mr. W. Olney walked to the front of the platform and called on the congregation to sing the Doxology as the recipients of special mercies. The sermon was founded on 2Th 3:16. The Conference this year opened on the 9th of April. At the meeting in Mr. A. G. Brown's chapel in the evening the President spoke for three-quarters of an hour with all his accustomed force. He said they were attracted to the East like the wise men; and while the East was the better for having Mr. Brown, he hoped Mr. Brown was also all the better for being there. He well illustrated how a change of ministers might be beneficial by an anecdote of a shepherd having asked of another shepherd, "Lend us a bark of your dog." In a variety of ways he showed the blessedness of Christian service; and they who, through being immersed in business, were unable to do all they wished were privileged to do the thing by deputy. They were not to do as Douglas Jerrold did when asked to help a friend in distress. "How much does he want now?" he inquired. "Oh, a four and two noughts will do," was the answer. "Then," said Jerrold, "put me down for one of the noughts." On the following morning, Tuesday, the 10th of April, he gave his address from the chair as President of the Conference. In a very impressive manner he read the opening chapter of the Book of Joshua, and related that during his stay at Menton Mrs. Spurgeon had had the 9th verse painted around the top of his bedroom, so that a portion always caught his eye. He confessed that he had frequently derived encouragement from that passage.

Before beginning his address he related a curious incident which he did not wish to have published in the papers. That morning he had received a letter directed to "C. H. Spurgeon, Esq.," and as such it appeared at first sight to be something more extraordinary than usual. He went on to say that some time previously he was applied to by a half-witted man who was in concern on account of his soul. Mr. Spurgeon was delighted, and, while speaking words of encouragement, said he had always wished to see Jesus Christ save an idiot, and now he should be gratified. But the poor fellow was filled with despair—body and all had been ruined by sin—he was too far gone. No, no, he must come along; he would get well again in mind and body when Jesus Christ took him in hand; and so it had really proved. The strange letter was one of good news; the man had recovered, or was recovering, in mind and body as the pastor predicted, and he maintained that the letter was a token for good. The address on present-day evils was in his happiest style; but as it can be read entire elsewhere I shall not attempt to give an abstract. In the evening, at the Stockwell Orphanage, he continued in a happy mood In regard to open-air preaching, he hoped they would be sufficiently prudent to obey the police. Still, he liked to hear of some of their number being locked up through excessive zeal in the service. At another time he advised them to keep record-books of various cases of conversion, after the manner of surgeons. A book of "Sketches" named was the kind of thing referred to, though he scarcely liked that particular work. Above all, the facts should be stated without being over-coloured, as their American brethren were apt to do. In one or two short speeches he gave much good advice, and he was particularly interested in one anecdote told respecting one of the pastors: "About the first criticism passed on this young pastor was that 'that young fellow from Spurgeon's was introducing the apple of discord into the parish.' But soon he got loved and honoured by the people for his work's sake, and actually the squire next

invited him to the Hall, and the brother took advantage of it and went, and was asked to go and look at the 'dawgs,' and though he understood nothing about dogs, he ventured to express his opinion that it was the best litter of pups he had seen, and thereupon secured £5 to put his chapel in order." A larger party than usual assembled this year to partake of the annual supper, the sum collected being £2,200. Three members of Parliament and a number of influential friends were present, and Mr. Spurgeon made reference by name to two of them who, with the late Mr. George Moore, presented him with the bust which adorns the Conference Hall. On the next night the annual public meeting was held in the chapel, and on the morning following he preached before the Conference from "Feed my sheep." At one of the meetings of this Conference he told of an application which he had received from the editor of a certain great monthly Review to figure in his pages. Not being fascinated with the proposal, an objection was raised, when the editor became importunate. His journal was of the broad, open council class, in which each writer could say just what he pleased; and he finished up by suggesting that Mr. Spurgeon should provide them a good article on Calvinism—"Say what you like, you know." Still the pastor hesitated by remarking that he had his own way of publishing what he was able to write. He would not lend his name to sell other people's rubbish; he did not care to row in the same boat with "a lot of demented lepers," who, according to the editor, were very able people, though they might not see eye to eye with the pastor of the Tabernacle. At one of the meetings he had something to say about disagreeable Christians and our duty to love them if possible. He had himself from time to time loved some of the most crabbed and hateful people on earth, and had done so until the said people would have suffered anything rather than do him an injury. According to custom, he gave an illustration. A certain man who was once associated with the Tabernacle was famous for his extraordinary sourness and shortness of temper, and yet he was undoubtedly a subject of Divine grace. Well, after this brother died it was discovered that a piece of bone was pressing on the brain; and when one and then another heard of this, they said, "Ah, if I had only known of that piece of bone! "He was subject, beyond control, to constant irritation, and had people known of the affliction, the poor fellow would have met with more charity and fewer harsh judgments. At the Baptist Missionary' Meeting in Exeter Hall this year Spurgeon made a good speech—not one of his happiest efforts, but still an oration abounding in earnestness, and sparkling with characteristic personal allusions. I give a brief extract:—

"The way to value yourselves, to value the church—by productiveness. Do you produce anything for Christ? I was startled when I came through Marseilles, and they were putting a fire in my chamber one day for my rheumatism. I saw the man putting something in the fireplace, and I asked him to let me look at it. It was what I thought—vine-branches. If a vine-branch bear no fruit it is good for nothing. You cannot make it into the smallest useful article. Shall a man even hang a pot upon the fire thereby? It is good for nothing but to be burned if it be not fruitful. A fruitless merchant or a fruitless professor of science may have some sort of use, but a fruitless Christian is good for nothing. 'Men gather them, and they are cast into the fire, and they are burned.'" On the 4th of May he spoke at a great and enthusiastic meeting on the Disestablishment of the State Church, held at the Tabernacle as the annual meeting of the Liberation Society, Mr. Jacob Bright being in the chair. It should be remembered that this was not the only effort he made on that eventful Wednesday. In the morning he gave an address to business men on "The Claims of God," at the Friends' Meeting House in Bishopsgate Street, an occasion when Mr. John Bright, M.P., occupied a seat in the body of the chapel. The day before he had preached at Regent's Park

Chapel, when a testimonial of £1,000 was presented to Dr. Landels.

Mr. J. T. Brown, of Northampton, succeeded Dr. Landels as President of the Baptist Union; and at the session at Bloomsbury Chapel Mr. Spurgeon had spoken to a resolution of thanks to the retiring President. Many kind things of a personal nature were said; and then it was added, "I hope the doctor has for ever extinguished the idea that we are ever going to cease as a Christian community, or lower our standards, or be absorbed. I hope our brethren will for ever be convinced themselves, and that all outside the brotherhood will be convinced also, that we are going to stand to our guns to the very last; and until the day when infant baptism shall cease and believers' baptism be universally practised, which we believe is coming on, we shall remain a body of baptised believers, vindicating that point which is thought by some to be so small, because we all believe that a great deal of other truth crystallises round about it."

Chapter 108

VOLUME SIX

Chapter 109

The Funeral Cortege at Mentone

The Funeral Cortège at Mentone

Chapter 97: Another Tour In Scotland

Chapter 97.

Another Tour In Scotland The Colporteurs—The British Quarterly Review—At Dunoon—A Mistake about the Highlands—A Talk in the Study.

On the 7th of May Spurgeon drank tea at the Tabernacle with the colporteurs, and presented one of the number with "The Treasury of David" as a recognition of seven years' good service. The men, whose pay was only four shillings a day, were a very respectable body, but on the whole they possessed more physical strength than mental culture, and on this account Mr. Spurgeon was interested in discovering that a man with a college degree was among the band. On the 9th of May he preached the sermon of the London Missionary Society at Christ Church, Westminster Bridge Road, the building being densely packed with a congregation largely made up of ministers. The subject was "War: an Aggressive Church," the text being Jos 7:3; Jos 8:1. The discourse was one of great and searching power. It was a settled conviction of his that the Modern-thought men with whom he believed the Congregational body to abound were authors rather than pastors, readers and not preachers—mere littérateurs, whose sympathies scarce extended beyond their study walls. The sum collected at the Conference of this year was larger than had ever been given before; and while nearly four hundred men had gone forth from the College into the world, there were over one hundred students in course of training. Even the two sons of the President were actively engaged in Christian work, and were at this time collecting funds for the erection of a new chapel in Chatham Road, Wandsworth.

It was at this time that one of the leading Reviews again gave some attention to Spurgeon as a preacher:—

"In his way of preaching Mr. Spurgeon is intensely practical. By that we do not mean that he indulges in 'moral' preaching, which, whatever may be said to the contrary, our fathers were right in considering unprofitable and sterile. We mean that his preaching exactly meets the wants of souls. It is common enough to hear and read appeals to people to concern themselves about their salvation; what people need to be told and desire to be told is what they must do to be saved. Mr. Spurgeon, more minutely and more patiently than any preacher we know, explains the way of peace. It need not be wondered that he has been so greatly blessed; and those who have the care of souls will find no better model. Then, in preaching to Christians, he deals with the actual problems of the Christian life. The chief desire amongst Christians is to gain an assurance of God's love, and to this subject Mr. Spurgeon constantly recurs, not dismissing it with a wave of the hand, but taking it up fully and elaborately. Many excellent sermons act merely as a mental stimulus. They instruct, and even to some extent excite, but they do not meet the deep needs of the soul. It is, we are convinced, one of Mr. Spurgeon's chief sources of power that he devotes himself almost entirely to the great concern. It is this that has made his writings so dearly prized by the dying. There is no more enviable popularity than the popularity which this illustrious minister has amongst those who are in presence of the profoundest realities. When cleverness and

eloquence have lost their charms, we have often found the dying listening hungrily to Mr. Spurgeon's writings, when nothing else, save the Word of God, had any charm or power. While other preachers have produced far more brilliant sermons than he, we have no hesitation in saying that he is the best model for preachers, and that those who care for usefulness rather than for fame will choose him as their truest inspirer and guide." In June he was in an improved condition of health, and early in the month laid the memorial-stone of a chapel in Trinity Road, Upper Tooting, towards which he had given £250.

Consequent on the recurrence of his complaint he was compelled to give up a number of engagements. But on his birthday, at the Orphanage, on the 19th of June, he was in excellent spirits and, for him, in good health. On the morning of the day he had received a large number of letters with birthday offerings. There were some thousands of persons present, who were apparently all in an enthusiastic mood. When he attempted to move about the grounds the President was beset by numbers of people anxious to speak a word and to have the honour of a shake of the hand. At night the grounds were illuminated. Mr. Blake, M.P. for Leominster, made an excellent chairman, and good speeches were delivered by various other friends. Mr. Spurgeon's speech was followed by addresses by Canon Hussey and others. In the summer he went northward, and appears to have been absent from his own pulpit during two Sundays—the 22nd and the 29th of July. He was once more the guest of Mr. Duncan, of Benmore, the house occupying a charming site near two lochs, and not far from Helensburgh, where the beloved John Anderson had died some years previously. Mr. Spurgeon was persuaded to preach at the Dunoon skating-rink on Sunday, July 22nd. The day opened with wind and rain; but at two o'clock, when the preacher appeared, the weather was fine, and a crowd of some seven thousand persons, made up of visitors and others, was gathered. An hour before the time for commencing, the place was so thronged that there was some danger of the platform being forced down. "Presumably all the church-going folk in Dunoon were present, for all the churches were closed in the afternoon, and from the surrounding villages and the other side of the water there were great streams of people. Some of the congregation came as far as from Garelochhead, a journey involving a walk of about twenty-two miles, and crossing and re-crossing of two lochs." The subject of the sermon was the "Ministry of Reconciliation" (2Co 5:18). In the evening, the weather being fine, and the atmosphere being exceptionally clear, the scene in the grounds at Benmore was still more striking, on account of the extreme beauty of the surrounding scenery. During the afternoon streams of people were seen wending their way along the roads on both sides of Holy Loch, while steam and sailing yachts had brought others long distances in order to be present. An eye-witness gave at the time this graphic description of the scene:—

"If the weather were to prove unpropitious the new United Presbyterian church in the town had been agreed upon as the meeting-place. Several boats containing occupants were lying in the bay. When Mr. Spurgeon ascended the platform, he advanced to the front of it, and in a clear, ringing voice remarked that, as most of his audience were standing, he would not make the service very long, to which he added that he should have to stand also. This seemed to tickle his listeners, and though the day was Sunday, and the scene the shores of a Scotch river, a general laugh could be heard. Then in a most solemn manner the reverend gentleman opened the proceedings with prayer. When finished he announced the 89th Psalm. This he read out, and having asked the crowd to watch the time in singing, the precentor led to the tune of 'Martyrdom.'

The effect was very grand, for the vast concourse of people seemed to be impressed by the Christian associations which the meeting recalled, and they sung the psalm with great earnestness, Mr. Spurgeon beating time with his psalm-book. Another prayer followed, and in it the Deity was addressed as the 'God of the Covenanters,' and a special appeal was made on behalf of those in the congregation who were unconverted. So well did Mr. Spurgeon speak that at some distance from the shore his voice was distinctly heard, and one remarkable feature was that the echo was so perfect that the words could be understood almost as well as when the speaker uttered them. During the sermon a large number of ladies fainted owing to the great heat and crush; but, in spite of the fears which at an earlier stage of the proceedings were entertained as to the stability of the front wall of the rink, the meeting was unattended by any mishap." On the evening of Sunday, the 29th, he preached at Oban to a congregation of three thousand, who belonged to Oban itself, and to Easdale, Benderloch, Kibninver, and other villages. On the preceding afternoon he had preached at Fort William, the banks and public offices being closed during the service. When, the next day, the preacher appeared, he not only seemed to be fagged, but confessed that he was not up to the mark; and it may have occurred to some of his friends that such a way of spending "a holiday" was not likely to bring health and strength.

"The place selected for the gathering was the slope of the Oban Hill, adjacent to the Free Church, and overlooking the spot where only three days before that good and worthy man, Professor Keddie, dropped dead. In front of the speaker's platform the scene presented a beautiful picture. On a gentle slope were gathered the large mass of people; while immediately behind, the hill rose like a huge wall clothed in the richest verdure." A Scottish paper gives the following description of the event:—

"Long before the hour appointed for the commencement of the service the hill-side was well-nigh filled with people, many of whom came a long distance—some twenty and thirty miles—to hear the distinguished preacher.... From the platform, which was temporarily erected, and covered with tarpaulin to protect the speaker from the weather should it prove unfavourable, Mr. Spurgeon had a full view of the congregation. Speaking of the depravity of man's heart and its antagonism to the will of God, he said that the stars in the firmament were only restrained by Omnipotence from darting baleful fires against those who were obnoxious to God. The Christian, he said, depended upon his God for his spiritual prosperity as much as the vegetable world depended upon the heat of the sun for its growth. He concluded with a most earnest appeal to his hearers to accept of God's salvation through Christ, reminding them all, young and old, that they and he would meet again when heaven and earth would be in a blaze, and on that day none of their blood would be on his head." This visit to the north excited great interest; but although the Scots accepted the great preacher's Gospel, they wished it to be understood that his references to Highland history and customs were not always to he taken without question, e.g.:—

"Mr. Spurgeon made one mistake in the Highlands. At Dunoon he delivered in his prayer an apostrophe to the 'God of the Covenanters;' and at Oban he improved upon this by speaking of the times of old when the mountains and valleys of the surrounding country had resounded with the psalms sung by the Covenanters. The worthy pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, whom we all hope to see often in this part of the world, must revise his study of Scottish history against his next visit. He will learn, on further inquiry, that the parts about Oban, instead of contributing subscribers to the Covenant, provided a pretty large proportion of that sanguinary 'Highland host' which

sprinkled some of our Lowland counties with martyr graves. Happily, a great change has come over the Land of Lorne, and this was indicated at the close of Mr. Spurgeon's Oban sermon, when crowds of venerable Highland peasants, some of the women especially very far advanced in life, crowded round the great preacher to shake hands with him and invoke the blessing of God upon himself and his work. Not a few of the old dames told him how greatly they enjoyed reading his sermons at home, and Mr. Spurgeon was much affected by these tokens of friendly feeling, so fervently expressed by the sons and daughters of the Gael, no longer the instruments of despotism and superstition, but the most ardently Evangelical and Protestant section of the Scottish nation."

One after another friends continued to be removed by death. Mr. J. C. Marshman, son of Dr. Marshman, the missionary to India, died in July; and in August, one of the most promising of the men trained in the College, Mr. W. H. Priter, of Middlesbrough, also passed away, at the age of twenty-six. To the President of the College this came almost like a personal bereavement. It was at this time that an endeavour was made to get Spurgeon to visit the Australasian colonies; but his reply was similar to that which he had given to the Americans. The annual picnic of the College was held on August 7 in the grounds of Mr. Coventry, at the end of Nightingale Lane. Dr. Hodge, the American theologian, was present, and Mr. Spurgeon said the doctor was at home among them. "The longer I live," he said, "the clearer does it appear that John Calvin's system is the nearest to perfection;" and he added that "if all other divines stood on each other's shoulders they would not reach up to the Reformer's toes." Rain came on in the afternoon, so that a good deal of speaking was got through in a tent, Professor Hodge taking his turn on the hamper which served the speakers for a rostrum. The long course of afternoon speeches was closed by some forcible utterances by Mr.

Spurgeon. "Look at the condition of London and let it revive your zeal. As regards intellectual opposition to the Gospel, truth will ultimately triumph; for in the end 'God has said' will surely stand against 'Man has thought.'" In the evening I was with him in his study for a short time in company with Mr. Alabaster, the publisher, Mr, Smith, from India, and another. He was in good spirits, and related some anecdotes respecting his visit to the north. While on board Mr. Duncan's yacht, on which he had spent some days, the weather being uncongenial, the company endeavoured to make amends for rain and wind by an extra flow of spirits. Mr. Spurgeon remarked that members of the medical profession as a rule were extremely jealous of one another, and the assertion was at once resented by a surgeon who was sitting at the table. He spoke as a man who had something in himself wherewith to weight his opinions. He had been high in the profession for many years, and had seen nothing of such opposition and disagreement. Mr. Spurgeon then said something about homœopathy, at the very mention of which the other fired up, and hoped that was not considered a science at all, and indeed spoke in a strain which showed that he regarded all but allopaths as mere empirics. Mr. Spurgeon had gained his point, and, to the no small chagrin of his opponent, pointed to what had been said against homoeopathy as proof of the justice of the original assertion. In a certain Society journal at this time there appeared an article on "Mr. Spurgeon at the Tabernacle," which was exceedingly characteristic of the class the paper aspired to represent. In literary power it was far behind the brilliant sketch of The World some months previously, which the pastor himself, in my hearing, acknowledged to be magnificently done. It abounded in foreign phrases, and the affectation of ignorance as to the locality of the chapel or the

"Elephant and Castle" was too forced to be even amusing. Mr. Spurgeon is put down as "the Anak of the pulpit," "the Chrysostom of Anabaptism," and so on; but still the writer evidently felt bound to qualify his compliments with a good deal of the fashionable rhodomontade which his readers expected. The impression left on the mind after reading the article was that the Society journalist understood Spurgeon about as perfectly as Spurgeon himself would have understood a prima donna at the opera.

About this time he wrote a preface to a little work—the Life of a well-known member of the Tabernacle Church—and the members of the firm which had undertaken the publication objected to proceed on account of something being said about the subject of the work being free from Plymouthism. Spurgeon's peremptory answer was that not a word should be altered or taken out; and this led to the book being published elsewhere.

Chapter 98: Three Memorable Excursions

Chapter 98.

Three Memorable Excursions At Leeds—Festival at Reading—Excursion to Silchester, etc.—Visit to Bristol—Presents his Books to the College at Bristol—Breakdown—"Sermons in Candles"—On the Continent—Letters—Return to the Tabernacle—Conference—Australia—Baptist Union—Orphanage Festival.

Towards the end of August, 1877, Mr. Spurgeon preached in honour of the centenary of the chapel at Farsley, near Leeds. On Saturday, the 25th of the month, he wrote to me: "On Wednesday we all, orphans and teachers, go down to Reading. Will you go with us?... I want you also to go with me to Silchester to write for The S. and T. an account of that ancient British city." In a postscript it was added: "Suppose we go on Tuesday, the 4th of September, to Silchester, Basingstoke, and Strathfieldsaye?"

Though the weather had been tempestuous for August, the day at Reading was fine, the place of entertainment being Whitley Park Farm, lent for the occasion. Mr. Anderson, who was then pastor in the town, met us at the station, with a number of friends. Mr. Spurgeon arrived somewhat later than the main party; and he was greeted by a large number, some of whom brought money for the Orphanage. One poor woman gave him a shilling, while a countryman presented a rose "picked on purpose" in the morning. On this occasion he disclaimed being the founder of the institution, and gave that honour to Mrs. Hillyard, who was then suffering from illness. A great crowd assembled to see the children return to the station. In regard to the excursion to Silchester, he wrote to me: "We may perhaps stop at Basingstoke on Tuesday night and see Old Basing. Look it up if you have time. We will also go to Strathfieldsaye. This all depends upon whether the weather is fine or no." On Friday, August 31, he wrote again: "Will you come to Tabernacle on Monday evening? Come home here and take a bed, and then we can start in the morning to Silchester. 'Half-Hours of English History' has a chapter on Silchester." On the 3rd of September I attended the prayer-meeting at the Tabernacle, and returned with him to Helensburgh House. The night was wet and blustering, and as he already had a cold the outlook for the morning following, on which we were to start, was anything but promising. We did not reach Nightingale Lane until nearly eleven; and that was but a sample of other nights, so many were the people who gathered around the vestry door, seeking the opportunity of an interview. We supped together in the study, and after making a hearty meal he worked until one o'clock, revising a sermon for the press, and was again abroad soon after six a.m. After such a night the morning was raw, and, still suffering from his cold, almost the first words he said on seeing me were that he could not go. He seemed so thoroughly decided on the question that I supposed our pleasure trip was finally abandoned; but just as I was about to take my departure there came symptoms of a decided change. The carriage was hastily ordered and we were presently on the road, our companions being Mr. May and Mr. Charles Spurgeon. At Basingstoke we were met at the station by a carriage and pair, for which Mr. May had thoughtfully telegraphed, and we drove first of all to the old Roman city of Silchester, in

the excavations and uncovered portions of which Mr. Spurgeon manifested the deepest interest. We all came away from this interesting spot feeling that it was indeed the British Pompeii. If not, as in the case of the Italian city, overwhelmed by the flood of ashes from the burning mountains, it was ruined and probably burned by a wave of barbarous soldiery.

We put up at the inn at Strathfieldsaye. After dinner Spurgeon told us many stories of his early days. He mentioned Dunmow in Essex as the town where he first received money for preaching. He preached three sermons on the Sabbath. His expenses were eight shillings and ninepence, and they gave him ten shillings.

He retired early, and on the following morning we visited Strathfieldsaye, the Duke of Wellington's seat, hard by, which we also found to be full of objects of interest—relics of the "Iron Duke." We then visited the ruins of Basing House, just outside the town of Basingstoke, a scene which recalled very vividly the stirring days of the great Protector. I could not help especially prizing the opportunity of accompanying Spurgeon round the ruins of Basing House. Only the day before, September 3, had been the anniversary of Cromwell's death, but still his great day—"The day of Dunbar field and Worcester's laureate wreath." The site of Basing House seemed to have many things associated with it belonging to the heroic age. At all events, my companion looked upon the spot with extraordinary interest. He seemed to be picturing in his mind what the place was like when it defied the Parliamentary army; and then he quoted Carlyle's words concerning Cromwell's successful assault, "Storming like a fire-flood!" He probably enjoyed these excursions all the more because he was able to move about unknown. On September 25 a special meeting of the London Baptist Association was held at the Tabernacle; and in an address on the evangelisation of London Mr. Spurgeon was able to say that his men had built about forty chapels in the Metropolis. At the Butchers' Festival, held at the Tabernacle early in October, he gave the company some reminiscences of early days at Waterbeach. He told how he had commenced his ministry at sixteen on a stipend of £45 a year, and not "all found." "I had to find myself a good suit of black, go about like a gentleman, with nothing in my pocket; yet I never wanted, for I was God's servant. The other day I was down in that village where I preached, and I was told that the biggest 'screw' who ever lived had recently died. This man came down from upstairs to die, in order that no one should earn sixpence by removing him. He directed that he should be buried in his own garden to save expense, and he was never known to give anything away in his life." As already shown, that man once gave the boy-preacher ten shillings for a hat, however. This was one of the anecdotes which Mr. Spurgeon often told either in public or in private, but the story was hardly complete until the man actually died. On the last day of October he preached in the afternoon at West Croydon Chapel, where the present Dr. James A. Spurgeon had been pastor for six years. At the evening public meeting some sarcastic references were made to the fact that the pastor's goods had been taken under an execution levied for tithes by the Vicar of Croydon. Referring to the clergy who had attended the recent Church Congress, he went on to say that there were a great many gentlemen, many of whom had lately adorned the streets of Croydon, who had manifested a general fear—which kept them quiet and well-behaved the one to the other at their Conference—that if they quarrelled and disruption ensued, they would have to resort to the horrible voluntary principle, and trust to the free-will offerings of the people. He was sure they laboured under that dread. Nonconformists, however, did not find much difficulty as to the cost of washing their surplices. His own expenses in that direction had never been very great; they could usually afford to appear in

clean linen, respectable and decent. The Church of England, too, had managed to exist without its church rates—nay, from the moment of the abolition she had seemed to receive new spiritual life; and if they lived long enough to see her other false props knocked away he would prognosticate for her what had taken place in the Irish Church—she would become more vigorous and powerful than she had ever been; all that was good and had life and force in it would still maintain itself without dependence upon the State.

After this I did not see him for some weeks, until I called at Clapham on one of the Saturday afternoons of November. He had complained in The Sword and the Trowel of having been misrepresented in newspaper reports of his speeches, and as I had only just before given a sketch of his visit to a Quaker mission hall at the back of St. Luke's Hospital, I had supposed myself to be a possible offender. He not only sent me a very genial letter saying this was not the case, but when I entered his study he at once referred to the subject, remarking that when he had anything against me he would tell me to my face and not write about it in the magazine. On Tuesday, December 4, I went with him to Bristol, having first been present at the opening of a bazaar at Westbourne Park Chapel—the beautiful building then recently erected by the present Dr. Clifford and his people. The speech delivered on this occasion, so far as it referred to the decadence of the Old Connexion of General Baptists and to the spread of negative theology among the Independents, was in the main identical with one he delivered on the following morning at Bristol. It was arranged that he should take luncheon with a family who resided near at hand, and the lady with her carriage and servants waited to convey him away; but as he had to be at Paddington Station before 1.50, it was soon seen that the engagement could not be kept. How many people were similarly disappointed in the course of a year it would be unsafe to surmise; but the disappointment chiefly arose from the extreme anxiety of people to entertain Mr. Spurgeon without any calculations being made as to the possibility of his accepting their kindness, which, however, he never failed to appreciate. The lady referred to drove us to Paddington Station, and, in company with Mr. Abraham and another gentleman, we were soon on the road to the metropolis of the West. One of the things first referred to was Mrs. Spurgeon and the Book Fund. On that morning Mrs. Spurgeon had been extremely agitated in consequence of the conduct of one or two Primitive Methodist ministers. An intimation having been given that for the time being no further donations of books would be made to this particular denomination, one or two individual ministers with something of the nettle in their constitution professed to be highly chagrined; one sent a Post-Office order for what he had received, another returned the books. The mental disquiet which this conduct occasioned the invalid was indescribable, and Mr. Spurgeon even said that she was worse than he had ever yet seen her.

He was very animated and cheerful during the journey, talking for our entertainment; and at one time he read a lengthy passage from the second series of "Lectures to My Students." He also spoke about the excursions he had enjoyed on the Thames, and of his adventures in Scotland in company with a friend. One memorable scene on the English river he depicted as having been the happiest moment of his life. They one day happened to descry a number of children on the shore, in charge of a lady, and, to please them, all were taken on board, when their delight was quite inexpressible. They crowded the yacht, went about peeping curiously at all its arrangements, Mr. Spurgeon, sitting on deck, being a no less delighted onlooker. When they were landed these little folks soon spread the news far and wide of the treat they had received at the hands of Mr.

Spurgeon, and, of course, brought down their elders to the water's edge. One of these excursions was marred by a severe fit of illness, aggravated, indeed, by the wet weather. The most common annoyance, however, was from the well-meaning friends who ceaselessly worried him to preach for them. Dozens of pastors, all along the route, would suppose their case to be exceptional. He once, I believe, became so disheartened by this conduct that, like one baffled in the attempt to enjoy a few hours' relaxation, he returned home in despair. On arriving at Bristol we were met by Mr. Gange with a carriage, and on our way to the pastor's house we halted for a few minutes at Broadmead Chapel, which was lighted for inspection. The alterations made were so extensive that old attendants on the ministry of Robert Hall and John Foster would not have recognised the sanctuary; and probably the chapel is now as large again as formerly.

We dined with Mr. Gange in the evening, and the four other Bristol ministers who had been educated in the Pastors' College afterwards joined our circle. Mr. Spurgeon appeared to be quite himself, and was cheerful and brilliant. The conversation turned on the falling away of many among the Dissenters; and one popular minister was mentioned who had lately resigned his pastorate, and whose removal all thought would be a good thing for the cause of religion. Mr. Spurgeon retired about eleven, and it was understood that we were to be at the old College in Stoke's Croft at nine on the following morning.

One part of our evening's entertainment has been omitted. Mr. Spurgeon's luggage included a plain deal case; and when the contents of this were turned out upon the carpet, we saw before us the whole collection of his works, uniformly bound in morocco and gold, and numbering forty-four volumes. These were a present to the College library; they cost £31 3s., and the gift was supplemented with £68 17s., making a total of £100, which he handed over to the institution for the purchase of modern works. The address which he gave to the students lasted for three-quarters of an hour. The young men from the Congregational Institute joined the Baptists; and, though all seemed to be entertained, it was thought by some that they listened as though they did not quite fully appreciate the man who was addressing them, and especially his intense earnestness.

After this two sermons were preached at Colston Hall to a greater crowd than had perhaps ever before congregated in that building. The admission was, of course, by ticket; but the crowd at one time rushed past the police at the entrance and gained admittance. The desire to procure tickets was scarcely comprehensible to those who did not understand the preacher's unique popularity. People came from distant places, and it was even said that £10 had been offered for a seat. Judging from appearances, I should be inclined to the belief that they would have readily sold in Bristol at a guinea each; but this mode of raising money was never countenanced by Mr. Spurgeon. He returned to London on the following day. According to my notes he preached for his friend Dr. Allon at Islington on Monday, the 10th of December. I was more grieved than surprised to learn that he had broken down on the Tuesday, consequent on an attack of his old enemy, rheumatism. He was unable on that day to preach at the opening of the Norwood Association Chapel. The singing at Dr. Allon's new chapel was highly approved by those whose musical ears allowed of their fully appreciating the artistic performance. With Mr. Spurgeon it was quite otherwise. To him the effect was as if a rat was running into a corner of the chapel with the basses after it; then the little animal would run into another corner with all the tenors after it, and so on. It was, I believe, before he began his sermon, and while some of the singing was proceeding, that some such question as "Is not that fine—is it not grand?" was whispered to him. He replied by

asking whether his friend had ever been in a Primitive Methodist chapel when the only harmony was bawling discordance which reached its climax in the chorus. Yes; the friend had been in such a purgatory. "And how did you feel?" asked Mr. Spurgeon. "Oh, awful!" "Well," he continued, "I feel like that now."

During the journey to Bristol he remarked that the saying, "No man is a hero to his valet," did not apply to him, because, in point of fact, the exact contrary was true. Just the people who made much of him and treated him with the greatest veneration were those in his own house. On Saturday, the 29th December, I received a message from him that he was much better and would be able to see me. I found him on the sofa in his study, Mr. Blackshaw being busy at the table, as he usually was on Saturday afternoons. Mr. Spurgeon was apparently somewhat shaken by the late attack, but he was still very cheerful and communicative. He confessed that he had been working too hard. "You must not do it again," I remarked; and he replied again by saying, "I can't." I said the change in the weather perhaps affected him (the frost of Christmas was succeeded by a warm thaw); but he said his ailment was all in the brain. He had been preaching and speaking incessantly in the weeks preceding his breakdown. He told me he had arrived at such a state that he thought and preached in his sleep. When he lay down at night he would call aloud on the students to get together in the lecture-hall, and ask them why they were lingering outside; or he would imagine that he was addressing a congregation. All this overwork arose from his desire to do all he could, and from his inability to say No. He was anticipating being at Menton in three weeks. His absence from the Stockwell Orphanage on Christmas Day was sorely felt.

Though in feeble health at the opening of the year 1878, he made brave endeavours to do what was required of him before setting out for France. The morning service at the Tabernacle on Sunday, December 30, proved too much for his strength, however, and he could not preach in the evening. Earnest prayer was offered that the efforts of the Government to mediate between the contending parties in the East might be successful; and in reference to prevailing unbelief, it was remarked in the sermon that some clergymen were not afraid to profess principles which formerly only the most daring atheists had the temerity to avow. On the following Wednesday, January 2, he furbished up his lecture, "Sermons in Candles," and gave it at the annual meeting of the Pastors' College. Though an old subject, it attracted the attention of a leading daily paper as though it had been a new one, a full leading article being devoted to the lecturer and his theme. I give this extract:—

"The lecture lasted two whole hours, and was listened to with earnest attention by the audience. We can well believe it; and, had Mr. Spurgeon's store of strength only served, there is no valid reason why he should not have gone on talking about candles for two whole days. The subject is almost inexhaustible. Life itself is only a candle; and who does not recollect Jeremy Taylor's beautiful similitude on the ease with which the existence of a little babe could be puffed out, but in which the good Bishop of Down, Connor, and Dromore was only unconsciously paraphrasing Shakespeare's 'Out, out, brief candle'? To a Biblical scholar of Mr. Spurgeon's ripeness, again, the close parallel between the prophet of old searching Jerusalem with candles and Diogenes going about with his lantern in quest of an honest man must have been obvious. The charge that was of candlesticks; the olive trees on the right side of the candlesticks; and the awful words which, at Belshazzar's Feast, were 'wrote over against the candlesticks,' might, by easy transition, have brought the lecturer to dwell on the detective bull's-eye of justice and the small, flickering gas-jet

which by night lights up the cell of the convict. And then the versatile lecturer might have opened up another branch of his fertile theme, and have told his hearers how King Alfred measured time by candles, and how the mamma of the Saxon king, when he was a naughty boy, used to whip him with candles—not, it is to be hoped, of very hard wax. The superstitious uses to which candles have been put in the Roman Catholic Church would have formed a most interesting subject for a dissertation; and Mr. Spurgeon might have reminded his hearers that condemned criminals making the amende honorable at the church doors were constrained to bear in their hands a wax taper of six pounds weight; that it is only thirty-two years since a woman convicted of the offence of brawling in church stood, by sentence of the Ecclesiastical Court, in a white sheet and with a candle in her hand, coram publico, in a church in Devonshire; and that since then many thousands of pounds sterling have been squandered in law costs on the vexed question whether it be permissible for Ritualistic clergymen to embellish their altars with candles, and whether, if the tapers themselves are admissible, they are to be lighted or not. We are yet some four weeks distant from Candlemas Day, else it might have been expected that Mr. Spurgeon would tell his hearers how the Pope blesses, or used to bless, whole cartloads of candles on the feast of the Purification; how in olden times in England the reserved parts of Candlemas tapers were supposed to possess supernatural virtues; and how 'Candlemas Blaze' was, until recently, a bonfire festival still observed in sequestered parts of Scotland." When he was unwell it was necessary that his holiday party on the Continent should not be too large. Thus, at this time he wrote to his old friend Mr. James Toller of Waterbeach:—

"Nightingale Lane, Balham, Surrey, "January 3, 1878.

"Dear Mr. Toller,—Mr. Abraham writes me that you wish to go to Menton with me, but I have written to propose another arrangement.

"I cannot take you in my party. If I am able to go I shall have my son, Mr. Passmore, and my man George; and this is quite a large enough party for me. I want quiet and rest, and I cannot therefore go about with a lot of people, not even the best friends in the world.

"I would suggest, therefore, that you and Mr. Abraham should make the trip together, and I shall be glad to see you there. You are quite able to get on without me, and you could travel a bit and go and see something of Rome, Naples, etc. As for me, I am altogether an invalid and seem to make no progress. Whether I shall be able to leave home or not is quite doubtful.

"Please don't be vexed; but I really cannot have any more in my company on any terms whatever.—Yours ever heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon."

At the annual church meeting on January 9, it appeared that the number of names on the church roll was 5,040, and that the net increase for the year was 100. The money given to the poor of the church annually amounted to £1,000, including the allowance made to the aged women in the almshouses. The raising of £5,000 to endow the almshouses was now seen to be a necessity.

Spurgeon was disappointed this year in not being able to attend the annual meeting of the London Baptist Association on January 15. On Sunday, the 13th, he preached in the morning with some difficulty; and in the evening he asked the people to sing a hymn in the middle of the sermon, besides telling them that he must get away for his holiday or he should not be able to get away at all. The result was that on the morrow various wild rumours were afloat in London that Mr.

Spurgeon broke down in the service; that he was dying; and so on. On Tuesday, the 15th, I received a note from him saying he was off to the Continent and was feeling very ill. In a few days I heard again, saying he was considerably better now that the daily routine was suspended; and that his only complaint was brain weariness. On Sunday, the 20th, this welcome news was given to his people at the Tabernacle in the following letter, which was read by the preacher, Mr. Chown:—

"Paris, Friday.

"My Beloved Friends,—As I have before told you, I have suffered greatly from "weariness of the brain, and this has caused me the loss of sleep, and brought on my lameness. My memory seemed to fail me, and my spirits sank. It was imperative on me to throw up all and get away. I have done so, and already I feel a mental improvement, and sleep has come back to me, for which I am very grateful. I hope and trust that in answer to your prayers I shall be recovered by means of such a period of rest as I have usually taken. I am very anxious that no Tabernacle work should flag through my absence. I was sorry to hear the Association meetings were so thin. I pray you do not let anything else suffer. Especially let our usual services be well sustained, and the prayer-meetings. You have never failed me in this matter, and I entreat you do not go back from former attainments. I remember returning and finding one hundred and forty to receive into the church, as the result of the labours of beloved friends in my absence. Shall I see the like again? I pray that I may. Rally round the deacons and elders. I cannot too highly recommend them to you. Seldom has a church had such a band of officers. When my brother and Messrs. Clarke and Smith call you to united action, do not, for our Lord's sake, falter or fall back. I long to see a great revival again in your midst while I am away. I feel that I am less and less able to be to you what I have been, but Jesus is the same, and His grace is still almighty. We shall see greater things yet if we pray, labour, and believe. It were better for me to die than to live and see my building fall to pieces because I did not personally stand by; but the Lord will not suffer it to be so. Up then, and see to it, each one, that nothing declines in any way. My love in Jesus Christ, as ever, with each one of you.—Your anxious pastor, "C. H. Spurgeon." The fact was that he had deferred his departure too long, and among other ominous signs was a breakdown of his voice. At a meeting of the London Association, Mr. J. A. Spurgeon "explained the cause of his brother's absence, stating that, his voice having now left him, he could not be heard a yard and a half distant." On the last Sabbath of January the pulpit was occupied by Mr. T. G. Tarn, now of Cambridge, who read the following letter from the pastor:—

"Menton, Wednesday Evening.

"It is only a few days since I wrote you, and therefore I have nothing fresh to report, except that each day I feel the need and the value of the rest which I am beginning to enjoy. I have only arrived here this afternoon, but the warm sunshine and the clear atmosphere made me feel as if I had reached another world, and tend really to revive a weary mind. It would be well if I could write without a word of mention of myself, and for your edification only. Forgive the need which there is of mentioning my health. It would best please me if I could work right on, and never have a wretched item of self to mention. My mind runs much upon the work at home—the services, the College, the Orphanage, the Sabbath-school, the evening meetings, and so on.... You will care for the state of the work, and so the Lord will use your instrumentality for His glory. We are set for a

sign and token of the power of the old-fashioned Gospel, and we are bound to prove to all around not only that truth can gather, but that it can hold. It will not only forcibly draw men together, but it will bind them together, and that, too, not through some famous preacher, but by its own intrinsic force. This assertion needs proof, and you will prove it. May God, the Eternal Spirit, abide over you all, beloved, and cause you to be strong in the anointing of the Holy One. May the poor be comforted, the sick supported, the warriors be strengthened, and the labourers sustained." On the 21st of February I received the third note he sent to me during his vacation. This is sufficiently characteristic to be inserted:—

"Menton, Monday.

"Dear Mr. Pike,—I am always glad to hear from you. Foxe is inserted, as you see, in next number of S. and T. I may be here longer than I expected, for I am getting so much benefit; therefore let me have some racy article, short and telling. I would suggest a visit to the lodging-houses with Mr. Woodcock, whose address Mr. Elvin would give you, of whom inquire of Blackshaw. Said Mr. W. gave a wonderful speech at Tabernacle, and is a character. I improve every three minutes. It was cloudy to-day, but when the sun came out his glare and blaze were more than I could well bear, and I retreated into the shade of the olives. This is a wonderful sanatorium for me, and yet some complain of the heat and say it is relaxing. I like to be relaxed, and to be half baked is better than being sodden and frozen in England....—With kindest regards, yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon." On the first two Sundays of March evangelistic services were held at the Tabernacle in the evening with marked success. On one occasion the regular congregation was dismissed, and others belonging to all classes that could be reached were admitted to take their places. The following letter was read on Sunday, March 11:—

"Menton, February 28.

"Beloved Friends,—I rejoice to think that my return to you is now a matter of a few days, and that I have every prospect, if the Lord will, of returning with health established and mind restored. Perhaps never before have I been brought so low in spirit, and assuredly never more graciously restored. May the Lord sanctify both the trial and the recovery, so that I may be the fitter instrument, in His hand, to promote His glory and your highest good. The last fortnight of additional rest was wisely ordained by a higher hand than that of the good deacons who suggested it to me, for without it I should not have had space to pass through an attack of pain which has just swept over me, and left me improved by its violence. The last few days will, I feel, bo the best of the whole, when I shall not have to be thoughtful of recovery, but altogether restful. Good news from the Tabernacle continues to be as cold water to a thirsty soul. You have had great times of refreshing; may their influence abide with you. We must not go to sleep on my return, nor at any other time, but steadily labour on and watch for souls. Spurts are very helpful, but to keep up the pace at a high regular figure is the most important thing. Even an invalid can make a great exertion when some remarkable occasion excites him to do so; but consistent, unwearied effort belongs only to those who have stamina and inward force. May our whole church prove itself to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might by unceasingly carrying on its work of faith and labour of love. In these days we are regarded as Puritanical and old-fashioned, and this, I trust, we shall never be ashamed of, but wear it as an ornament. The old orthodox faith is to us no outward creed of past ages, but a thing of power. In the name of the Lord, who by that faith is honoured, we press

forward to proclaim again and again the doctrines of the grace of God, the efficacy of the blood of the Divine Substitute, and the power of the Eternal Spirit. And we feel assured that whoever may oppose, the omnipotent Gospel will prevail. The multitudes are hungering for that old-fashioned bread whereof their fathers fed; and too many preachers now give them newly-carved stones, and bid them admire the skill of the modern sculptors. We mean to continue the distribution of bread, and the stone-cutters will meet with no competition from us in their favourite amusement. But, brethren, only a living church—holy, prayerful, active—can make the old truths victorious. Linked with the mass of mere profession, it will perform no exploits. To you and to me there is a growing call for greater spirituality and more Divine power, for the work before us increases in difficulty. The Lord be with you all. So prays yours lovingly, "C. H. Spurgeon." On Sunday, the 17th of March, he again stood in his place at the Tabernacle, where he had not preached since the second Sunday in January. I reached the chapel in good time, and found all concerned in a state of expectation. I happened to be on the vestry stairs when he was coming up. "I can pass you!" he cried, after a cheerful greeting; and the words implied a good deal when one noticed the comparative ease with which he walked. In a moment a cluster of deacons and others surrounded him, and before he entered the vestry, "Glad to see you back again" was the burden of their remarks. "Glad to see you again; there are no faces like yours!" he replied. When seated in the vestry he told one of his friends that he felt like a new man; and all were rejoiced to see that he really looked like one. The attendance at the service was overwhelming; and a number had to be shut out to avoid undue pressure and confusion. The sermon from the words occurring in Job xxxvi., "I have yet to speak on God's behalf," was in his best style. On the evening following, a thanksgiving meeting for his safe return was held, when the chapel was well-nigh filled. The Butchers' Festival was also celebrated during the same week. On the Friday I attended at the College at three o'clock, when he was to resume his weekly lecture from the President's chair. The room was very full, and when he entered, the audience of young men did not cheer, but sang the Doxology. The lecture, which occupied about an hour and a quarter in delivery, was on "Experimental Preaching." In the course of it he mentioned that when he was about to leave the country for more exciting scenes, an elderly friend remarked to him, "Young man, if you are going to be a preacher in London you will have to swallow bush faggots crossways; but they will do you no harm." They had not done harm; they had tended rather to clear the throat. The Conference this year opened on April 8 at John Street Chapel, Bedford Row, and everybody seemed to be indulging in high expectations on account of their President being in such good health. He was not so stout, his flesh appeared to be firmer, and he could walk with greater ease. This improvement in the main arose from his partial adoption of a vegetable diet. He thought most people injured themselves by the consumption of more meat than was necessary, and was greatly pleased at finding himself much better for the change, especially as the force of his rheumatism was correspondingly abated. At the evening meeting in John Street Chapel he made some pertinent references to the two former pastors—Harrington Evans and Baptist Noel. The former was the greater preacher; but the latter was justly characterised as a grand man. Many among the audience would be able to remember the controversy between Mr. Spurgeon and the Evangelical clergy of the Establishment on the publication of his famous Baptismal Regeneration sermon. Those who remembered the stir would also be able to call to mind the position assumed by the Hon. Baptist Noel in defence of his friends in the English Church, which at the time produced a deep impression, besides strengthening in no small degree the cause of the opponents of Mr.

Spurgeon. Many of these friends would consequently hear with surprise that some time after he had published his defence of the Evangelicals, Mr. Noel confessed to Mr. Spurgeon, "I am not sure that I was right." This difference never in any degree marred the friendship of the two pastors for each other. Mr. Noel loved his younger brother, and Mr. Spurgeon revered Mr. Noel as a father in Christ.

Spurgeon's annual address on Tuesday morning was duly delivered from the President's chair. At the Stockwell Orphanage in the evening he was as usual all alive. If possible he was more joyous than ever, on account of the settlement at a Cambridgeshire village of an "old boy" of the Orphanage, this being the first-fruits of the institution so far as preaching the Gospel was concerned. It had been determined to present the young pastor with a testimonial in the shape of ten pounds' worth of books, the money having been chiefly subscribed by the Orphanage staff. When he first heard of this, Mr. Spurgeon was sitting in the master's house at tea, and he insisted on becoming a subscriber. He wished to give half a sovereign, but only a shilling was accepted. A beautiful framed address was also sent to Mrs. Spurgeon, which was acknowledged in a letter read before the assembly on the following morning.

These sittings of the Conference seldom passed without some passage-at-arms between the President and Mr. Rogers in respect to the question of baptism. On this occasion he gave an amusing account of how he should, on reaching heaven, inquire for Mr. Rogers, drink a cup of tea with him, and then ask if he had not been mistaken "down there" on the question of baby sprinkling. The collection at the supper was less than usual, though it reached £1,600.

After the close of the Conference on Friday, the 12th, I went for a drive with him in an open carriage to Helensburgh House round Dulwich. He spoke of the good which the men derived from the Conference. He also referred to a certain renegade who owed him £30, and, having changed his creed and crossed to America, excused himself from paying on account of the services he had done the denomination. On Monday, the 6th of May, he met the colporteurs and gave them an address, and afterwards drank tea with them. The progress of the society afforded him much delight, and he complimented the men on doing even more than they had bargained to do. In the spring of 1878 papers which arrived from the Antipodes showed that endeavours had been made during the previous autumn to prevail upon the great English preacher to visit Victoria at least. "Mr. Spurgeon would like to come, and would do much good work here and in the other colonies; we shall act wisely if we make prayer and supplication that the way may be cleared for his coming," remarked The Victorian Freeman, which also printed a letter that had been received by Mr. John Reid:—

"Nightingale Lane, Clapham, "September 22.

"Dear Sir,—The invitation, or rather the preliminary to an invitation, which you so kindly sent me was most pleasing to me for many reasons, and especially for the kind way in which you worded it. How I wish I could glide over and return in a month, and see all your kind faces! Thank you all very much.

"But do not allow others to waste time in hoping to induce me, for I conclude that it would be wrong for me to leave England for so long a journey unless I were thoroughly broken down. I am. not well, but I can keep on somehow, and I must do so. Everything grows, and demands more and

more attention. The pecuniary need is by no means small, but I would leave that. Oversight, however, there must be, and if things went wrong I should have all the blame.

"My deacons are too good to dissuade me; but when I ask their opinion I can see that they are alarmed at the idea of such an absence. No, I must tarry here. For the present, at any rate, I shall not see Australia, but I send you all my very grateful thanks.

"Please take care of my son for my sake. May he be a blessing wherever he goes.—Yours very heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon."

The reference to "my son" may remind us that thus early one had gone forth from Helensburgh House to evangelise in the Australasian colonies. Thus, as we learn from a news paragraph: "Mr. Thomas Spurgeon left by the Melbourne steamer on Tuesday, after a visit extending over about two months, during which he has been, though anything but robust in health, almost incessantly engaged in public services.... He has his father's sincerity and earnestness, his simplicity of aim, and not a little of his humour and mother wit."

Sunday, the 12th of May, was free-seat evening at the Tabernacle. After the service I saw Spurgeon for a few minutes, and, in consequence of its being a lovely evening, on coming outside he quoted the saying of an Irishman, "The night is the best part of the day." The decisive vote given at the Congregational Union on the Leicester Conference seemed to afford him extreme satisfaction; but he said that he wished all who had voted on the side of orthodoxy could be considered orthodox.

He gave his opinion on the work of the country churches at the Congregational Home Missionary Society on May 7, when he expressed the view that the polity of the Wesleyans and Presbyterians was better adapted to country towns than Independency. While there were villages in England which were difficult to keep, the Presbyterians had managed to evangelise all Scotland and to sustain an efficient minister in every parish. It was advisable to learn of such and to see to weak points in their own system. The country churches needed to be looked after. While they believed in the voluntary principle, and that the poor were some of the best people in the church, they could not get blood out of a gate-post; and those who had to live on twelve shillings a week could not be expected to support the Christian ministry. It was thought that there ought to be large expenditure to encourage the country churches, and it was recommended that two of the best men should be chosen to visit rural districts and stay in each place a month. "I always speak very reverentially of committees," Mr. Spurgeon went on to say, "only I am afraid that there is something of idolatry about it; for 'eyes have they, but they see not—ears have they, but they hear not.' It is not always so, however, I believe, in committees; but they must be committees of three, and two of them must stop at home, and on that occasion something would be done." A preacher's power with the people depended on his being understood. They must preach a very plain Gospel, for the people wanted very plain food. At the Stockwell Orphanage festival this year the weather proved uncertain; but the President seemed to make all things go cheerfully on this his forty-fourth birthday. There was more truth in his remarks than many present liked to admit when he had to confess that he felt old—older than his father really was. He had crowded a long life into a comparatively short space, and he began to feel the wear and tear. He made a tolerably long speech, referring to the faith and unity of the church at the Tabernacle. In one memorable passage he spoke very nearly as follows:—

"I do bless God that all we have been enabled to do as a church has been the outcome of spiritual life. We have been alive unto God, and therefore God has put this work and that work into our hands. Do you wish to show your piety? You can do it by working a beautiful altar-cloth, or by giving a new paten and chalice to such-and-such a church. You can do it by decorating a chasuble and working a gold cross; for pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is to put as many ornaments as you can conveniently hand about your pretty body, and so stand before the church dressed in such robes that none but an angel can tell whether you are a man or a woman. That is the way in which some people's religion ritualises itself. Ours, however, has ritualised itself in another way. My mother scolded me yesterday for having signed my letter, 'Your ugly son.' She protested I was not ugly. I protested I was, and had always been so, and should be so. There is not the slightest cut or trace of anything priestly, not to say decently parsonic, about me; and if anything I wore made me look like a priest, I would rend it in pieces, for I do abominate it. But we must have an outward show for everything that inwardly exists—an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace. Does the world wish such a sign? Let them look "around them. Pure and undefiled religion with us is this—to visit the fatherless and widow, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. Be that our ritualism, and may we abound in it, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things by acts of piety and charity." The grass was sodden, for on some of the preceding days and nights the storms of wind and rain made the weather more resemble December than Midsummer. The people brought between four and five hundred pounds as birthday offerings; but their kindness as Mr. Spurgeon moved about the grounds was too demonstrative for a man in such health as his. On Friday evening, June 28, he attended the tea at the Tabernacle on the occasion of the break-up of the evening classes, and afterwards addressed the youths and young men, whom he styled his "Band of Hope." He also spoke of a certain active deacon as "the man in the shirt-sleeves," besides paying other compliments to him as an indefatigable server of tables. I was interested in noticing what keen eyes these deacons had, and how well they used them in the service of their leader. The pastor of a small country church, somewhat fussy and forward, came and sat down close to Mr. Spurgeon to unroll a long narrative of his crosses and successes, although someone else was already speaking to him on business. The bored looked once or twice as though he should be glad to be rid of the bore; but the bore showed no disposition to move until "the man in the shirt-sleeves" gave him a hint too broad not to be taken. In anticipation of a summer preaching engagement he wrote lo Mr. Toller of Waterbeach:—

"Nightingale Lane, Clapham, "June 27, 1878.

"Dear Friend,—I shall he occupied to the last moment, therefore meet me at Paddington on Monday evening at 6.30. I shall he delighted with your company. Be ready with a sermon for Tuesday in case I should break down.—Yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon."

Though, in a letter like this, the writer might appear to he joking when he said "Be ready with a sermon," the preacher would now sometimes even need to have such a substitute in attendance at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. What some of his sermons in that great building—especially in his latter years—must have cost the preacher will never be known.

Chapter 99: A Holiday In The North

Chapter 99.

A Holiday In The North In Scotland—Alarming Adventure—Spurgeon's Tutor—Reminiscences—Canada—Baptist Union at Leeds—Dr. Moffat—The Shoreditch Tabernacle—"Silver Wedding" Testimonial—The Alms-houses—Menton—The Dutchman—Return to the Tabernacle—Conference—Neal Dow—Retirement of Mr. Rogers—Girls' Orphanage—At Glasgow—The Established Church-Death of Mrs. Hillyard—Letters.

The overworked pastor again arranged to spend a few days with his friend Mr. Duncan, of Benmore, after Midsummer; but, on account of a return of gout and the tempestuous weather, the trip had to be postponed. He preached at the Tabernacle on Sunday, July 14, and set out for Scotland on the following morning. No sooner was it known that he was going northward than a large number of applications to preach, not only in Scotland, but on the road down, were received. He could stop for two hours and go on by the next train, and so on. As Spurgeon loved the sea, the chief attraction of the holiday in Scotland was Mr. Duncan's yacht, on board of which he was enabled to visit some of the Western Isles and Highlands. Having touched at Oban, Tobermory, and other places of attraction, he arrived in Rothesay Bay on July 27, and landed in order to take a drive in the Isle of Bute. The sail, so far, had been delightful, the boat having passed round a considerable part of the Isle of Arran; but at Bute an alarming accident occurred, to which reference will presently be made. A correspondent wrote:—

"There is a neat Baptist chapel at Adbeg, Rothesay, ever pleasant and ever popular with visitors. The Baptist chapel here is usually crowded in summer. Mr. Crabbe, one of Mr. Spurgeon's former students, officiates in the said chapel. With much acceptance Mr. Spurgeon worshipped there in the morning. The chapel was crowded, many failing to get admittance.

"Mr. Spurgeon preached in front of the Rothesay Academy in the evening. He stood upon the top of the porch of the mansion of Provost Orkney, and there preached to the assembled thousands, attracted by the fame of the preacher, from Luk 13:10-17. There were present at least 15,000. Behind us, in front of the Academy, there was a great crowd of most attentive listeners. Before us, onwards to the preacher, there was a dense mass of interested hearers. Towards our right hand, the side of the hill, on the summit of which towers the Rothesay Museum, was lined with hundreds on hundreds of hearers. The vast audience being thus seated on a natural amphitheatre, the preacher had full command of his hearers. These had come from all parts of Bute, from Largs, Millport, and Dunoon, not a few having crossed the Firth in yachts and small boats. The weather was delightful. The congregation began to assemble between three and four o'clock p.m., and before six every available seat on the sward was occupied, whilst those who arrived later had to content themselves with standing in the road leading up to the Academy." As regards the preacher's providential escape from a tragic death, the accounts in the papers said that the horses ran away; but it was a somewhat different version that I heard from Mr. Spurgeon himself in the

study at Helensburgh House. It is customary with some Highland coachmen to allow horses to rush down steep hills at a headlong pace; but after one feat of the kind had been accomplished, Mr. Spurgeon asked that the English mode might be adopted. "Oh, we always go like that here," said the man; and, on coming to another steep incline, down they went at a rate the English preacher had never travelled at before, except in an express train. Then, because the harness broke and the driver lost all control over the horses, they presented the appearance of frightened runaways. Certain destruction was anticipated, and spectators were terrified; but when the horses reached the bottom—a precipice protected by a fence—they turned into another road which was an incline, and thus came to a standstill. They do not appear to have been stopped by anyone, as reported. When he returned from this tour he complained that even in the most remote parts friends found him out, so that the rest did not do so much for him as might otherwise have been the case. He enjoyed several fishing excursions, and gave an address on Fishing; and on this, I believe, The Daily News had a leading article. A correspondent gave further particulars of this visit to Scotland:—

"Mr. Spurgeon preached at Pollokshaws, near Glasgow, on the 1st of August, Long before the hour fixed for the beginning of the service the place of worship was besieged by crowds of people anxious to get admission, and as it was altogether impracticable to allow others than ticket-holders to pass into the place of meeting, thousands who would willingly have paid to get inside were turned away disappointed. An amusing incident is reported as having occurred at the gates, where a policeman or two and several stalwart office-bearers acted in the capacity of sentries and collected the passports. Mr. Spurgeon, having elbowed his way through the crowd as far as the gate, was asked to show and deliver his ticket; but not being a ticket-holder, the great preacher was peremptorily told to 'Cut his stick.' Happily some person who recognised the familiar face, greatly amused at the comical situation, nudged the policeman's elbow, and he immediately gave way. The crowds who had gone in the hope of getting admission without tickets, and were excluded, were addressed in the Greenbank Public Park by Mr. Spurgeon, jun. Though Mr. Spurgeon's fame as a preacher went before him like the light and radiancy of the bearded comet, his preaching at Rothesay, and we have no doubt at Pollokshaws, has exceeded expectation." At or about this time I heard him make some references to his old schoolmaster which were then quite new. The veteran tutor had been living within a short distance of Clapham unknown to his grateful scholar, and, like some others of his class, had lapsed into penury. He was, however, too independent to solicit aid from friends; but when Mr. Spurgeon knew the truth, he at once sent, I believe, twenty pounds for present relief. This schoolmaster, a most competent judge, entertained very decided opinions on his celebrated scholar's attainments. He volunteered to set those right who went about retailing the news that Spurgeon was "no scholar," the fact being that at an early age Spurgeon was one of the best scholars of the neighbourhood, and one who could have taken his degree at Cambridge without any difficulty. The venerable tutor was justly proud of his former charge; but he was far too staid and proper to submit to anything like a cross-examination on the part of the too inquisitive.

Tuesday, the 6th of August, was the day fixed for the reassembling of the students at the commencement of the session, when twenty-five new candidates were received, making a total for the year of a hundred. The grounds of Helensburgh House and those of Mr. Coventry not far away were opened for this occasion.

He appeared among his friends in a light summer coat, and with the exception of a cold appeared to be in excellent health. He was as genial as ever, and spoke freely on many subjects He said some rather severe things in regard to the sayings and doings of one of the bishops who had not long before been appointed. This dignitary had told another chaplain that "The Treasury of David" was the book on the Psalms. He was not at all conciliated by this compliment, but on the contrary he seemed to be all the more incensed, and remarked that the man said fair things of everybody, and then did what he could to oppose those whom he hated.

After this I saw little of him during the remainder of the summer, although several letters passed between us. He was hindered by illness on one or two Sabbaths from occupying his pulpit, but otherwise all went well, and he was able to attend the October meetings of the Baptist Union at Leeds, where the great speech he delivered, "Drive On," produced a marked sensation. In the meantime preparations were actively progressing for the celebration of the pastoral silver wedding in December. On Saturday, the 19th of October, I went to Clapham and found him alone in his study. He was in very good spirits; and although Saturday was still a day he reserved to himself, so far as outsiders were concerned, he appeared to be really glad to see a friend. He spoke of a new paper which had recently started in the evangelical cause, and referred to it in a desponding tone. There was nothing in it. He also alluded to a more popular organ which was well established, and while remarking that it was very cleverly conducted, he heartily wished it was more evangelical. He thought it did much mischief, while it had the opportunity of doing infinite good.

He also spoke of the furious things which had been said about his sermon on the Princess Alice disaster. One provincial journalist had the impertinence to say that Spurgeon's frequent ailments arose from excessive eating and drinking. One friend became so justly indignant that he consulted a lawyer and made the writer apologise; but even this hardly mended the matter, as the next issue of the journal contained insults equally gross.

He also spoke of the "silver wedding" services which were to come off in December. In showing me some of his books he picked out Withers's "Emblems," a small volume he had just bought as a bargain at £4 10s., and which was supposed to be worth twelve guineas. An invitation to visit the churches of Canada was destined to receive a reply similar to that sent to the United States:—

"Nightingale Lane, Clapham, "September 7, 1878.

"Beloved Brethren,—Your kind letter of July 20 must have been remarkably delayed, for I knew its contents long before its arrival. It is, however, very welcome to my heart, and comes at a time when I am needing some such brotherly word. I thank you heartily for the love which it breathes in every line, and I beg to assure you that my affection to the brethren in Canada is not less than theirs to me.

"I do not, however, feel that I could leave home and cross the Atlantic to accept your generous offer of hospitality. When I do leave the post of actual service I must seek absolute repose, and that I could not find in your country. I fully believe that you would be considerate of my weakness, but I cannot myself be considerate. When I see the eagerness of the people to hear, I must preach, and to refrain from doing so is a greater strain than to deliver one's soul. Hence, I could only come among you when I felt able to work hard; and that also is the time when I most desire to be at home. The work around me, which so largely depends upon my personal presence and

oversight, grows every day, and I feel more and more the necessity of being upon the spot. I do not feel that I have my Master's permit to leave the post where He, in great condescension, has hitherto blessed me. I am none the less grateful to you, but all the more so. I beseech the Lord to return into your bosoms this your great spontaneous kindness. And though I may never see your faces in the flesh, may we meet before the eternal throne to unite in everlasting praise! Meanwhile, may your churches multiply in numbers and increase in grace. May you maintain the truth both in doctrine, ordinance, and life; and may the Spirit of the Lord rest upon you abundantly.

"I am feeling better just now, and I ask your prayers that I may, with you, glorify the Lord, both in service and suffering, until He come.—Yours very heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon."

During the autumn of this year Mr. Chown presided at a Conference at the Tabernacle, the subject of discussion being "The Duty of the Church Towards the Young." In the course of his address Mr. Spurgeon gave some reminiscences of his early days:—

"The first looking after the soul of the child belongs to the Christian parent, and there it should begin. I have in my own person to thank God that my father and mother thought their first business was the conversion of their children. Therefore I never went to a Sunday-school. I do not say whether that was good or not. My mother always stayed at home on Sunday evening and gathered us round the table, and we read passages of Scripture, and she spoke to each one of us in such a way that I seldom spent a Sunday evening without tears. She prayed with us, her arms around our necks, and laboured to bring us to Christ. She asked us if we could not pray. I remember I could not, though I felt a good deal. I never forgot father's words and mother's tears; and if all fathers and mothers did the same as mine did, maybe all the children would not be saved, but the exceptions would be very few. They are the persons who have the greatest influence over the children—especially the mothers; and if we can get them to be true and earnest matrons, if they live near to God, we shall have the young people surely enough." At the meeting of the Evangelists' Association it was stated that nearly one thousand one hundred services had been held during the year; and Mr. Spurgeon showed that the work done was a favourable contrast to sensational Revivalism. Thus he remarked: "A woman said to one of our brethren a little while ago, 'If what you preach is true, I am a lost woman.' He said, 'I am sure it is;' and she replied, 'I have been to the Revivalists and have been saved ten times, and it has never been any good; it has been of no use whatever.'" It was during the autumn of 1878 that J. B. Gough lectured first at the Tabernacle, to a full audience, after an absence from England of twenty years.

While the Baptist Union was holding its autumnal meetings at Leeds, Mr. Spurgeon preached in Oxford Place Wesleyan Chapel to an audience of three thousand persons, from the words, "But we preach Christ crucified." We find it remarked: "The hour fixed for commencing the service was three o'clock, hut, in spite of the heavy storms prevailing, crowds were hurrying to secure a seat before two o'clock had struck; and long before the preacher had ascended the pulpit every available space was occupied, and hundreds were unable to obtain admission at all. The announcement of Spurgeon's intention to preach not only created quite a flutter of anxiety within the town itself, but further evinced his continued popularity by attracting hundreds from many miles distant."

It was about this time that an Anglican newspaper gave out that, according to his own confession, Spurgeon preferred the Established Church to the Congregational Union. This seemed to be so

startling that a friend asked for an explanation, and received this reply:—

"Nightingale Lane, Clapham, "October 26, 1878.

"Dear Sir,—I should be glad to know when and where I said anything of the kind. Under no conceivable circumstances could I be in the English Church. To the best of my knowledge and belief I never said anything which could be construed into the extract quoted. I have tried to remember, but the very thought is so new to my mind that I can recall nothing approximating to it. If such an expression were ever used by me, there was some connection to explain it. Please see into it. You may print this note.—Yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon"

Though threatened from time to time with a return of his old complaint, the late autumn of 1878 was, on the whole, a happy time, on account of the progress of the work in general. I believe that the only time I ever saw the late Dr. Moffat at the Tabernacle was on October 25, when two coloured students of the Pastors' College—Messrs. T. L. Johnson and G. H. Richardson—with their wives, took leave of their friends before departure for Africa. The first had been born in slavery, and he was able to give vivid accounts of the state of Richmond on the night when the city was forsaken by the Confederate army and its inhabitants. The pastor warmly welcomed Dr. Moffat, whose work he had been familiar with in the days of childhood. The veteran missionary gave an address, remarking that better days were coming on for Africa, at the same time making touching allusion to the work of Livingstone. Spurgeon looked on such a scene with delight; and four days later came the equally gratifying event of the laying of the memorial-stone of Mr. Cuff's great tabernacle in Shoreditch. Amid so much that was encouraging, however, the pastor was laid aside by illness. He preached on Sunday, November 3, but was not heard again in the Tabernacle until December 22, when he intimated that, if able to stand, he should be present at the great bazaar which was to be opened that week on behalf of the "Silver Wedding" testimonial. Unhappily he was not able to be present; and he did not again occupy his pulpit until Easter Sunday, April 13, 1879.

Meanwhile the co-pastor opened the bazaar at the Tabernacle on behalf of the Testimonial Fund, on the last day of 1878, and though half-a-crown was charged for admission, there was a crowded attendance. Mr. James Spurgeon spoke of his brother's going off from Cambridge to London, to "the great Babylon," as the young preacher called it, shrinking from the prospect before him. though he recognised the Divine leading. Little did anyone think, however, of what the future had in store:—

"No one could have prophesied what our eyes now behold, and what we now know concerning a world-wide work. We can many of us remember the twenty-five years' growth—the growth of the College from the single student to one hundred, the growth of the Colportage and the Orphanage, the universal growth which God has given to the many works entrusted to my brother's hands. It is, I think, well that we should thus celebrate all this as we are now doing. My brother has declined to receive anything for himself, and we are therefore compelled to think of something which will be nearest and dearest to him; and we know full well that he will consider anything done to the almshouses as done to himself. Our good sisters there, although they contrive to be happy, have very little to live upon, and yet, small as the sum required for their maintenance is, it is a burden to the church; and we have to remember that in case of my brother's death it might not be so easy to raise the sum as it now is, hence our desire to raise the necessary amount for endowment

purposes." The bazaar was so far a success that the gross takings amounted to £3,400, the donations to the Testimonial Fund being correspondingly liberal. At the annual church meeting the number of names on the roll of membership was 5,066, notwithstanding that over 250 had been told off to form a church at Peckham. The pastor himself was always pleased when such a battalion left the main army to carry on operations elsewhere. The invalided pastor was able to start for Menton on January 15; and he left a characteristic message to those who had been engaged with the bazaar:—

"It overcomes me to think how well, how earnestly, and how happily all was done. But now for a spiritual blessing which shall be still more wonderful. It is even more to be desired; let it be sought and laboured for. The evangelistic meetings during February, if followed up with universal zeal, will, by the blessing of God, bring a great revival and a large increase. Oh that it might come! I shall be far away, but my heart is with you always." On reaching Menton the invalid wrote:—

"By the tender kindness of God the journey hither was made without excessive fatigue, and now I trust that genial weather will bring with it rapid restoration. This place has participated in the severe weather which has swept over the Continent, so that I miss just now the bright sunshine to which I have been formerly accustomed; yet it is comparatively warm, and so far is beneficial to an invalid. Rest is the main thing, and rest I hope to find, that I may come back to you strengthened for sacred service."

Partly in consequence of the Testimonial Bazaar, Spurgeon and his work again attracted the notice of the daily papers. A lengthy and appreciative article appeared in The Daily News, in course of which particular reference was made to the almshouses, which were destined to receive £5,000 from the fund being raised:—

"The almshouses are situate in Station Street, off the New Kent Road, and afford shelter to seventeen old ladies. The elder of the colony is Miss Gay, who is now in her eighty-sixth year, and has for seventy-two years been a member of the congregation to the care of which Mr. Spurgeon succeeded. The lady whose home we had the honour of being received in is Miss Bonser—'spelt with an e,' as she observes, having apparently suffered much tribulation in the course of a long and otherwise happy life by a popular prejudice for spelling her name with an 'o.' Miss Bonser is seventy-five, and is as sprightly as if her years were twenty. She hops about her sitting-room much after the manner of a sparrow, and chirps pleasantly in describing her many blessings, a principal item being a dole of half-a-crown a week from funds bequeathed by a former member of the congregation. Miss Bonser has a good memory, which she regulates exclusively by reference to affairs connected with the church of which she is a member. She is a sort of animated Church Almanack; and, looking down the pages of her life, you will find, instead of the memoranda of the births and deaths of kings and queens, the dates when Dr. Rippon died, when Mr. So-and-so was deacon, and when Miss Something-else was baptised. The walls of her room are decorated with portraits of departed divines—Dr. Rippon, Dr. Adam Clarke, the Rev. James Smith, and others. In a place of honour is a charming engraving of Mrs. Fry, whose placid face and kind eyes have looked out from this framework on Miss Bonser for thirty-three years. 'I have heard her preach for three-quarters of an hour at a stretch,' Miss Bonser says, looking lovingly at the likeness, and evidently regarding the feat as wonderful in a woman. Over the almshouses runs a schoolroom. This is a public school connected with the Tabernacle, where an average of 240 boys and half as

many girls receive a sound elementary education. The school is always full." The season at Menton was exceptionally wet. Hence, during the second week of February, Mr. Spurgeon wrote: "The damp and dull weather which has reached us even here has retarded my progress to health and strength, so that I remain a very feeble traveller. But I am greatly improved, and feel that my mind and spirits are the better for rest."

He remained in the sunny south, until Tuesday, April 8th, when he left for Paris; and, spending one night in that city, reached London on Thursday, April 10. Easter Sunday, the 13th of the month, was like the opening of a new era at the Tabernacle; and the joy of all was enhanced by the evident improvement which had taken place in the pastor's health. He remarked that he had resumed his nationality by contracting a bad cold; but otherwise the preacher was like a new man, compared with what he had been five months previously. The weather was also genial and springlike, in keeping with the occasion. The people were thanked for having so well sustained the various works. As regarded himself, Mr. Spurgeon said that, having been so long silent, he felt somewhat rusty; but being a key that had so often been in the lock, he hoped he might still fit it, and find something to say. The service was one of thanksgiving and praise, the sermon being founded on Psa 145:7 : "They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness," etc.

Among the reminiscences of Menton in 1879 some pleasant things might be mentioned in connection with a genial Dutchman who could speak no language save his own, but who every morning greeted Mr. Spurgeon with a cordial shake of the hand and the remark, "We're bruderes." Indeed, the two became quite friendly, and communicated through an interpreter. The oddest thing about this friendship was that the only available interpreter who volunteered his services was a Roman Catholic friend, who confessed that he did not understand much about ecclesiastical terms. The Dutchman was a Mennonite Baptist, who one day asked another gentleman at the hotel if he had ever heard of C. H. Spurgeon of England. "That's he sitting on the sofa," was the reply, and so the friendship commenced. On Thursday in Easter week Spurgeon gave one of his most striking discourses on Hos 14:6 : "His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon." All the illustrations seemed to come fresh from the olive-groves of Menton.

Some very hopeful notes were this year struck at the Conference which opened on May 5, the Monday evening meeting being held at Trinity Chapel, John Street, Edgware Road. The members were pleased because their President seemed to appear before them in new strength and health. Their enthusiasm rose to a higher pitch on the next morning at the College, when the President spoke to them for an hour and a half, giving a good word to the discouraged, while he strove to stimulate all to aim high and succeed. The discussions of Wednesday, the 7th, were on ministerial qualifications and the doctrine of future punishment, which Mr. Spurgeon said was not to be rejected because it was awful. Mr. T. A. Denny presided at the supper in the evening, when the collection amounted to £2,020. What was called the College Testimonial was presented by Professor Gracey on the following morning, and consisted of a sum of £414. According to my own notes, Mr. Spurgeon's remarks on accepting this gift were about as follow:—

"I do not think I could make a fine speech if I were to try, and there are times when fine speaking shows the fool. I am glad to receive the money, because five thousand pounds of this and the coming testimonial will go to the almshouses, and the rest to the other works. I feel a pleasure in

receiving, and more in giving away. I have received five pounds from a friend towards paying my expenses to Menton; but, as they are already paid, I have given it to a young brother who needed it more on account of illness. I accept the money, and shall use it in the way which yields me most pleasure. I hope to live to God as long as I live, and to use the money in the same spirit as friends manifest in giving it. I used to have plenty of enemies; but if they are not dead, they are much quieter than they used to be. Lately when ill one of the first notes I received was from the bishop of the diocese; Dean Howson also sent me a book to Menton. I also received a kind message from Archdeacon Law, and another in a similar strain from another very High Churchman—a Ritualist. I think it strange that I should be treated so kindly by people of opposite views, and so different from my own. My heart always sinks when people praise me, and rises correspondingly when they abuse me. If there is any virtue in connection with the College I disown it, except in association with the tutors, the church, and the deacons."

Some sensation was caused by an article which appeared in an American paper, in which it was thought that our great preacher was charged with intemperance. The offending writer sent this letter to an English newspaper:—

"Sir,—In your issue of the 31st January you say, 'Neal Dow has charged the Rev. Mr. Spurgeon with intemperance, saying that he goes to the South of France every year because of the gout, which is due to his intemperate habits.' You have been led into an error. It is not true that I have charged Mr. Spurgeon with intemperance or with any other habit.

"In the New York Daily Witness of December 4, 1878, was a long article of mine on Christian charity, in which I said, 'Here is a case calling loudly not to be judged uncharitably.' Then I spoke of a famous London preacher who freely drank beer, brandy, and sherry. And I said that one morning at a gentleman's house, where he led the family devotions, after the prayer was over, before rising from his knees he struck a match and lighted his cigar. I mentioned no name.

"The American press caught it up, and sent it flying all over the country, headed, 'Neal Dow on Spurgeon.' It was an impertinence to do so. Why not say, 'Neal Dow on Dean Stanley, or Canon Farrar, or Newman Hall?' No one has any warrant from me to say that I had Mr. Spurgeon in mind when I wrote that article.—Respectfully,

"Neal Dow.

"Portland, Maine, U.S.A., 17th February." On the following day the same paper commented on this letter:—

"....The case was that of a 'famous London preacher' who freely drank beer, brandy, and sherry, and who one morning, when leading family devotions at a gentleman's house, struck a match and lighted his cigar before rising from his knees on the conclusion of prayer. We have a serious doubt whether there is any vestige of truth in the latter part of this story. A minister may drink beer or brandy or wine and be none the worse for it; but the cigar incident is utterly improbable. One hears a good deal of talk about the freedom of American manners; but such a thing would scarcely be possible in good society there, and is still less likely to have taken place in any religious home to which 'a famous London preacher' was admitted. But with the truth of the story, or with the question as to its illustrative value in a paper on Christian charity, we need have nothing to do. Our difference is with Mr. Dow and his mode of controversy; and we say that no man, however pure his

motive, has a right to make a statement of this kind in such a vague way as to permit of its being applied to this, that, or the other clergyman who may be identified as a 'famous London preacher.'" At this time, on attaining the age of eighty years, the venerable George Rogers, Principal of the College, retired from active service, and was succeeded by Professor Gracey. The latter was born in County Down, Ireland, in 1841, and as a youth made strenuous and successful efforts to secure for himself a university education. He first met with Spurgeon at Glasgow, and soon after became connected with the Pastors' College as assistant in the junior classics. Soon after he succeeded Mr. James Cubitt as classical tutor. Professor Gracey died February 9, 1893, and his remains lie near the grave of Mr. Spurgeon in Norwood Cemetery. The great event of the spring of 1879 was the presentation of the Silver Wedding Testimonial on May 20. The programme was a very full one. On Sunday, the 18th, special sermons were preached; on Monday the poorer members of the church were gathered together; and on the following evening a tea preceded the crowded meeting at which the testimonial was presented. At this meeting interesting addresses were given by Mr. B. W. Carr, Dr, Stanford, and Mr. William Olney. The amount of the testimonial was £6,233; and, as the pastor refused to take any of this for himself, a study clock with ornaments was given, to be kept as a memento of the occasion. After £5,000 for the almshouses was deducted, about £1,200 remained for other objects. The reason that the receiver of this testimonial would reserve nothing for himself was because it was an expression of gratitude to God. Two hundred pounds went to Mrs. Spurgeon for poor ministers, and £50 went to keep company with a like amount which Mrs. Hillyard had sent on behalf of the proposed Orphanage for Girls. Reference was then made to the common report, "Spurgeon makes a very good thing of it." He acknowledged that that was true in regard to his service for God:—

"When I gave myself up to Him at first to be His minister I never reckoned that He would give anything except raiment to put on and bread to eat. I recollect when my income was forty-five pounds a year. Well, I do not know, but I think I had more money to spare then than I have got now. I had not many things to drag at me then; I never wanted anything. When I came to London I desired to keep up the feeling that I was to serve God altogether, and give myself and all that I should ever get entirely to Him, and just be a gentleman-commoner upon the bounty of God, whose livery would always be found him, whose bread would be given him, and whose water would be sure. So I have lived. I get sometimes requests for loans of hundreds of pounds, under the supposition that I am a very rich man. I never was a rich man, and never shall be; and yet I am the richest man in England, if you can make that out, because there is nothing that I want on earth but I have it. I have not any wishes which are not gratified and satisfied, except that I always want to be doing more for Jesus Christ, if possible." On June 9 he once more met the colporteurs, and showed, by the address he gave them, the keen interest he continued to feel in their service. On the occasion of the celebration of his forty-fifth birthday, on June 19, both Mr. Macgregor (Rob Roy) and Sir Charles Reed gave addresses, and a number of additional subscriptions for the girls' houses were announced. In a letter written about this time the President referred to this enterprise:—"It seems to me that the proposal only needs to be made known to be taken up by benevolent individuals. The position of the land which I have purchased is exceedingly advantageous, and it was necessary to purchase it at once, as it was put up to auction. I have not before ventured to make a purchase without having the money in hand, and should not now have done so if necessity had not been laid upon me. I have now the promise of money for four houses; but this, of course, is not available for the purchase of the land, and as I cannot very well hang the

houses down by a chain from the sky, the first necessity is to buy the soil on which to place them." When this appeal was made the times were unfavourable, however. The summer of 1879 was remarkable for its scant sunshine and stormy skies; while, in addition to all, there were political troubles at home and abroad. On July 13 a discourse was given at the Tabernacle on the situation, when his opinion seemed to be that unless sin were repented of, the judgment of God might fall upon the nation.

It was at this time that he sent forth his little book on Eccentric Preachers. At Michaelmas farewell was taken of Mr. Thomas Spurgeon at the Tabernacle, on the occasion of his starting off for a second tour in the Australasian colonies; but more important was the inauguration of the Girls' Orphanage on October 1. It was decided that the houses should be larger than the boys', and that the girls should receive a thorough domestic training, and not a mere institutional one. The President gave a lecture on "Hymns and Hymn-Writers." The autumnal meetings of the Baptist Union were held at Glasgow in October, and Mr. Spurgeon preached on the afternoon of the 8th in St. Andrew's Hall, the assembly numbering five thousand persons. The text was Num 14:11 : "How long will it be ere they believe me?" The collection on behalf of the Girls' Orphanage amounted to £273. A Glasgow newspaper gave pen-and-ink portraits of several of the Baptist leaders, and thus referred to our great preacher:—

"Mr. Spurgeon loves the great city which transformed the boy-preacher of the Cambridge Fens into the most widely-renowned pulpit orator of the Anglo-Saxon world; but he cannot stand the London fogs. He says they are meat and drink to him and poison too; and so, especially of late years, he has run away from them as much as possible. If the Glasgow session of the Baptist Union had been fixed for a later date he would not have been able to come; but the managers of the meeting have been fortunate enough to secure him just before his departure for that early winter sojourn at Menton which gives him at once a much-needed rest and deliverance from the fogs that hang so heavy over the English Babylon in November. Though he is himself in the habit of declaring that he cannot lecture, all who have heard him give an address at the Autumnal Congress in past years will probably regret that he is not going to do this, instead of preaching, at Glasgow. From his first sermon in Edinburgh, when the modern Athenians looked askance at the strange phenomenon, down to the present time, when criticism is dumb in his presence, we have often heard him preach; but the most impressive utterance that ever fell from his lips, in our opinion, was the platform address he delivered at the Plymouth Congress in 1875; and next to it we should be inclined to rank the speech he gave in the Free Trade Hall during the Manchester meetings of 1872. For spiritual power they were quite equal to any sermon, while they possessed certain attractive features—a peculiar grace in literary form, a strong personal interest, and a richness of humour—that are not usually found in sermons, not even in those of Mr. Spurgeon. However, we are thankful to accept what he desires to give; and the wide prevalence of this feeling is attested by the fact that the tickets admitting to the sermon were exhausted in a few hours, and have not been procurable for days past either for love or money. Mr. Spurgeon is to be the guest, while in this city, of Provost Wilson, of Govan, but his stay will be brief. We regret to learn that of late his health has been again giving way. Many of his friends would not be sorry to hear that he had listened to the Baptists of Victoria, who are once more urging him to pay Australia a visit. The brethren at the Antipodes have heard—what is, we fear, too true—that a mere three months' rest is not likely to make any permanent improvement in Mr. Spurgeon's health; so they

beg him to take a long sea-voyage—good advice, if the Victorians will promise-not to undo the beneficial effects of the voyage by working Mr. Spurgeon too hard when they get him to their side of the globe. On this head we confess we are somewhat sceptical. It is a comforting thing to hear that Mr. Spurgeon's grandfather, the fine old Independent minister with whom he was brought up, used to be a martyr to the gout in middle life, but by-and-by he got over the malady and lived to the great age of ninety. How many will unite in the prayer that this experience may be repeated in the life-story of the grandson!"

Spurgeon had often been accused of defaming the Established Church; but what he said was as often as otherwise unfairly quoted. The present Dr. George Duncan, of Hornsey, made inquiry concerning some alleged extreme statement, and received the following reply:—

"Nightingale Lane, Balham, Surrey, "August 2, 1879.

"Dear Mr. Duncan,—I have so often answered the statement which Mr. H. B. Reed quotes, that I would now just let it stand, and let these Defence agents slander me at their pleasure. The words are wrenched from their connection. They were, originally, rather a compliment to the Church than not. I remarked (some eighteen or more years ago) that our difficulties as to disestablishment lay in the very goodness of the Church, and that I preferred, when I must fight, to fight with a bad man; and therefore, so far as this disestablishment battle is concerned, I could wish, etc. Tell Mr. Reed that he must be very hard up for charges if he goes so far back; that if he pleases I will say a few strong things for him to quote which will be true; and that his cause must be in extremis when it needs this garbled quotation to defend it. I wish his Church and himself would grow better and better, and abandon all erroneous doctrines and erroneous quotations. If you will inform him that I do not entertain the sentiment set forth in the quotation as it stands by itself, and that I never did entertain such a sentiment, I shall have confidence in him as an English gentleman that he will not go on imputing to me a sentiment which I heartily repudiate. If, however, he quotes me thus again I shall regard it as an illustration of that ecclesiastical honesty which enables men to deny baptismal regeneration and yet teach children the Church Catechism.—Yours ever heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon."

During the memorable wet summer of 1879 he wrote a note of sympathy to Mr. James Toller of Waterbeach:—

"Nightingale Lane, Balham, Surrey, "September 23, 1879.

"Dear Friend,—I am deeply grieved that this year should be such a loss to you, but I am yet glad that your faith keeps its hold and that your spirits do not sink. Bless the Lord when He takes as well as when He gives.

"As to the Orphanage, our loss is nothing to yours, but if all our helpers were farmers where should we be? I trust the Lord will give you a double crop next year, and, above all, fill your soul with joy in His own self.—Yours very heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon.

"P.S.—I hope to be preaching each Sabbath till November, when I shall go away awhile." A few days later he wrote again:—

"Nightingale Lane, Balham, Surrey, "October 1, 1879.

"My Dear Mr. Toller,—I am quite unable to go out this weather, and I am soon going abroad to escape it. I am sorry that I have to go to Glasgow, but beyond that I cannot hope to do more.

"I persuaded my son Thomas to take the anniversary, and then we had a note to say it would not come off. He leaves for Australia to-morrow. There is, therefore, no sou to send you, for Charles was with you last year, and having newly settled at Greenwich he cannot often leave his place. I am sorry that there has been a disappointment, but I trust another year I may be up to the mark.

"I am very grateful for your handsome present to the Orphanage. Just like you.—Yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon." Being an open-air preacher himself, Spurgeon seemed to delight in giving advice to members of that fraternity. A large body of them assembled at the Tabernacle on October 27, when some good things were spoken, but only the following can be quoted:—

"I am consulted about so many things that it is the burden of my life. Sometimes I try to imitate the Delphic Oracle, and give an answer that may be taken two ways. A man wrote to me lately that his master objected to his preaching, and asked me whether he should go on with it, and I wrote him this reply: 'Dear Brother,—If the Lord has opened your mouth the devil cannot shut it; but if the Lord has not opened your mouth, may the devil shut it.' This person said he felt encouraged by the answer. I only hope that my reading of the oracle was the correct one." On Sunday evening, November 9, he took leave of his people, and on the following morning started for Menton; but after his arrival there he was confined to his bed for a time by illness. At the beginning of the New Year, 1880, better news came to hand. The weather was dry and summer-like in loveliness. On January 10 he wrote to me: "I am gathering strength. We have had thirty-live days of fine weather without a break. This is reviving. I hope to set out for home the first week in February; but pray clear your tight little island of frosts and fogs, and of the Jingoes." It was during this stay at Menton, at the Hotel de la Paix, that he preached to fourteen persons from Jas 5:2. Before he reached home, Mrs. Hillyard, the founder of the Orphanage, passed away, her last words being, "My boys! my boys!" One of the principal evangelists associated with, the Pastors' College, Mr. A. J. Clarke, had become invalided, and his place was taken by Mr. Fullerton. Several friends passed away to the silent land during the year, and among them James Grant, ex-editor of The Morning Advertiser. The departure of such early supporters may have served to remind the preacher how he had outgrown the need of such help as they accorded him. His usefulness was said to be greater outside of the Tabernacle than within; for, including the readers of the sermons, Spurgeon's congregation was thought to be not less than a million persons. It was also during the year 1879 that the present Dr. J. A. Spurgeon paid a visit to Canada and the United States.

While in France Mr. Spurgeon wrote this letter to his people:—

"Menton, Christmas Day.

"Dear Brethren,—I am now much better. The weather is so charming that it makes me gather strength, and it takes the rheumatism out of me. I believe that I shall rapidly recover, and I am full of gratitude to God that it is so. I have had a sharp turn of affliction; but it has been comparatively short because of the sunny clime and the lovely weather. Had I been with you in the frost and fog I should not have left my bed for an hour. I am sorry that I must be longer away from the people of my love, but it is evident that so it must be. May those who occupy my place be divinely instructed and blessed. My heart's desire and prayer is that the special services may be the best you have

ever held. There must be a general effort if the noon prayer-meeting is to succeed, but it goes to be done. Mr. Jackson Wray wrote to tell me of your great prayer-meeting and collection. I had heard of it from others, but the repetition was still pleasing to me. Surely I have the best of people to deal so lovingly with their poor cripple of a minister. God bless you all! I wish you most earnestly a happy New Year. The Lord be with you all.—Yours most lovingly, "C. H. Spurgeon." In the week following he wrote again:—

"My Beloved Friends,—Now that our special services are beginning, I entreat you to labour as one man to make them a success. It is the Lord's work to send the blessing; but, as a rule, He begins to work upon sinners by first of all arousing His own people. We believe in grace, and in grace alone; but we know by experience that true revival is not a gourd which springs up on a sudden while men sleep; but, like the angel of Bethlehem, it visits those who keep watch over their flocks by night. Grace to us is as new wine, refreshing and inspiring, and not as a soporific potion, creating the slumber of inaction. Messrs. Smith and Fullerton, who conduct the services, have proved their fitness for the position by their success in other congregations. If the pleasure of the Lord does not prosper in their hands among us, it will be our fault and not theirs. What is wanted is, first, much prayer. In this all the Lord's people can join. Attend the noon prayer-meetings, if possible, and, if not, pray all the same. Without the Holy Spirit we are nothing, and prayer alone can win His aid. The next practical step is to make the meetings known.... If you cannot preach the Gospel, you may yet win a soul by letting it be known that the Gospel is preached. The third needful work is to bring in the people. Persuade friends and neighbours to attend; canvass a district; visit from house to house with invitations. 'Compel them to come in,' and, when this is done, give a personal word. Speak for Jesus, if it be with faltering lips, both before and after the addresses of the preachers. Good sermons need following up with personal entreaties. God often blesses feeble efforts; indeed, He suffers no true endeavour to fall to the ground. How I wish I could persuade all the church members to rally to the holy war! God knoweth how much I wish I could be with you myself. My infirmities detain me from the field of sacred action; but my heart watches you. As ye have served the Lord in my presence, so do I pray you much more in my absence, that, if possible, my lack of service may be made up by your overplus of labour. You have not only your own work to do, but mine also. Be pastors to the lambs and to the wandering sheep. If you cannot fill the pulpit, yet tell out the same old, old story which is the one sole message with which it has for many years resounded. To your beloved deacons and elders, and to you all, I send my fervent Christian love, beseeching you all—altogether—with all your strength, to unite in the service of love.—Yours most heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon."

Evangelistic services were held at the Tabernacle during January, 1880; and then, at length, on Sunday, February 15, the pastor again appeared among his people after an absence of three months, the sermon being founded on Psa 68:20-21 : "He that is our God," etc All were thanked for carrying on the work so well during the winter. "I feel sure that I have returned greatly refreshed, and I hope to have a long spell of happy, loving, and useful service among you," said Mr. Spurgeon. "It is a great mercy that everything at the Tabernacle does not depend on the presence of the pastor, but that in his absence all manifest so much earnestness." As this was leap year, and February 29 fell on a Sunday, what is called a leap-year sermon was preached at the Tabernacle in. the evening from the Apostle's words, "One born out of due time." He said he had selected that text because February 29 had fallen on a Sunday.

"There are a large number of you who have never seen the 29th of February on a Sunday before, and there is a still larger number who will never see it again. I suppose that it will be twenty-eight years before it will occur again, for it is a Sunday thrown in—a sort of odd day. If you were to ask our neighbours of the Greek Church they would tell you that there was no such day at all, for they keep to the old system of dates. This plan of putting in an odd day every four years, just to make the days square with the sun, is a very good one, no doubt, but still it is a day thrown in. It has seemed to me that if the Lord would but bless some souls on this odd day in the leap year, what a great blessing it would be—converted on the 29th of February, and that on a Sunday!" On Tuesday, March 9, he encouraged Mr. Cuff and his friends by preaching in the New Shoreditch Tabernacle, Hackney Road, the text being Rev 1:17 : "Fear not." The spring of 1880 was the time of the General Election which resulted in the fall of Lord Beaconsfield's Government; and the meeting of the London Baptist Association at Westbourne Grove Chapel on April 6 seems to have partaken of the general excitement. In referring to the situation, Mr. Spurgeon said that he was filled with unspeakable delight, and pointed out that the Liberal party saw the power of Nonconformists. Prayers were offered for Mr. Gladstone and the Government; a sum of one thousand pounds appears to have been subscribed for mission work abroad; and in the evening Mr. Spurgeon preached on Christ's miracle of turning water into wine.

He did not often write a political letter; but as it was necessary in the then excited state of the public mind to correct false rumours, he penned the following:—

"To the Editor of 'The Baptist.'

"Dear Sir,—The Tories have diligently spread a statement that a Northampton Baptist voter, being puzzled whether he should vote for Mr. Bradlaugh or no, made an inquiry of me, and received for answer that I would vote for the devil if he were a Liberal. Now, it so happened that when this report came under my notice I had not even thought of the Northampton election, and no voter or other person had written me upon the subject. Since then I have so far written upon the matter as to deny that I had ever expressed myself, one way or another, as to Mr. Bradlaugh's candidature. Why such a falsehood should have been started I cannot tell, unless there were party ends to serve.

"In my judgment no man should be made to suffer for his religious opinions, and men of all creeds and of no creed have a right to be represented in the House of Commons if they are numerous enough to be able to return a member. I should greatly prefer to see men of Christian character and principles returned—the better the men the more worthy of the honour. At the same time, the fitness of a man to represent us politically cannot be measured by his piety or his orthodoxy. We employ a physician, not because he is a Baptist, but because he understands medicine; and so we vote for a man to sit in Parliament, not because he is orthodox in religion, but because he holds views in politics which we regard to be right. The less sectarianism comes into the question the better. The moral element in politics should be mainly regarded, and peculiarities of creed only so far as they are involved in the present union of Church and State and other kindred subjects.

"Personally, I may say plainly that I would not have voted for Mr. Bradlaugh, nor should I have recommended others to do so; but that is not a matter of much importance to him or to anyone else, as I have no vote for Northampton. If it had ever been my intention to advise the Northampton Baptist to vote for him, I should certainly not have used the language imputed to me,

nor, indeed, in any case should I have so spoken of any man. Northampton Liberals were placed in a very difficult position, and there is ample room for difference of opinion as to what they ought to have done; but there can be no need to mix me up in a matter with which I had nothing to do, either directly or indirectly, nearly or remotely.

"C. H. Spurgeon.

"Nightingale Lane, Balham, "April 13, 1880."

Chapter 100: The Girl's Orphanage

Chapter 100.

The Girl's Orphanage

Conference of 1880—Missionary Soiree—The Girls' Orphanage—In Scotland—Removal to Westwood—The Unitarian Herald —Sunday-Schools Centenary—Baptist Union and the Orphanage—At the Wesleyan Conference—Mr. E. W. Matthews's Reminiscences.

On April 18 the Conference of 1880 opened at the Shoreditch Tabernacle, when Mr. Spurgeon said that he felt a pride in sitting in that house, for it was an instance of how God blessed faithful effort. In the course of his speech he predicted a great future for the Baptists, for he believed that the time was coming when their principles would be triumphant. About five hundred and eleven men had now gone forth from the College, and the baptisms since 1868, when the accounts began to be collected, reached a total of over thirty-nine thousand. The subject of the presidential address at the College on the following morning was, "Running Down—Renewal—Starting Afresh." What was said related to perils and temptations, hobbies versus Gospel preaching, causes of failure, a quickened ministry. Considerable enthusiasm prevailed, especially as the President was supposed to be enjoying more than usually good health. At the supper on April 20 Mr. J. B. Mead presided, and the collection amounted to about two thousand pounds. Addressing this distinguished company, Mr. Spurgeon made some characteristic references to his men, who were now scattered pretty well all over the world:—

"I feel thankful that so large a proportion of the men have continued in the work, remaining unchanged in their sentiments and not having deserted the denomination to which they belong; but they take fast root, and have worked thoroughly hard and well. Of course there are failures; we cannot guarantee men. We cannot guarantee a horse, and certainly we cannot a man, for, in addition to all the infirmities of the body which an animal has, there are infirmities of mind and spirit possessed by a man; so that one who is a capital student may turn out a very poor preacher, and one who has been a first-rate student will suddenly drop and we cannot tell why. Sometimes he gets in love, which is good or bad according to whom he loves; or he gets a crotchet, rides a hobby, understands the book of Revelation better than he understands Matthew, Mark, or Romans. Some fad takes him, or else he gets self-indulgent. All sorts of faults happen to men. We do not find children all turn out everything we can wish, and even those who seem the most hopeful may grieve their parents after all. It has been so with our children of the College; it will be so with all men as long as men are men. But it is a blessing that this matter has been but a very small affliction with us. On the contrary, we have had joy in the brethren, and they have had joy in me, for if they could see us meet together all day as we have, I do not think we would find under heaven any body of men so attached to another man as these are to me. I do not understand it, and cannot make it out. I have never felt I deserve it. I have done all I can for the brethren, and am prepared to do; at the same time it is to me a very wonderful thing, and I am quite lost in gratitude to God for it—not so much that I wish to be the leader of them as that I know that unity is strength

and power, for it would be much better that we should be broken up than to have a lack of sympathy the one for the other." As usual, the Conference continued its sittings on Thursday, the public meeting being held in the Tabernacle in the evening; and on Friday there was a communion service. On this day reference was made to Edward Leach, formerly sub-editor of The Sword and the Trowel, who had died on the day before. The Baptist Missionary Society this year held its annual soiree at the Holborn Town Hall on April 27, Spurgeon being the chief attraction of the gathering. He gave a bit of his experience of the preceding week. "I was all last week in a chair, ruling meetings, and I got into such a state of weariness that on Saturday, when I sat down to study, I found myself asleep. By-and-by I got up and shook myself about, and sat down and went to sleep again; and if it had not been for the admirable speeches which I have had the pleasure of hearing to-night I should have been asleep now." The address, which nearly fills five closely-printed newspaper columns, touched on such subjects as missions and Christian responsibility, the vices of civilisation, caste and infidelity, and Gospel tests. In showing how caste ruled in England, he gave an example of a pious and useful minister whom no congregation would have because he had married a black wife. Nor was that all, for it was added: "I know several half-sovereign people that would not think of inviting half-a-crown to tea with them; and there is a very strong aversion on the part of the half-crowns to the threepenny-pieces; and perhaps there is a stronger aversion still of the threepenny-pieces to anything coppery." In addressing the colporteurs in their conference on the afternoon of May 3, he strongly impressed on the men that the Gospel was what the people wanted; and then, in a way that such hardy packmen could appreciate, he showed that the selling of books was one of the best ways of diffusing the truth, because a good book, especially the Bible, would go on preaching for generations. He next touched on difficulties, and insisted that nothing worth doing was ever free from them. He confessed that his own trials came chiefly from himself, and if he had only more grace he could laugh at the greatest of them. The evening meeting in the Tabernacle was memorable on account of a speech by the late Dr. Samuel Manning, who showed that the Reformation itself could never have been effected without the printing-press. It was also pointed out that even the vast congregation at the Tabernacle was as a drop in the bucket compared with those whom Mr. Spurgeon reached by the printed page. The text of Dr. Manning's address was the picturesque legend of Luther having thrown his ink-pot at the head of the arch-fiend who appeared to him in his study in the Wartburg. On Saturday, June 19, the President of the Orphanage completed his forty-sixth year, and the birthday festival was celebrated on the Tuesday following by laying the memorial-stones of four houses of the Girls' Orphanage. Though the weather was not so summer-like as we are accustomed to associate with Midsummer, the programme was carried out with a good deal of enthusiasm, and the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon at three o'clock drew forth hearty cheers. It was arranged that six houses for the accommodation of two hundred and fifty girls should be built; but as these would cost £11,000—a much larger sum than was anticipated—the contractor was instructed to proceed with four houses, the money for which was already in hand. "I think no one ever spent in their lives such a day as I spent yesterday," said Mr. Spurgeon. "I received with this hand nearly £900, to a large extent made up of five-shilling pieces and half-crowns; and my right hand is in a very ugly condition to-day. I hope no one will want to shake hands with it, for it shakes itself; it is full of pain." More suffering than friends suspected came in this way; but in the present instance the sufferer willingly endured the pain because of the determination of the people to carry through the Orphanage enterprise. The cost of one house,

named after the Sermons, was given by Mr. Spurgeon and his publishers:—

"It is Sermon House, and is intended specially to commemorate the goodness of God in connection with the sermons; and right it is that there should be a house for that, because the College, the Orphanage, and all our works owe a great deal to the sermons. I have a little church of some 5,500 members over at Newington Butts; but I have a larger church of, I dare say, 56,000 members all over England, Scotland and Ireland, who are always up to the mark if any good work has to be done.... Among my birthday gifts of this land there are some coming from distant lands. The people who send them say I am their pastor. They are far away from sermon-makers, and so they read one of mine every Sunday, and think of me as their minister, though I hope that those who read them will never think them to be half so good as listening to those from the lips of a living preacher.... This house is to be a record to all time of our thankfulness to God that the sermons have continued to be printed week by week for twenty-five and a half years, and we have now reached the number in regular order of 1,542. That is a considerable number of sermons to be printed week by weak, and there seems to be as much good in them for the souls of God's servants now as twenty-five years ago, for which I devoutly bless God. For many a time, when I go forth to look for food for the souls of my people, it is with an earnest cry to heaven, and a consciousness that if I am not helped I have nothing laid up in store, I use up the manna every day, and have none to breed worms. I keep on emptying the barrel, but it fills again."

After the stone of Sermon House was laid by his wife, Mr. Spurgeon himself laid the stone of The Limes, in the name of his friend Mr. W. R. Rickett, who provided the house, in memory of five children. The cost of The Olives was defrayed by Mr. Samuel Barrow, and his wife laid the memorial-stone. The stone of the fourth house, as the gift of the trustees of the Orphanage, was laid by Mr. W. Higgs. In the evening after tea one meeting was held in the boys' play-hall and another on the lawn. The list of speakers was an attractive one; for, in addition to several members of the Spurgeon family, there were Canon Hussey, Mr. Newman Hall, and Dr. Allon.

Soon after this, Mr. Spurgeon went to Scotland, when he was again the guest of Mr. Duncan, of Benmore. According to the custom of former years two services were held on the lawn, which were attended by great crowds of persons from the surrounding country.

It was during the summer of 1880 that Helensburgh House was sold and Westwood, Upper Norwood, purchased. It was thought that, on account of his being subject to rheumatism, Mr. Spurgeon might be benefited by making a move to higher ground. The new residence had more ample grounds, but the house itself was of about the same size. On account of the furniture being removed at or about the time of the reassembling of the College, it was thought that there would be no al-fresco meeting of the students; but this took place as usual at Park Hill, near Streatham Common, an unoccupied mansion and grounds lent for the purpose. At this meeting Mr. Spurgeon expressed the hope that he would enjoy better health on higher ground, so as even to be enabled to remain in England during the winter. He also read an auctioneer's description of a famous medicinal spring in the grounds at Westwood, and the company were assured that if they would assemble there next year, they should be at liberty to drink ad libitum of the water which was supposed to be capable of curing all ailments. In one way or another Spurgeon appears to have won the admiration of all sections, including even the least orthodox. In the first week of August, 1880, a Unitarian journal gave an article on the pastor and his work, from which this extract may

be made:—

"A special interest seems at all times to attach to the name of the great South London preacher. When it is mentioned, or when it is seen in print, the attention, not to say curiosity, of almost all classes seems to be attracted and drawn.... Without the imposition of the hand of a bishop, Mr. Spurgeon seems to have had the hand of God resting upon him. In the early days of Mr. Spurgeon's popularity it was commonly supposed that his success would be merely meteoric, and, like the shooting-star, would fade away as quickly as it came; but all such suppositions were beside the mark. With some it might, and doubtless would, have been so, but not with a man like him. In addition to the most laborious earnestness, zeal, and enthusiasm he has ever betrayed the greatest self-sacrifice, sincerity, and singleness of purpose; and these qualities combined, and withal guided and toned by consummate common-sense, have made him, in addition to being a notorious man, a man—even where not agreed with—to be trusted and admired. It is impossible to speak of his labours and those of his devoted friends without to many minds seeming to border, and that even when nearest to the truth, upon the apparently fabulous and fanciful.... We have only attempted a statement of some of the more important of this deservedly popular man's herculean doings, the very personal charity of whom is immense, as witness the devotion to his Christian work of the noble pecuniary testimonial which was raised for him on the completion of the twenty-fifth year of his pastorate. In religion he is a Baptist and a Calvinist, in politics a strong Liberal, in practice a broad, genial, thorough, and catholic man, and we wish him success in his noble and self-denying efforts. He is an example, not only to every Unitarian minister, but also to every other minister as well. He has succeeded, as in the long run others may, if they like, succeed, because he has deserved success. Theologically we are not in sympathy with him, nor will he expect us to be; but we can distinguish between theology and practical religion, and we wish both him and his good and noble-hearted wife renewed health and long life, not only to pursue their good works, but also to be a blessing and a comfort to each other in the doing of them." The celebration of the centenary of Sunday-schools also belongs to the year 1880, and the occasion excited considerable interest at the Tabernacle. Mr. Spurgeon preached a sermon on Psa 8:5 : "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings," etc. "One would like to have known what kind of a child Whitefield was; for who would have thought that out of that little mouth the whole nation would be aroused?" said the preacher. "One would like to have seen John Wesley, too. when he was a child. Out of the mouths of little George Whitefield and little John Wesley—out of those two baby mouths God smote the devil." He thought that victory might come to the church through little children, while the saying was quoted that more was being done to evangelise the world through Sunday-school work than by all other agencies put together. The autumnal meetings of the Baptist Union were held in London, under the presidency of Dr. Trestrail; and the members were invited to be present at the Stockwell Orphanage on Monday, October 4, when the memorial-stones of two other houses for girls would be laid. Rain came on; the President was too ill to be out, but the following was read by his brother:—

"C. H. Spurgeon to the Members of the Baptist Union.

"As chairman of the Stockwell Orphanage, I welcome you to this institution, deeply regretting that I cannot do this in person, in heartiest tones of brotherly love. We thank the brethren who will lay the stones, and the many generous friends whom they represent; and we thank all who will look on and give us the benefit of their kind wishes. May the Orphanage grow rich in prayers to-day. There

are two hundred and forty-nine boys and thirty-two girls in residence at this hour, and when the new houses are complete our usual number will be two hundred and fifty boys and two hundred and fifty girls. This is a great family; and Unbelief inquires, 'Whence shall we find bread for this multitude?' But Faith sees a sure supply when she knows that thousands will be praying for it. I would rather have your prayers than a donation of twenty thousand pounds, for something more than money is needed—health for the children, wisdom for the managers, patience for the teachers, grace for us all. Personally I am recovering strength, but I am unable to leave the house. Pray excuse my infirmity, and continue your forbearance to this evening's service, from which I must be absent. God's blessing on the Reading House and the Liverpool House, and on those other houses which record the zeal, the gratitude, and, in one case, the resignation of the donors. The Lord be with you all, and make the week of meetings a week of Sabbaths and a very Pentecost." The memorial-stone of Reading House was laid by Mr. George Palmer, M.P., after which Hugh Stowell Brown laid the stone of Liverpool House. The Baptist Union had a great public meeting at the Tabernacle on Thursday in the same week; and though he had to make the confession, "I am exceedingly feeble; I can scarcely even sit," Mr. Spurgeon was present, and made quite a long speech, which does not read like the utterance of a man who was ailing. The chief point seems to have been that in working for Christ people should have a full assurance of the truth of what they teach:—

"We believe and therefore speak. That is not all. When I take down the Bible I find it knows more about me than I know about myself. I find it condemns me, and I have to admit that I ought to be condemned. It searches through me like a March wind sometimes, and carries away the foliage of my soul like the sere leaves; and I know the thing ought to be done when it is done. And that same Book will sometimes thrill me with an intense delight. It is the master of my being; it answers to every chord within my nature; it is a master minstrel that touches every chord within this heart and plays upon it. I know it is true, or else I do not exist. I am myself a fiction, or else that Book records facts in what it teaches."

One of the adventures of this year was having unexpectedly, and therefore quite unprepared, to make a speech before the Wesleyan Conference. Wishing to get some information at City Road Chapel, he alighted there and went into the vestry; but as the news of his arrival at once got into the chapel, Dr. Punshon, with a following of eminent divines, at once appeared on the scene, and all asked for an address. This was given, and in the minutes of that Conference satisfaction was expressed at the visit of the Baptist preacher:—"One beautiful episode of the week was the visit of Mr. Spurgeon to the Conference," writes the great Wesleyan orator of this the last Conference he ever attended. "He gave a characteristic address, full of mother-wit and Gospel wisdom."

Some time before Christmas Spurgeon's health was tolerably recovered, apparently; but a relapse came on, so that on Christmas Day he was in bed instead of dining with the Orphanage staff, and after Christmas things appeared to grow worse rather than to improve. The spiritual work of the church was never more prosperous, however; for in the last month of 1880 over a hundred persons were received into church fellowship. The experiment was tried of doing without a holiday at Menton, and it was not by any means a success. The remainder of this chapter may be devoted to a subject which always excited Spurgeon's interest—Sailors and the Sea. My friend, Mr. E. W. Matthews, Secretary of the British and Foreign Sailors' Society, supplies some reminiscences, letters, etc., which will be read with interest:—

"Perhaps when crossing the Irish Channel was Mr. Spurgeon's first introduction to the great sailor world; though from the first year he came to London sailors were attracted from the docks by that mighty magnet. Missionary Whitemore, of Ramsgate, was a sailor in the Victoria Docks in 1859, and he with another sailor walked all the way (on October 30) to the Surrey Gardens, and they heard the great preacher give a memorable sermon—'The Saviour's Many Crowns.' But it was on the sea itself where Mr. Spurgeon came into touch with Christian seamen all alive with zeal and love. The British and Foreign Sailors' Society gave in its 'Sailors' Magazine,' thirty-three years ago, Mr. Spurgeon's own account, which he addressed to his Exeter Hall congregation.

"'God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore.' God gave the beloved Spurgeon all this and much more. This is certainly true: God gave him 'largeness of heart' like unto the sea, 'even as the sand that is on the sea-shore.' It is said of One who 'spake as never man spake': 'and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea.' Born and bred in the country, His ministry began, continued, and ended 'by the sea.' Mr. Spurgeon was born and bred in the country, but his great life-work began in the greatest seaport of the world. London to him was not only a city, but a port in touch, by its ships, sailors, and commerce, with every other port in the world. He loved to smell the tar and watch the ships ever coming and going on the restless tide. Then it must never be forgotten that for many years he found restoration by the blue Mediterranean Sea.

"Mr. Spurgeon was a lover of the sea, its ships and sailors. He had in rich measure not only the salt of grace but the salt of the ocean. By largeness of heart, like unto the sea, by the assimilating power of a great sympathy, by a receptive and reflective nature of the highest order, he became in a very real sense a son of the sea. Sailors intuitively felt C. H. Spurgeon was no landlubber! They have a supreme contempt—(this may be unjustifiable, but it is true)—for any preacher who is nautically wrong in his allusions to and metaphors of the sea. Many a sailor's yarn by a sea-lawyer in the forecastle has been brightened by the nautical mistakes made by some Jonah of a preacher. I know a learned divine, thinking he must use some sea phrases to his Jack Tar audience, spoke of 'splicing the main brace,' which, being interpreted in sailor parlance, means a glass of grog!—a bad custom which has often raised the wrong spirits from the vasty deep to the wreckage of characters more precious than ships. This Master of Arts preacher did not in the eyes of seafarers add to his ministerial reputation.

"When visiting the United States on behalf of the sailors' cause in Antwerp I preached at Detroit. A naval officer present, finding that I was freely illustrating my subject from the sea, said to an American railway king by his side, 'I shall catch this fellow dropping anchor in the Atlantic presently!' Great was his delight to find there was no unpardonable sin committed against that keen sense of having things ship-shape. At the close of the service I saw two gentlemen walking up the aisle, the 'king' and the one-armed old sea-warrior. 'You have been to sea, or you could not have preached that sermon!' So enthusiastic was he in our mission to the United States that his railway friend, as his contribution to the good cause, would give, at his suggestion, free passes from Atlantic to Pacific. The remarkable thing about Mr. Spurgeon was that he could 'launch out upon the deep,' give full scope to his imagination, speak to sailors on the great truths in their own language, even to the satisfaction of a sailor's critical faculty, and all this without having served his time at sea! Many a famous sailor sermon did he preach for the British and Foreign Sailors' Society; and on those special occasions there was always a large audience made up of seamen of

all nations. Captain Sharpies, the Society's agent at Cardiff and Barry Dock, wrote concerning the memorable sermon, 'God in Heaven and Men on the Sea,' preached by Mr. Spurgeon at his own Tabernacle for the Society, from the text: 'By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of my salvation, who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea'—that he had read the sermon carefully several times, that it contained ninety-eight allusions to the sea, ships, and sailors without one nautical mistake, and might have been preached by an old shellback. He called it the most practical sermon for seamen or landsmen he ever met with.

"Not only to seamen, but to a critical audience like the Union of Baptist ministers and delegates, could ho preach from ships the grandest truths of the holy religion. In 1875 this Union was held at the historic naval port of Plymouth. From the Hoe is one of the finest views seawards either in this or other lands. Mr. Spurgeon was asked to be the preacher; and here again, with the Christian orator's unerring instinct, he took the text and subject calculated to make the deepest impression on visitors and residents, landsmen as well as seamen. 'There go the ships' sermon-will never be forgotten by those who heard it, while thousands who had seen ships before saw them now as bearers not only of precious cargoes, but of more precious lessons. The Christian World said of this sermon that it again marked him out as the prince of preachers; while the Press gave large quotations from it.

"It was a great pleasure and profit for me to have the privilege of staying a short time with Mr. Spurgeon under the same roof at Menton. My rooms were adjoining his, and looked out upon the Mediterranean Sea. One evening as the sun was setting he was sitting out upon the balcony, drinking in the wondrous scene. He called: 'Matthews, come here, this is the prettiest sight I have seen since I came to Menton.' A ship had tried to reach the little harbour and failed. The wind went down with the sun. Sails were flapping from the yards as the swell gradually heaved the ship towards the rocks. There was no tug-boat there to come to the rescue; but the news spread, and out went a small fleet of Italian fishing-boats and fastened their little lines on the big ship. They began to chant and sing, and as they sang they beat time with their oars, and so tugged the ship out of danger into port. It was full of symbol and teaching to that receptive mind and brain, all alert, and gave great pleasure to one of Nature's greatest sons.

"In the endeavour to extend, by a small memorial fund, the work of God among seamen, Mr. Spurgeon sent this characteristic letter, which came to me while staying at the house of one of his great admirers, and reading it to Alderman R. Cory, J.P., and his family in Cardiff, it brought forth immediate fruit:—

"'Dear Mr. Matthews,—I am glad to be able to give you ten pounds towards your excellent work and tender memorial. Nothing can be better, and I hope that many friends will practically show that they think so. Sailors' work is needful and profitable, and if I were a rich man I should take care to invest a good portion in those who go down to the sea in ships. I pray that the rich blessing of the Lord may rest on your earnest labours and on your admirable society. May generous donors make short work with the amount you so much need. Thanks to the two little ones, and love to their father.—Yours heartily, "'C. H. Spurgeon.'

"One day a sailor, a real A.B., called at our Sailors' Institute with this letter to me:—

"'Dear Friend Matthews,—I cannot help this sailor-missionary; I am at the end of my rope. Can your Society in any way aid him? It would seem to be more in your line than mine. How are you? How are all the Matthews? God bless them and their warm-hearted father.—Yours most heartily, "'C. H. Spurgeon.'

"It is not too much to say that many eminent men and gifted ministers would never have touched this rough sailor, or discovered under rather a queer and repulsive exterior a strong character capable of much Christian service. No doubt he would sometimes, like many others, persecute Mr. Spurgeon, but after a voyage he would make for the Tabernacle. Mr. Spurgeon would say, 'I can only give you so many minutes;' but Jack, by his sailor talk, would chain the pastor till he had finished his tale of the sea, would convulse him with laughter, and do him a world of good. And though Mr. Spurgeon was such a hard-worked man, yet he would write to this sailor with his own hand a bright spiritual letter filled with nautical terms. And at last he gave to this man—thought by some to be mad—a magic-lantern, so that wherever he went he might preach to sailors and others by the eye as well as by the tongue, in his own simple sailor fashion. This sailor, Telfer, as he read Mr. Spurgeon's really splendid letter, turned upon me and said, 'In future I hope you will write me, like a Christian, a proper letter, and not on a post-card!' Mr. Spurgeon shone in so many things; in correspondence he was a past master. At the opening of the Fisheries Exhibition, several hundred fishermen, representing all the chief centres, arrived on a Saturday. When Sunday morning came, nearly all the fishermen, save a few Roman Catholics, went in a body to the Tabernacle to hear Mr. Spurgeon. He remembered them both in his sermon and prayer.

"Mr. Spurgeon delighted to see the seamen of many nations at his own Tabernacle. On these special occasions the Society's large Bethel flag used to be hung round the platform. He was very fond of the Bethel flag, which was designed by a Christian captain and his wife. It was, in a very symbolic way, representative of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Across it, writ large, is the expressive word 'Bethel.' In the upper corner is the star (of Bethlehem, or the bright and morning star), so significant to the sailor; while in the lower corner is the dove with the olive branch, pointing to a wrecked earth and the Gospel ship, as well as to the ever-blessed Comforter. Perhaps it would be impossible to compress more by symbol or word in so small a compass. On either side of the Bethel flag, hanging over the rail, was the Bethel Union's white burgee, with its blue star, representing a fleet of over a thousand ships, large and small. Nearly eleven hundred Christian shipmasters have been members of this Union, and had this flag flying at their masthead. The sailors used to be placed in the reserved seats in the first gallery, so they were on Mr. Spurgeon's starboard and larboard. Among their faces were to be seen black and yellow and every other colour. I find among his letters to me such as the following:—

"'Dear Friend,—If all you desire is that the prayer meeting of May 2 should be special for sailors, I am right glad to say, "Yes, come and welcome." You may make a speech if you do it in compressed fashion. God bless you and your work.—Yours heartily, "'C. H. Spurgeon.'

"Our missionary at Ramsgate, Mr. W. Whitmore, gives some reminiscences of the great preacher; but space will allow of only one representative case of a captain's conversion being given:—

"'Some years ago a ship put into this harbour for refuge, bound to St. Petersburg. On boarding her I inquired for the captain. He told me he was led through curiosity to the Metropolitan Tabernacle to hear Mr. Spurgeon preach, not with the intention of being converted, but the sermon came

home with power to his soul, he was deeply convinced of sin, before leaving the building peace flowed into his soul, and he returned to his ship a new creature in Christ Jesus. Up to this point he told me he had been a libertine. Such was his love for the great preacher that he bought all his sermons, beautifully bound, which he had with him, kept in a handsome glazed case, to which were added the annual volumes as published. He used to send a thank-offering every year to Mr. Spurgeon for the College and Orphanage in acknowledgment of what the Lord had done for him through His servant.'

"Spurgeon's last sermon to sailors was given in the spring of 1891 from the text, 'Am I a, sea, or a whale?' (Job 7:12). The occasion was, indeed, memorable. The missionaries of the British and Foreign Sailors' Society from many parts of the world had previously gathered at the pastor's prayer meeting, held just before the powerful sermon was preached. Many of them were known, honoured, and loved by Mr. Spurgeon, and he was much helped by their sailor-like petitions. His special friend and helper, John Gilbert, of Dover, had just gone home to heaven. Gilbert always took a room near the Tabernacle, and spent his holidays attending all the services, both week-day and Sunday. The keen-eyed pastor, who was sharp to detect who was present in the great congregations, often called him out to tell of God's work among the seamen. On the last occasion he said, 'Gilbert is with us again; the angels want him in heaven, but we cannot spare him yet. Come and tell us of the good work at Dover.' It will scarcely be believed that during that quiet and unique ministry to the seamen visiting the port of Dover he gave and sold no less than 26,238 of Mr. Spurgeon's sermons to seamen of various nationalities." The fact is that Spurgeon's addresses to sailors reflected his own great love of the open sea.

Chapter 101: Mr. Gladstone At The Tabernacle

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Mr. Gladstone At The Tabernacle

India—Silver Wedding—Dr. Punshon—Conference Address—The Baptist Union—At Portsmouth—Mr. Gladstone and his Son at the Tabernacle—Illness—An Open-Air Sermon—Prayer Meetings—Dr. Parker and Spurgeon—Illness—His Parents' Golden Wedding—Sermons Telegraphed to the States—At Enfield—The Luther Tercentenary—A Letter from Menton.

At the opening of the year 1881 Mr. Spurgeon was showing some interest in the evangelisation of the English-speaking races of India. Mr. H. Rylands Brown had already gone out as a representative of the College, and it was hoped that others would follow as soon as funds were forthcoming. As regards the church at the Tabernacle, now that it was growing older, the net increase for the year was not so great as might have been imagined from the number of additions. Thus against the total increase for 1880 of four hundred and fifty-three there was a decrease of three hundred and ninety-nine, leaving the clear increase only fifty-four. Some had gone off to form a new congregation at Tooting, and the pastor was always more pleased at such enterprise than if they had remained with him. Another thing which yielded him satisfaction was the erection of the new home at Hoxton for the Golden Lane Mission. Some will remember that the winter was severe, especially in January, when, on account of snow and frost, coals of indifferent quality rose to between four and five shillings a sack at the small dealers' in London. During the opening weeks of the year Mr. Spurgeon was suffering at home; and when the weather was still at its worst on Sunday, January 23, he wrote this letter to his people:—

"Westwood, Upper Norwood, "January 23, 1881.

"Dear Friends,—I should gladly have been among you to-day, for I am much better; but I am not strong enough to face this terrible weather. Risk of more weeks of suffering warns me to wait till another Sabbath. May my dear son be helped to fill my place; he steps in like a loving son when at the last his father finds himself unable. Pray much for him in the great work of to-day. I am distressed for the poor. Our church funds are exhausted; but I will personally see that they are replenished, so that our poor brethren shall nob lack. But there will be need that every Christian man who can help the poor should do so at once—wisely, but largely. If ever we were generous it should be now. Everyone must look after those immediately around him. Every well-to-do member of the church must personally see to the case of some brother or sister in need. Many hands will make good work, and the blessed burden will be a benefit to all who bear it. God will be glorified if His people now show their tenderness to the suffering. I hardly think that you need this admonition, but I tremble for the hungering and freezing poor. On Monday I would suggest special prayer for the removal of this bitter weather. I pray that before you call the Lord may answer you. May the blessing of our Father in heaven rest on you in Christ Jesus!—Your loving minister, "C. H.

Spurgeon." As it was now twenty-five years since Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon were married, the Silver Wedding would doubtless have been celebrated in a worthy manner had the pastor been in better health. He was ailing more or less throughout March, so that the necessary work for the printers was only got through with difficulty, and he could not regularly take his place at the Tabernacle. Then one after another such friends as Lady Lush, a daughter of a Baptist minister, as well as a friend of the poor, and Sir Charles Reed passed away. Spurgeon's little book, issued at this time, "Be of Good Cheer," was probably a stimulant to his own spirits. His regard for Dr. Morley Punshon was very sincere; and, as showing the sincerity of their friendship, the following letter is given. It is of the more interest because the writer passed away a few weeks later:—

"Tranby, Brixton Rise, S.W., "January, 1881.

"My Dear Sir and Brother,—The papers tell us that the 10th will be a memorable day to you, and amid hosts of greeting friends my wife and I (than whom you have none truer, though our love can rarely exhibit itself but in wishful thought and prayer) would fain express our good wishes in a line.

"We trust there is good foundation for the rumour which has lately reached us of great and permanent improvement in Mrs. Spurgeon's health; and we pray that, if it be the Lord's will, you may be continued to each other in happy fellowship until the silvern' shall have become 'golden' by the lapse of years.

"Like most of God's anointed, it seems as if you are to be made 'meet by consecrated pain.' May the Refiner sit always by the furnace! You know that the fire will never be kindled a whit too fiercely, nor burn a moment too long.

"There are many, whom you know not, who thank God, in these times of rebuke, for your fidelity to the old Gospel, and who watch you with solicitude and prayer.

"Wishing for Mrs. Spurgeon and yourself happiness, and the blessedness which is better, the Lord's unutterable peace, long and useful lives, and the 'abundant entrance' at last,—I am, in my wife's name and my own, yours very affectionately, "W. Morley Punshon."

Mr. Spurgeon so far improved in health during April that he was able to preach the annual sermon on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society at Exeter Hall on the 27th of the month, the text of which was Isa 51:2-3 : "Look unto Abraham, your father," etc. As he warmed with his subject the preacher seemed to be, as it were, all on fire, and some who listened must have been reminded of the palmy days of youth at the Surrey Gardens. Take this passage in reference to the future of the Church:—

"Looking to the rock whence we were hewn, and to the pit whence we were digged, we have not to count probabilities and possibilities. We have to deal with God, who can do what He says; and if He says, 'The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea,' who is to stop Him? Who is he that shall stand against the army of God when He wills to achieve a thing? What did He make the world of? and who was there to help Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him? And if all the things that are have been spoken into existence by a word, cannot God yet build up His Church, even if to our sight there shall seem to be nothing to build her with? See how our race has sprung from one common stock, and yet how many we are! And if ever you want to revive your faith, think of this country. If ever you want to be strong as to the

conversion of the heathen, remember what your forefathers were when their bloody rites were performed under the oak of the woods, and whether ever more degraded and debased heathen exist than those who were living in this land. Yet where are the gods of the Druids now; and who cares for the golden sickle and the sacred oak? The thing is gone as if it had never been. Look again at Protestantism in this country. What was it at first? A thing utterly despised and hunted down. The stakes of Smithfield should never be forgotten at such meetings as this. Yet the Gospel of God did triumph. Let the days of the Puritans, the palmy days when God was known in England, speak." The annual Conference opened on May 2 at Salters' Hall Chapel, Islington, when it appeared that three hundred and sixteen churches had sent in returns for 1880, and two hundred and thirty-three congregations showed an average increase of fourteen members each church, although forty-five London churches showed an average of twenty-one for each church. Salters' Hall Chapel had been an ancient institution in the City, and had been removed to the suburbs, Mr. Alfred Bax, of the College, being pastor. The President rejoiced in the prosperity of the people, and wished them "Good luck in the name of the Lord." On the following morning at the College several deaths of pastors were mentioned. Reference was also made to Mr. Thomas Spurgeon's evangelistic services in Australia, and to the fact that two chapels had been erected in Tasmania. The presidential address was as full of wit and wisdom as ever. The preacher was again all aglow, as always seemed to be the case when he was speaking to some hundreds of his own men. Though he might compliment them on doing well, he would still urge them to strive to do better, e.g.:—

"We might all have greater honour if we were fit to bear it. When Nelson was serving under a great commander, and a certain number of the enemy's ships had been captured, he was written to by the officer in charge that they had had a splendid victory. Nelson did not think so; he said that if there was an enemy having eleven ships, and he had only captured ten, he would not write home and call that a victory. But for glorying in our work peradventure God would use us more extensively. Some brethren may say, 'In my sphere I have done all I can,' and probably that was their honest opinion. Possibly they had had quite enough meetings, and the people had heard them quite enough, but you might do it in better style. A Bristol Quaker—and Bristol Quakers are very shrewd—stepped into a bar for a pot of beer, and when the pot was brought it was not very well filled. He said to the landlord, 'How much trade are you doing?' 'Oh,' said the landlord, 'I draw ten barrels of beer a month.' 'Do you know how you might draw eleven?' 'No, sir; I wish I did.' 'Well, always fill up your measures.' If anybody says, 'I do not know how I can preach more of the Gospel than I do; I preach so many times,' I say, 'Do not preach any more, but fill the pots full.' 'Fill the water-pots with water; and they filled them up to the brim.' Some brethren have an awful flux of words; you can scarcely see the poor little straw of idea carried down on the awful Ganges, the torrent of words. Put in plenty of thought, of real solid truth, and deliver it in a better way, in every way better, for the glory of God." The Lord Mayor (Sir William McArthur) presided at the supper party on May 4, when the collection amounted to two thousand one hundred and seventy-five pounds. The chairman was a Wesleyan and a philanthropist, and Mr. Spurgeon paid him a well-deserved compliment. "There is no mayor who has better done his duty," he said. "In regard to the frequent invitations to civic and other banquets which I receive," he added, "I have never gone but once, and three days after I was seized with small-pox."

There were seventy-three colporteurs now at work, and Mr. Spurgeon showed his continued interest in their operations not only by addressing the men on May 16, but by announcing at the tea-table that he should give five pounds to the man who did best in the coming year, three pounds to the second, and two pounds to the third. He also promised three similar prizes to three others who should be recommended by the committee.

After the Conference this year a denominational paper gave an article on the Baptist Union and its critics. "The grumbling which appears to be periodical is once more raising its voice. It waxed rather loud at the Tabernacle during one or two of the meetings of the Conference held a few weeks ago. The Union is too cold for some perfervid spirits of that body." It was then significantly added, "By union they can help each other; by severance they would both suffer; and it is a moot question which of them would suffer most." In reply the following letter was written:—

"To the Editor of 'The Baptist'

"Dear Sir,—If your leading article of this date had not been calculated to breed discord I should not have replied to it on my own account. From a remark as to the spiritual chill of the Union meetings, you infer a looseness of attachment to the Baptist Union, if not an intention to break away from it. This is, indeed, a monstrous leap of logic. No one more heartily desires the prosperity of the Union than I do; no one is more satisfied with its designs and plans. If there be any mutterings of tempest they certainly do not arise from me or from any of those who gathered with me at the Conference.

"It is a great pity that you so frequently abuse your columns for the suggesting of discords. We are all, as far as I know, happily agreed, and if we venture to desire more fervency, or even leave the politics of the denomination to be managed by those who have a greater aptitude for such things, it is from no want of goodwill to the Union or to any part of it. You would do far more service if you imputed good motives whenever it was possible to do so.

"Personally, I have shown my goodwill to the Union gatherings by very frequently speaking and preaching at them; and as I have declined to do this at the next autumn gathering, I should like it to be known that my sole and only motive is that I wish others to have their turn, and I would either absent myself or present myself, or do anything else to promote Christian love; but sometimes I am perplexed to know how to avoid giving offence in one way or another. Your paper has so much energy about it, and so much zeal for the growth of the denomination, that I feel sorry to see in it a sharpness which is not worthy of it. What can be the good of falling foul of your friends? At the same time, you are welcome to insinuate anything you please against me, if you will only believe that I am the hearty friend of the Baptist Union and all its works. How could I be otherwise? Everyone is much kinder to me than I deserve, and I dare say that even your disagreeable remarks are meant for my good.—Yours very truly, "C. H. Spurgeon.

"Upper Norwood, May 27, 1881." The article was, of course, mainly directed towards Mr. Spurgeon himself. He was represented to have said that, while in full sympathy with the London pastors, he should not go to the Union meetings. "He always got a chill when he did so. The meetings were to him like an iceberg." Thus coming events were casting their shadows before. At the fête of the Orphanage in June, in celebration of the President's forty-seventh birthday, the chief interest centred in the new houses for girls. The students' holiday, on the reassembling for the session on August 9, was spent at Mr. J. Tritton's mansion, Bloomfield, Lower Norwood. Having

spent so much time in his sick-room, Mr. Spurgeon decided that he would not himself go away for the usual summer holiday. This was the year in which the Revised Version of the New Testament appeared, and Spurgeon's opinion of it was not very favourable. He thought that the Revisers were stronger in Greek than in English, and that consequently their work would need much revision before it would be fully accepted. Among the afflictions of the summer was the death, early in September, of Mrs. J. A. Spurgeon. Then such good friends as Mr. John Edwards, of Camden Town, and Dr. Samuel Manning also passed away.

There was a meeting of the members of the London Baptist Association for fraternal intercourse at the Tabernacle on September 27, when there was a discussion on a paper by the present Professor T. V. Tymms on "Lukewarmness in the Church: the Cause and Cure." Mr. Spurgeon spoke well of the paper, and in course of his address referred to his afternoon's work. "I have sat from two till seven seeing inquirers desirous of entering the church, and I saw thirty-three of them without resting. I never had a more joyous time; and the hardest of such work is for our good. I at last did not seem to know which was John or which was Mary when they came on so quickly one after another. I tried to form an honest judgment in every case, and picked out twenty-eight of them." A short address on the subject of the evening followed.

He attended the Baptist Union meetings at Portsmouth and Southampton. On Wednesday afternoon, October 26, he preached in the music-hall at Portsmouth from the words, "Without me ye can do nothing." The eagerness of the public to obtain tickets of admission was as remarkable as it had ever been on any former occasion, and a vast crowd made up an overflow meeting of those who were unable to gain admission. Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, the Mayor of Portsmouth, and several chiefs of Government departments who resided in the borough, were to be seen on the platform. On the following day Mr. Spurgeon preached at the skating-rink, Southampton, the text being John 21:22.

Early in November he took leave of his congregation at the annual meeting of the College, and delivered the "John Ploughman" lecture, with dissolving views, which had been advertised to be given ten months previously. He then set out for Menton, leaving friends at home to complete the arrangements for the great bazaar to be held on account of the Girls' Orphanage. On Sunday, November 20, Mr. Moody conducted the services at the Tabernacle. Mr. Spurgeon again occupied his pulpit on Christmas Day. He returned to England in time to be present at the Christmas festivities at the Orphanage on Monday, December 26. The last time he had been present was five years previously, or in 1876. The special "Welcome Home" meeting at the Tabernacle on December 28 was attended by about four thousand persons, who were gladdened to hear their pastor report himself in good health. He said that he was thoroughly rested, and added:—

"In coming back among you I feel myself in the outset glad to get back; and yet before I went away I felt as if I were a man who had twenty times more to do than he could do, and I have begun to feel that again already within the last two or three days. Since I have been at home I have been cheered by the large number of letters I have had with contributions for the Orphanage. One is from Boston, another from Russia, another from Bordeaux, and many from other places, all sent in gratitude for the good the donors had received from the sermons."

He was also able to say at this time that he had daily to solve things as difficult as any which came before the Queen's judges. His chief desire as a preacher was to see the Tabernacle as well filled

on Thursday evenings as on Sundays. One source of satisfaction was the settlement of his son at Auckland. The great bazaar at the Tabernacle in the following week, at which there were thirty stalls, was in all respects a success, the amount realised being £7,333. The visit of Mr. Gladstone, accompanied by his eldest son, Mr. W. H. Gladstone, to the Tabernacle on Sunday evening, January 8, was an interesting event. "Mr. Gladstone's visit was an unexpected one, and therefore no opportunity was afforded Mr. Spurgeon of preparing a special sermon," said The Freeman; but the pastor had had too many visitors of similar quality to allow of his making any difference on their account. During the afternoon a messenger had called to inquire whether Mr. Spurgeon would preach, and on their learning that the Premier was coming, the deacons arranged to receive him in a fitting manner. Mr. Gladstone and his son arrived at 6.15, and, being conducted into the minister's vestry, they sat with Mr. Spurgeon until service-time. A contemporary account says:—

"The rumour that the Prime Minister had arrived rapidly spread throughout the congregation, and as half-past six approached, every eye was turned towards the small door at the rear of the platform, "from which the pastor and his officers emerge. With customary punctuality, Mr. Spurgeon opened the door and descended the stairs, followed by his deacons; behind them was seen the calm and pallid countenance of the Premier, accompanied by his son. The elders of the church brought up the rear." The sermon was founded on the healing of the woman who had an issue of blood—Mark 5:30. Of course, the sermon was precisely what it would have been if the eminent statesman had not been present; and the exercise of faith was illustrated in a humorous but characteristic manner, e.g.:—

"If we could call up one of our great-grandfathers, he would have to exercise a good deal of trust. On awaking in the morning the old gentleman would probably ask for his flint, steel, and tinder-box. Instead of these antiquated implements he would receive a small box containing a number of small sticks, and we should tell him to strike one of them. Then he would call for a lamp, and imagine his surprise at being told that the reeking vapour from the gas-bracket could be lighted and answer his purpose. He would see nothing to light, and yet be told to light it. Though he might be incredulous, the light would come when the match was applied. Similar astonishment would follow his being told that he could be carried fifty miles an hour without horses, and yet it would all be true. So with spiritual matters; God's purposes will be unfailingly carried out, whether we can understand them or not." The preacher and his distinguished visitors retired to the vestry after service, when the deacons and elders shook hands with Mr. Gladstone, who congratulated the pastor on having so large a body of co-workers. The event naturally attracted the notice of the newspapers generally. The anecdote was re-told of the American Sunday-school scholar who, in reply to the question, "Who is Prime Minister of England?" replied, "Mr. Spurgeon." When Lord Palmers ton was Premier, in the days of the Surrey Gardens services, portraits of Palmerston and Spurgeon had been exhibited together at a bazaar as those of "The Two Prime Ministers." It was hoped that the pastor of the Tabernacle might have a successor as worthy of himself as Mr. Gladstone was of Lord Palmerston. The Standard said:—

"The announcement that the Prime Minister was among Mr. Spurgeon's audience at the Tabernacle on Sunday night is in many ways a suggestive item of news. Fifty years ago the 'stern and unbending hope' of the Conservatives might have been inclined to scoff at the seer who would have risked the prophecy which has now come true. But in the course of half a century Mr. Gladstone has changed, and the Church, if in its main features the same as that in whose defence

the young Member for Newark wrote his maiden work, has so widened its sympathies and moderated its asperities as to leave room for an honest appreciation of even the energetic Baptist preacher who, for thirty years, has exercised so marked an influence on a certain section of the community. When Mr. Spurgeon first began his ministrations in New Park Street Chapel, London did not know well what to make of 'the new light.' He was young, fiery—unfriendly critics said illiterate—and, it was agreed by most men, a little vulgar. The canons of pulpit oratory seem not to have been framed for him. His similes were drawn from sources hitherto untapped, and his endless anecdotes, apt though they were to the point to be illustrated, not unfrequently savoured of irreverence. Yet the preacher drew; and the more he offended the smooth commonplaces of the polite world the fuller his chapel became and the wider grew his fame. Park Street became too small for him, and the Tabernacle in Newington Butts had not been well finished before it was clear that a hall even double its size would prove too limited for the crowds which gathered from far and near to listen to the popular pastor. Mr. Spurgeon has so long been a recognised institution of the metropolis that it is hard to believe that at a period still easily remembered he was the subject of harsh criticism and what almost amounted to vituperation.... Mr. Spurgeon is to-day as eagerly run after as ever. Any ill-feeling which he once provoked has entirely disappeared, and few strangers now pass through London without visiting his Tabernacle. Accordingly, when the Premier and his son, and at an earlier date Mr. Bright, paid him a visit, they were only following a custom which has grown very general amongst all classes in this country—Churchmen as well as Dissenters.... The world is wide, and requites many men to make it what it is. There may be differences of opinion regarding the advantages to be derived from sermons such as those which have so long been a speciality of the Tabernacle. But it requires no great stretch of liberality even in the most devout of Churchmen to allow that, take him all in all, the world would be the poorer by the loss of the Baptist minister who has been honoured by preaching before so eminent a theologian as the present Premier." At the annual gathering of the London Association at the Tabernacle on January 24, much sympathy was felt for Dr. Stanford, who had become almost blind. Mr. Spurgeon gave an address on "How to Get at the People." Preaching needed to have good practical results, and the preacher had to get close up to the people. "I do not mean how to get at them inside the church, whether by blowing trumpets or sounding fiddles, or Salvation Army extremes, or anything of that kind." Nor was there any gain in being too important. Then: "As style is the man, in the formation of style the principal thing is the formation of the man." The preachers were advised to be natural and to feel at home in the pulpit, and not to be, as it were, different persons in their own houses from what they were in the chapel. This was a busy time, but working at high pressure brought on another illness. He preached on the first Sunday of March and was then laid aside, though the evening of March 12 was the time for the Tabernacle to be open to "strangers." The pastor wrote: "I am more disappointed than any of you when I find that I cannot address you to-night." He was obliged to add, "Alas! I cannot leave my couch or even stand." A week later there was no improvement, but more pain. On the first Sunday in April the message to the people showed how severe had been the attack. When he did preach again on April 9 his strength had not returned. This attack came at an inopportune time, as the annual Conference opened on April 17, the first meeting being held at Mr. Charles Spurgeon's chapel at Greenwich. It was at this meeting that mention was made of the Bishop of Rochester having called at Westwood in order to pray with Mr. Spurgeon in his sickness. The expenditure of the College for the year (£6,883) somewhat exceeded the income; but otherwise all things seemed to be in a high state of

prosperity. On the following morning the subject of the President's address was, "When I am weak then am I strong." Mr. George Williams presided at the supper on April 19, when the collection amounted to £2,150.

Spurgeon was not well enough to take any leading part in the May meetings; but on Sunday, the 14th of the month, he made special reference in prayer to the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke, asking that while justice might be executed on the criminals, peace might be given to the distracted country. Mr. Spurgeon's forty-eighth birthday was made a day of prayer by the members of the College, and on June 21 the annual fête came off at the Orphanage. On this occasion he was able to tell his troops of friends that he bad received as much as £450 since the previous Monday in birthday gifts, and he was glad the children were there to receive it, for he would feel humiliated by keeping it himself. The friends were also reminded that twice as much money would be needed as formerly. "I have no doubt you all feel that there has been connected with this institution a great deal of thought and a great deal of care," he added. "Well, there has been thought, but not anxious thought, because the means have been sent in; but I often wish that you would pray earnestly for us, that we might have grace to do the work perfectly." The buildings for the girls were in all respects a contrast to those erected for the boys, when less money was in hand. As the President remarked, "They look substantial enough to stand till the last tremendous day." In rather threatening weather, on July 18, he visited Hornchurch and preached from a waggon in Grey Towers Park. The service was held "in the shade of a line of fine elm trees, which formed a very pretty background to the congregation." A large number of chairs were placed on the grass, and then there was a fringe of carriages and vehicles in which people were seated. The sermon was founded on John 12:32. The putting up of the little chapel at Hornchurch was a small affair; but in London and the suburbs the aggressive war was still being actively waged. In August we find the ministers of the Middlesex and Surrey Association dining at Westwood, and holding a conference. Then there was the ten days' Gospel Temperance Mission of Booth, the Blue-ribbon lecturer at the Tabernacle. On the opening night of this crusade Spurgeon himself made a speech such as he would not have made a few years previously, when he showed little sympathy with teetotal principles. I give one brief extract from his address:—

"There is an awful amount of money spent every year over the drink business. Now if, instead of that, the men had another coat or two, and the women another dress or two, and the children had some little shoes to their poor feet—suppose the money went in some articles of furniture—why, all this falling-off in trade would soon be altered. There would be plenty of work to do, and work that would be worth the doing. Now, for the production of drink very little goes to the working-man who makes it. The materials cost the money—I really do not know what they may be. There is no man on earth knows what beer is made of now—so I am told. We can see what the effect of it is; but there used to be a drink made of malt and hops. Has anybody tasted any of that? It seems to have gone out of use—the industry spent on the manufacture is a very small matter."

Probably no pastor ever took more pains to make the prayer meeting a success than Mr. Spurgeon, for he showed his interest in its prosperity by continually studying how to make the Monday-night service more attractive. He was accordingly quite in his element when a large company were entertained at tea in the lecture-room, whose object was specially to hear a paper by Dr. Stanford, and to discuss the subject. Spurgeon's address was quite characteristic, and full of wit and good points. During the same week he found himself surrounded by the members of the

Evangelists' Association, in which he showed deep interest; for the agents of this body did far-reaching service in the suburbs and Home Counties. His mind appears to have been exercised on the subject of prayer even more than usual at this time. Thus his memorable sermon in Hengler's Circus, on October 6, during the meetings of the Baptist Union at Liverpool, was on "Helps and Hindrances to Prayer."

Late in October he was looking forward to his annual visit to Menton. Speaking at the annual meeting of the College on the last day of the month, he said, "I am going away next Monday. I should drive you all away if I did not sometimes go away. I must go away and mend my nets, or the fish will get through all the meshes. I shall come back a better and an older man; but recruited, I hope, and with a few fresh ideas." It was at this time that volume vi. of "The Treasury of David" appeared. In acknowledging the receipt of a MS. which I sent him on December 12, he said, "Get me this year more of those accounts of poor London," and added:—

"I am to preach at home the day before Christmas, and should like this to be well and widely known. Weather here is not so good as usual; still, I am much out of doors, and this is of great benefit to me; so that I am well beyond all my expectation.

"I suggest as a topic a visit on Sunday to one or two of the most mouldy of the City churches. Would there be any interest about Sion College, seeing it has just escaped the fire? At any rate, an article on Dr. Williams's library might cause ministers to use it more."

He was greeted by an immense audience at the Tabernacle on Christmas Eve, but his pale face and painful limp as he advanced on to the platform were ominous signs. In considerable pain he gave a magnificent Christmas discourse on the Saviour's herald-star; but though he preached again in the evening, a friend was present who would have continued the service had the pastor broken down. On the following morning, being Christmas Day, when fog and frost had given place to a downpour of rain, he was confined to his bed.

One of Spurgeon's characteristics was that he regarded any season of more than usual quiet spiritual felicity as the herald of trouble and worry. The time at Menton had been so peaceful and happy that he expressed fear that something was coming; and it is remarkable that his own illness followed, as well as the death of two deacons at the Tabernacle—Messrs. Higgs and Mills. In January a funeral sermon was given at the Tabernacle in memory of these worthies. On January 23, when the members of the London Baptist Association met at the Tabernacle, there was a discussion on Christian fellowship. As one of the original founders of the fund, Mr. Spurgeon was pleased to be able to intimate that the membership had increased from under twenty thousand to over forty thousand, while fifty thousand pounds had been expended in chapel building during the year.

What was called "the long-looked-for exchange of pulpits between Mr. Spurgeon and Dr. Parker" took place about this time, and the former preached at the City Temple on February 15, the sermon being founded on Heb 10:35. The collection was in aid of a new Colportage Society for London which Dr. Parker was founding. In expressing the wish that God would bless the effort, Mr. Spurgeon said, "My own Colportage Association includes some seventy or eighty of these most valuable labourers, and I hope that Dr. Parker's association will soon include seven or eight hundred. There is not a glen in Scotland that is not regularly visited by the colporteur, perhaps

once a month, and it would be something if a similar state of things could be established in the lanes of London."

Other work went on apace, though from time to time there may have been threatenings of a return of Mr. Spurgeon's rheumatism. At one time we find him opening a Swiss-village bazaar at Clapham. Another great bazaar was on behalf of the new Haddon Hall to be erected in Bermondsey as a mission station. About the same time he issued his book, "A Puritan Garden."

Though in great pain, he was able to open the Conference of 1883, on April 16, at Lower Norwood; but there was disappointment on the following morning, when, instead of the President being in the chair, the following letter was read:—

"Dear Brethren,—After a night of extreme pain, I find myself unable to leave my bed to-day—at least I fear so. I am bitterly disappointed; but as I have had no hand in it, I must yield myself to our Great Father's will. May the presence and power of the Holy Spirit be with yon all day long! If I find at any time that I am recovering, I shall set out for your Conference at once, and may appear at any time. Meanwhile I shall be glad if the vice-president will kindly go on with any part of the programme which may be ready. When such a sad Providence intervenes we must make the best of it. I am somewhat in hopes that the attack is so sharp that it cannot last very long, and it is very furiously upon me at this moment.—Your suffering President, "C. H. Spurgeon."

Some solace was found in a collection of over two thousand pounds at the annual supper, at which Mr. J. Houghton, of Liverpool, presided; but the President remained a prisoner at Westwood. He was down in the programme to preach on the last day of the Conference; but the following letter was read on Friday, April 20:—

"Dear Brethren,—I send my hearty love to one and all of you. I am very grateful to all who have done so much to make the Conference a success. I feel as if I had had double reason for praising and blessing God. If I had one reason for complaining that I was not allowed to come, I seem to hare two reasons for rejoicing that, although I did not come, the blessing came all the same, and it does not matter what becomes of me so long as you get blessed. I shall meet the whole of you in a hundred years' time.

"You'll not be in glory and leave me behind. God bless you all for ever; so prays your President and friend, "C. H. Spurgeon." On Saturday, May 12, Mr. and Mrs. John Spurgeon completed fifty years of married life; and on the Monday following the happy pair were entertained at Westwood with their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren—over thirty persons in all—seven being preachers of the Gospel. It was not the first celebration of the kind which had taken place in the family:—

"As is well known, the Rev. John Spurgeon is still engaged in preaching as an Independent minister, and we understand that he has six brothers all living. The family generally are such long livers that with them life insurance is said never to pay. It appears, also, that there have been other golden wedding celebrations in past days. At all events, Mrs. Spurgeon, senior, well remembers a celebration which came off in her childhood in honour of her grandfather and grandmother, and on that occasion a hogshead of ale was placed in the street for the refreshment of all comers, who were also regaled with unlimited supplies of cake." A few days later, or on Monday, May 21, in genial weather, the memorial-stone of Haddon Hall, Bermondsey, was laid by Mr. Samuel Barrow,

that being the name of the mission hall of Mr. William Olney, junior. To Mr. Spurgeon the day was a happy one, for the work carried on was quite after his own heart. References were made to the past and to the old Baptist sites and scenes with which the neighbourhood was associated. It was on this occasion that I heard for the first time from the preacher himself that his Sunday-morning sermon was being telegraphed to the United States for publication in certain daily papers of the next day. Nothing of the kind had ever been attempted before, and experience soon proved that the thing could not be done in a satisfactory manner. The sermons only reached the American breakfast tables in what the preacher himself called a battered condition, and the enterprise was soon abandoned as a failure. At the Orphanage festival in June memorial-stones of the master's house, board room, etc., were laid by Mr. Samuel Morley and Mr. James Duncan, of Benmore. The splendid collection of Reformation pictures which Mr. Spurgeon had got together on the Continent and elsewhere was on view on this occasion. Dr. Parker was among the speakers; and he made an offer, which was afterwards carried out, of preaching on behalf of the Orphanage at the City Temple. Because he would not accept a trowel, Mr. Morley was presented with an American "Life" of Spurgeon, with a suitable inscription. In course of time this book got among the second-hand dealers; and I was afterwards surprised to meet with it in a friend's house at Willesden. It was at the close of this memorable day that Mr. Spurgeon seriously referred to his own death. "I should like to be buried in the square enclosed by the Orphanage," he said; "in death I should like to be helping the Orphanage, and I think that if people came to see my grave they would be induced to help that, which was so dear to my heart." A friend gave the orphans a strawberry feast on July 4, when Mr. Spurgeon mentioned that personally he had the greatest dislike of strawberries, but none the less he rejoiced to see the children enjoy them.

Signs were now showing themselves that the bonds of union which held Spurgeon to the Baptist denomination were not so strong as of old. It was only through extra pressure being brought to bear upon him that he had consented to preach at Liverpool during the Baptist Union meetings in the year preceding; and at the midsummer meeting of the London Baptist Association he intimated that he had "firmly determined not to go to Leicester to attend the autumnal Conference." It was at this meeting that he said, "Every morning when I get up I expect to hear some new doctrine." On August 14, in company with the tutors and students of the Pastors' College, he passed a charming day at Enfield. Mr. G. W. White, one of the most successful of the College men, who is still stationed there, was the host of the day, and a number of willing friends supplied the cost of the day's liberal entertainment. A field was hired for the occasion, and during a great part of the day the great preacher sat in the open air entertaining his friends. He preached to a large congregation in the evening from Acts 20:2. As regards the College, it was a new departure, and it was hoped that other churches might annually imitate the example.

There were several enthusiastic anniversary meetings in the Tabernacle during 1883, chief among which was that of the Liberation Society, when John Bright made one of his great speeches. During August Mr. Spurgeon was far from well—he suffered a good deal of pain; but on the four Sundays of the Tabernacle being closed for repairs—August 12 to September 2 inclusive—he preached at Exeter Hall. Still, neither at home nor even in the more bracing air of Scotland did it seem to be possible to shake off the rheumatism which apparently sapped the preacher's strength while it took away his enjoyment of life. In acknowledging the produce of "the Orphanage acre" at Winfold Farm, Waterbeach, this year, he wrote:—

"Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood, "September 27, 1883.

"Dear Mr. Toller,—I heartily congratulate you upon the excellence of your crops and upon the generosity of your heart. For this last I thank you most sincerely, and I pray that the blessing of God may rest upon you and your family. The Orphanage portion is a very liberal one, and so may the Lord deal liberally with you. Receive my kindest regards and heartiest thanks.—Yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon." But though the flesh was weak, the spirit was still willing; and the pastor's chief thought was how best to promote the work he had at heart. At the end of September we find him speaking on church work at a Conference of pastors and delegates at the Tabernacle. On that occasion he mentioned a circumstance which had happened to himself:—

"The other Sunday morning, after trying to do my best to preach the Gospel of my blessed Master, I had a taste of what our missionaries must feel in a remark made to me by a Mahometan gentleman, in the most bland and affable terms, concerning the utter impossibility of God's ever having a son, couched in language which I will not repeat. I stammered out some words; and I had been so unused to hear such talk that I hardly knew what to say; but I felt all day the single sentence or two that he had said. What it must be to go and live where Christ is derided, where the very idea of His existence is scoffed at, I can hardly tell. And yet the crescent of Mahomet shall wane into eternal darkness before the everlasting Sun of Righteousness." When he met the members of the Evangelists' Association a few days later he endeavoured to arouse enthusiasm for the old Gospel. As the year drew to its close it became more and more evident that Spurgeon was beginning to view the Baptist Union with distrust. A certain well-known Unitarian had been admitted to one meeting; but as he came as a guest of the mayor rather than of the Union itself, that objection was thought to be pointless. Two leading ministers wrote:—

"The article in The Sword and the Trowel (referring to the Leicester meetings) has filled us with surprise and grief. We have, acting on our own responsibility, sought an interview with Mr. Spurgeon in order to put before him certain facts which might have led him to modify his harsh judgment. He has thought it well, however, to decline to receive us, on the ground that he had 'said his say, and had no wish to discuss the matter further.'...The distressing paragraph in Mr. Spurgeon's article which refers to 'loose thinkers' and their 'loudness' is to us quite incomprehensible. The epithet itself is a shameful one, and when combined with the insinuation that the persons so contemptuously referred to have no 'fixed principles' is simply cruel.... We think that if Mr. Spurgeon had spent as much time in acquainting himself with these simple facts as he has in 'careful thought and earnest prayer,' both the tone and substance of his article would have been different, and that he would not have used his great name and influence to wound the feelings of those who are as faithful to the Master, and as anxious to know and teach the truth, as himself." On the other hand, "A Country Pastor" maintained a week later that the denomination was "attacked and affected by the dry-rot of false Liberalism," and he protested against the broadening tendency.

Mr. Spurgeon entered very heartily into the celebration of the Luther Commemoration. On Sunday morning, November 11, he preached a Luther sermon at the Tabernacle, and in the evening he addressed a crowded, congregation at Exeter Hall, for the most part made up of young men. Speaking of Luther, he said, "The Bible was his battle-axe and weapon of war. A text of Scripture fired his soul. To God's Word alone would he yield, while his belief led him to intense activity and

not to fatalism. His books and pamphlets issued in a year might be counted by hundreds. His life abounded in prayer, and the harder his work, the more time he gave to devotion." He also gave a lecture on Luther, with lantern views, at the annual meeting of the College on November 28.

Thus when the preacher, in the darkening days of November, left London for Menton he was supposed by some to be "narrowing his sympathies," and "forcing back the clock;" and even a leading evangelical paper thought some of his utterances not to be "well-timed or in harmony with catholicity, which it is more than ever desirable and essential to promote." Meanwhile a remark by Professor Huxley in The Agnostic Annual was approvingly quoted by Mr. Spurgeon as affecting the controversy which was broadening and deepening: "On the whole the 'book' of heterodoxy is more offensive to me than that of orthodoxy, because heterodoxy professes to be guided by reason and science, and orthodoxy does not." The weather in the South was not quite so genial as usual during the winter; but Mr. Spurgeon was well enough to prepare his miniature volume, "The Clue of the Maze." Among those removed by death was his genial friend, Mr. T. B. Smithies, editor of The British Workman.

He commonly wrote a letter to be read at the Orphanage on Christmas Day. The one for 1883 was as follows:—

"Grand Hotel, Menton, "December 23, 1883.

"Dear Children,—It pleases me to think of you all as full of glee and gladness to-day. Let us thank God for providing the Orphanage, and then for giving us kind friends who think of our daily wants, and then, again, for finding another set of friends to make us merry on Christmas Day. You see the Lord not only sends us our daily bread, but something over. Let us together bless the Great Father's name. I do not know how you can thank Him better than by becoming His own dear children, through believing in His Son Jesus. I hope every boy and girl will be found believing in Jesus, loving Jesus, and serving Jesus.

"I am just a thousand miles away from you, but my love gets to you by one great leap. It is a little after seven on Sabbath morning, and the sun is just up, and the sea is like melted silver. There are such sweet roses in my room, and just outside the window there are oranges and lemons. Don't envy me, for I know the oranges are sour, and those which you will have to-day will be much better. Do not forget three cheers for Mr. Duncan. I shall listen between one and two on Tuesday, and if I hear your voices I shall just ride on the moon to you and drop down from the ceiling. That is a great big IF.

"Be very happy and very kind to one another. Do not give the dear matrons and masters any trouble at any time. Obey immediately all Mr. Charlesworth's rules and make him happy, and then perhaps he will get quite stout.

"God bless you, my dear girls and boys. Three cheers for the trustees! No more, except my best love, from "C. H. Spurgeon."

Spurgeon's letters or addresses to the children of the Orphanage at Christmastide were not only characteristic, they always showed how thoroughly his heart was in tune with his philanthropic service.

Chapter 102: Spurgeon's Jubilee

Chapter 103: Withdrawal From The Baptist Union

Chapter 103.

Withdrawal From The Baptist Union

Letters to Dr. S. H. Booth—The Newspapers on Spurgeon and the Union—Statement by Leading Divines—Ministers at Dalston—Spurgeon's Letters on the Controversy—Public Opinion—Mr. James Spicer—The New Evangelical Association—Final Separation from the Union.

At the opening of the year 1887 Mr. Spurgeon was at Menton, slowly recovering from illness. "Weather here is cloudy, cold, and wet," he wrote to a friend on January 9. "What must you be? I cannot say that I feel well, but I am much better than I was, and hope to be in my place for the 23rd. If I am able to do my own home work it is all I can hope, for I am weak, and this last attack has shaken me a good deal as to spirit." He recommenced preaching at the Tabernacle on January 30, and during the same week he opened a new mission station for Walworth at Surrey Square. The Conference began on April 18 at Devonshire Square Chapel, Stoke Newington, and passed off well. Mr. A. Gage Spicer presided at the supper, and the collection amounted to nearly £2,600. This being the year of the Queen's jubilee, a fund was raised on behalf of the British and Irish Home Mission, and Mr. Spurgeon sent this letter to the secretary:—

"My dear Mr. Booth,—I wish your Jubilee fund the utmost success. I shall be ready to pay a personal subscription of fifty pounds through the London Association. I wish I could give more; but as I have just finished a chapel at Thornton Heath, I have, on my own account, celebrated the Jubilee, and really done my part of the very work which you are aiming at."

He opened this chapel on May 3, and two days later spoke on behalf of the London City Mission at Exeter Hall. On the last day of May he entertained at tea at the Stockwell Orphanage the members of the Baptist Board and their wives. In the course of the evening the host remarked that there was no body of ministers among whom brotherly love more abounded than among the Baptist ministers of London. At the Orphanage festival a little later he mentioned that they had received a hundred times as many applications for admission as they had been able to respond to. In connection with the Queen's Jubilee he conducted an appropriate service on his birthday, Sunday, June 19.

Meanwhile that crisis was hastening on in which Spurgeon was to sever his connection with the Baptist Union. Some representations in The Sword and the Trowel to the effect that Arminianism led to Arianism and Socinianism were repelled by a writer, who, according to The Freeman, "well justified his contention." On the other hand, The Baptist was more favourable to those who took a pessimistic view; the statement about the perilousness of the times was endorsed, and it was affirmed that "the Baptist denomination is tainted with the heresy." The last-named journal invited a number of leading men, including tutors of colleges of various denominations, to express their views upon the subject; and the result was that some sympathised with Mr. Spurgeon's views, while many others who could not be suspected of theological unsoundness thought that the pastor

of the Tabernacle was too much of an alarmist in the statements which he had made and reiterated during the spring and summer of the year 1887 relative to false teaching. In the autumn, when the storm was thought to be abating, the situation was thus described:—

"The articles in The Sword and the Trowel were the utterance of an earnest and good man, which we thought demanded prayerful consideration and personal application. But they appeared, unfortunately, just at the time called in the publishing world 'the silly season,' when papers are in danger of running short of interesting material. Hence the matter came to be debated in a very unspiritual way by all sorts of newspapers.... The secular press is not a desirable medium for the discussion of such a question. Then infidel papers took it up and shouted pæans on the decline of Christianity; and Church papers took it up and sermonised on the decline of Dissent; and organs of heterodoxy quietly pointed out to young people that if they would be abreast of their age, they must forsake the old declining theology. Then all protests against this development were put down by certain good folks as antagonism to Mr. Spurgeon, and they grew angry.... If Mr. Spurgeon were well and about amongst his brethren and the churches, he would have formed a different opinion. As it is, he gets his information through unreliable channels. He must have some good men about him whose judgments are not equal to their zeal."

He suffered from illness more or less during the autumn; but a sermon on John 1:29 at the Tabernacle on October 16 was supposed to be a rejoinder to certain criticisms to which the preacher had been exposed at the meetings of the Baptist Union and the Congregational Union. Dr. Clifford had also been "interviewed" in The Pall Mall Gazette, and his "Appeal to Mr. Spurgeon" had attracted widespread notice. The letters regarding the withdrawal from the Baptist Union are as follow:—

"Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood, "October 28, 1887.

"Dear Friend,—I beg to intimate to you, as the secretary of the Baptist Union, that I must withdraw from that society. I do this with the utmost regret; but I have no choice. The reasons are set forth in The Sword and the Trowel for November, and I trust you will excuse my repeating them here. I beg you not to send anyone to me to ask for reconsideration. I fear I have considered too long already; certainly every hour of the day impresses upon me the conviction that I am moving none too soon.

"I wish also to add that no personal pique or ill-will has in the least degree operated upon me. I have personally received more respect than I desired. It is on the highest ground alone that I take this step, and you know that I have long delayed it because I hoped for better things.—Yours always heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon."

"Beckenham, October 31, 1887.

"Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.

"My dear Friend,—Your letter announcing your formal withdrawal from the Baptist Union reached me here at midday on Saturday last. I cannot express adequately the sense of pain such a step has caused me, nor can I at present calmly think of the future. I can only leave it as it is for awhile, merely adding that I think you have wounded the hearts of some—of many—who honour and love you more than you have any idea of, and whose counsel would have led to a far different result.—I

am, yours very truly, "S. H. Booth."

It seems to me hardly necessary to give at length the opinions of leading journals on this act of withdrawal. The Daily Telegraph complimented the popular preacher on "his refusal to add another to the already long list of English religious sects," when his train of admiring followers would have enabled him easily to do so. The Western Morning News, edited by a Baptist layman, said, "Mr. Spurgeon is very definite. What he believes as truth is the truth, and those who teach it in another fashion to himself seem to him always to be taking the side of the Evil One." The Birmingham Daily Post represented Spurgeon to be "a convinced and vehement Calvinist," and, misunderstanding the situation, gave out that he had "seceded from the Baptist denomination." The Scotsman asked, Why leave a church if the members were falling away from truth? "Ought he not rather to remain within it, and use all his great influence to stay it on its downward course?" According to The Pall Mall Gazette, leaving a body like the Baptist Union, which sent representatives "to an annual palaver," was not so serious as breaking away from an ecclesiastical organisation like the Anglican, Presbyterian, or Wesleyan community; but "nevertheless, his protest is well worthy of being numbered among the signs which blaze in the theological firmament." The affair created great interest in the United States, where opinion was quite as divided as in London. "The wisdom of the act is doubtful," remarked The Standard of Chicago, in reference to the withdrawal from the Union. "Better to resist all this drift, so far as it exists, where we are face to face with it, than from any position outside." To understand how the matter was viewed at home by leading veterans, whose devotion to evangelical doctrines was of the most uncompromising kind, it seems necessary to give the following statement:—

"We have learned with extreme regret that our dear friend and fellow-labourer, Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, has withdrawn from membership in the Baptist Union.

"We heartily agree with Mr. Spurgeon in regarding disloyalty to Christ and His Gospel as inconsistent with membership in the Baptist Union. From the beginning the Union has been an association of evangelical churches for evangelical purposes; and this is

Mr. Spurgeon's Funeral - Outside the Metropolitan Tabernacle as true now as in any period of its history. In baptism we make profession of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and take our place among His disciples; we are baptised 'into the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit;' and we avow our readiness to learn and observe 'all things whatsoever Christ has commanded.' In the Lord's Supper we show forth His death and gratefully receive His Word: 'This is my body... this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.' If anyone renounces the profession made in baptism and the Lord's Supper, he has no longer a legitimate place in the Union.

"According to the rules of the Union, 'the constituencies and list of members may be revised by the Council, and their decision shall be duly signified to the persons concerned, who shall have the right of appeal to the assembly.' The Union has exercised this power in past days.

"This power of revision must be exercised in conformity with the fundamental principle of the Union, 'that every separate Church has the liberty to interpret and administer the laws of Christ, and that the immersion of believers is the only Christian baptism.' We feel that the imposition of theological tests or a human creed would contravene this fundamental principle and defeat the

objects of the Union, which are declared to be: 'To cultivate among its own members respect and love for one another, and to spread the Gospel! of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland.'

"While we differ from Mr. Spurgeon in the step he has taken, we are at one with him in loyalty to Christ, in love for the Gospel, and in earnest longing of heart that it may be preached in simplicity, uncorruptness, fulness, and power in all the pulpits of the land, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; and we rejoice that, though he has withdrawn from the Union, we shall continue to enjoy fellowship and engage in service with him as members of the same denomination.—Yours, "John Aldis, "Joseph Angus, "Alexander Maclaren.

"November 16, 1887."

Spurgeon left London early in November, and the following letter was read to the congregation on Sunday, the 13th of the month:—

"I have only left you a few days, but I am already rested by anticipation of rest to come. I wish to thank you all most heartily for your constancy and love through four-and-thirty years of fellowship. We have been many in number, but only one in heart all through these years. Especially is this true in the present hour of controversy, for my heartiest sympathisers are in my own church. Several enthusiastic ones had proposed a large meeting of the church members to express their fervent agreement with their pastor, but the ever-faithful deacons and elders had taken time by the forelock and presented to me a letter, signed by them all, as representing their brethren and sisters. Such unity comes through the grace of God, and proves that His blessing is now with us, and Providence will give future happiness. What can I do but thank you all, love you in return, labour for you as long as strength remains, and pray for you until I die? The infinite blessing of the eternal God be with you for ever and ever.—Your faithful friend and pastor, "C. H. Spurgeon." On November 18 Principal Gracey presided at a meeting of over a hundred Pastors' College ministers at Dalston Junction Chapel, when three resolutions were passed, one of sympathy with Mr. Spurgeon, and of thanks for the attitude he had taken. The second resolution had reference to devising some means for return to the Union; but the third resolution decided that no united action be taken until after the report of the Union Council had been received. When these were forwarded the following reply was returned to the secretary:—

"Menton, November 23, 1887.

"Dear Mr. Mackey,—As you are the scribe for the brethren, I thank you heartily, and beg you to let Mr. Gracey and others know how cheered I am by the action of my beloved brethren. I think the three resolutions most wise, as well as most loyal to the truth. I never desire my dear friends to follow me slavishly in every action, but to be influenced by that grand motive which I hope inspires me. Then there will be differences of operation, but all will work for one end.

"It was incumbent upon me to leave the Union, as my private remonstrances to officials, and my repeated pointed appeals to the whole body, had been of no avail. My standpoint had become one from which, as an earnest man, I could see no other course but to withdraw. But you have made no such appeals, and might not be bound to do as I have done until you have had my experience of failure. That you will fail as I have done I fear; but you cannot do any harm by making an attempt. That you should march with me in a sympathy which is practically unanimous is a great consolation to my heart; for there are among our College confraternity two or three over whom I

sorrow much. I will not think of them while I remember you, except it be to pray that they may return to their first love.

"Let us daily pray for each other, in reference to the work which lies before us, that we may be faithful unto death—faithful not only to the doctrine of truth, but to the spirit of love—warring our warfare without trace of personal bitterness, but with stern resolve to spare none of the errors which insult the sacrifice of our Lord, destroy the way of salvation in this life, and then seek to delude men with the dream of salvation after death.

"It is a great grief to me that hitherto many of our most honoured friends in the Baptist Union have, with strong determination, closed their eyes to serious divergencies from truth. I doubt not that their motive has been in a measure laudable, for they desired to preserve peace, and hoped that errors, which they were forced to see, would be removed as their friends advanced in years and knowledge.

"But at last even these will, I trust, discover that the new views are not the old truth in a better dress, but deadly errors with which we can have no fellowship. I regard full-grown 'modern thought' as a totally new cult, having no more relation to Christianity than the mist of the evening to the everlasting hills.

"I desire my hearty love to each one of my true brothers in Christ, gratefully remembering in particular the learned chairman.—Yours most lovingly, "C. H. Spurgeon."

On Tuesday, December 13, the Council of the Baptist Union met at the Mission House, eighty out of the hundred members being present. It was felt that the charges made were based on inaccurate information; and it was shown that when members had lapsed into Unitarianism they had ceased to be associates. Dr. Angus submitted a declaration of evangelical faith; but while being in sympathy with this, the Council ruled that the Scriptural rule of a personal interview should be honoured. The officers denied that Mr. Spurgeon "had, in any communication he had made to them, brought any charge as to laxity of faith and practice such as would have justified them in laying it before the Council of the assembly." A. member then said: "I call his brother to witness that I do not impugn the veracity of Mr. Spurgeon. I think he believes he has done things which he has not done; but the statement in his letter to Mr. Mackey as to confidential communications was not true." Thereupon Mr. J. A. Spurgeon left the room. The phrase "not true" was explained as being used in the sense of "not correct." It was arranged that a deputation should wait upon Mr. Spurgeon after his return from France. This meeting was followed up a few days later by the following:—

"To the Editor of 'The Baptist'

"Dear Sir,—I would not occupy your columns with a personal matter were it not of considerable importance that I should do so. In the letter to Mr. Mackey I wrote: 'It was incumbent upon me to leave the Union, as my private remonstrances to officials, and my repeated pointed appeals to the whole body, had been of no avail.' This is not untrue, nor inaccurate. After a painful occurrence at Leicester I made serious complaint to the secretary, the president (Mr. Chown), and others of the Council. At the Orphanage, to which he kindly came, Mr. Chown made to me a pathetic appeal to regard it as a solitary incident, and hoping that I had been mistaken. I did not go further with this matter, for which, possibly, I am blameworthy.

"Since then I have repeatedly spoken to the secretary upon the subject, as he will willingly admit. I think each year either himself or Mr. Baynes has waited upon me to. preach for the Union, or to preach at the mission services connected with the Union gatherings. On each occasion one or other has heard my complaints till they must, I fear, have been wearied. Here I beg to add that I do not confound the mission with the Union; but it so happens that these good secretaries call upon me while making arrangements for the same series of meetings, and therefore I have regarded that which I said to one as said to both. The fact has remained that I have declined to take a public part in the meetings, because I could not feel sure that I should not be compromised thereby. This is surely an action which spoke more loudly than words. With Mr. Williams and Dr. Maclaren I had considerable correspondence, which on their part, at any rate, was most admirable.

"My friend Mr. Williams says my letters were marked 'Private,' and that is just what I said to Mr. Mackey. Mr. Booth did not regard my communications as made to him officially, neither did I ever say that he did. The complaints were, however, made by me to him, while I tried to compromise the matter with my judgment by joining in the work, and not in the talk, of the Union, and I wish it could have been a possible middleway. I will not venture to say definitely how many of the Council knew my views and feelings by hearing me utter them at various times, but more than enough to justify my statement to Mr. Mackey.

"Please note that the first clause of the sentence only is taken, and it is made to be more prominent than I intended by the remainder being left out—'my repeated pointed appeals to the whole body.' My letters on 'The Down-grade' do not deal exclusively with the Baptist denomination, which I have all along admitted to be far less tainted than another; but they did so far concern it. that the republished articles were submitted to the entire ministry and posted to all. 'The organ of the Baptist denomination' likened the affair to a 'big gooseberry,' and stated that certain ministers on the road to Sheffield regarded it as a 'great joke.' At the meetings no public notice was taken except to assail me before a public meeting, where there was no opportunity of reply. Of other expressions of an unkind character then used by individuals I will not write; but the whole together made it clear to me that no one thought my appeals worthy of notice. Had any one of the brethren judged them to be serious he could have mentioned them to the Council, and could have asked that private statements should become public ones; but no one thought this wise. Of this I am not complaining; but it must not be said that I have not spoken the truth in the lines quoted above.

"The fact seems to be that the question asked was not, 'Is that statement made by Mr. Spurgeon true?' but the real inquiry made was, 'Has he so written that the officials felt bound to lay the matter before the Council?' This is quite another subject, as anyone can see with half an eye. Thus I can exonerate questioners, repliers, and others by the theory that they meant one thing and I meant another; and I at once do so.

"But this is a sad beginning for a brotherly conference. The charge was not that I was knowingly untruthful, but that I said what was not true—I suppose through the failure of my mental powers. The inference should be that it is a waste of time to send a deputation to confer with so imbecile a person. I will not, however, draw the inference. I have not descended, I trust, to personalities. I do not even impute motives; but I hope I may write thus much without seeming to be disrespectful to the honoured brethren who request a conference with me.—Yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon.

"Menton, December 19." The congregation at Stoke Green, Ipswich, having passed a resolution of sympathy with Mr. Spurgeon, the pastor, Mr. C. M. Longhurst, received the following letter:—

"Menton, December 30.

"My dear Brother,—I present to you and your church the heartiest thanks for their vote of tender sympathy, which comes to me just now in a very seasonable manner. I have learned to look to the Lord alone; but He often sends His servants draughts of consolation in the cup of brotherly love. I accept the vote of the church at Stoke Green, Ipswich, as a token of true Christian affection, and I beg to assure you and the brethren that it awakens loving emotions in my own heart in return. When I entered upon my painful task, I did not expect that so many whom I esteem would deny the existence of the evil. It would be far easier to deal with the erring than with those worthy brethren who protect them. Surely the churches will yet speak out. I believe the Council does not know the true desire of the great bulk of the Baptist people. If I were seeking to return to the Union, I would appeal from the Council to the whole body. But I am not desirous of being the reason for any reforms; I am anxious that the question should be decided upon its own merits. Is the Union an assemblage of evangelical churches, or is it an indiscriminate collection of communities practising immersion? Pray much for me. I desire to act firmly and kindly. The Lord be with you and the whole church. Yours gratefully, "C. H. Spurgeon." As was to be expected, a controversy of this kind could not be set on foot without calling forth some searching criticism even from those who held the doctrines of grace without show of compromise. Thus one well-known organ asked:—

"Was Mr. Spurgeon right, not in leaving the Union—for we are not aware that anyone questions his right to do that—but in bringing general charges which expose to suspicion the whole body of Baptist ministry, except such as take sides with himself? Mr. Spurgeon has charged the Union with countenancing and retaining in its membership men whose teaching exposes them to the Apostle's imprecation, 'If we or an angel from heaven preach unto you any other Gospel than that we have preached, let him be accursed.' If this charge can be substantiated, the Union should without delay take every possible step to rid itself of the accursed thing. If it cannot, Mr. Spurgeon has done a grievous injury to the ministers and churches of the Baptist denomination, for which, if faithfully dealt with, he will not be slow to make amends." The jar of controversy was happily relieved on Monday evening, January 9, 1888, by what ranked as a sermon festival, consequent on the publication of No. 2,000 in the weekly issue. Some good anecdotes were told respecting the sermons, and a great deal of enthusiasm prevailed.

Among the home missions which about this time excited Mr. Spurgeon's interest was the comprehensive work in Spitalfields of which Mr. Charles Montague has been the honorary superintendent for a number of years. Spurgeon was well acquainted with Mr. Montague, and recognised in him one of those ragged-school pioneers whose service to London has been past all calculation. An account of the general work appeared in The Sword and the Trowel for January, 1888. The school was commenced in a disused cow-shed over forty years ago; but it has grown until large and handsome buildings are provided, while the influence of the institution extends more or less throughout the whole of Spitalfields. Spurgeon always showed the greatest possible interest in works of this kind—what he called Bagged London having for him a kind of fascination. In his friend Charles Montague he saw a kind of model ragged-school veteran, one who had been associated with the institution from infancy, working his way upward until he had become the most

successful of superintendents.

It was also at this time that Spurgeon's friend, Mr. James Spicer, passed away. Mrs. Martindale, of Prestonville, Brighton, supplies the following reminiscences:—

"My father's (James Spicer, of Harts, Woodford, Essex) first introduction to C. H. Spurgeon was at Harecourt Chapel, Aldersgate Street. It must have been in 1856 or 1857; the teachers of the Sunday-school had engaged Mr. Spurgeon to preach for them at twelve o'clock on a week-day.

"My father did not believe it would be a success, and was not very pleased about it; but in the few minutes before the service the young man had completely conquered him, and a look of very great relief came into my mother's face when he returned to the pew and said, 'He's all right.' From that moment began a lifelong and uninterrupted friendship which terminated only with death.

"On entering the pulpit Mr. Spurgeon at once riveted the attention of the audience by saying, 'Of all the hares I ever hunted, not one ever gave me as much trouble as hunting for Harecourt Chapel, and I am very thankful to find that there is a prospect of moving from this building, which was built in times of persecution, to some place where your church may be seen.'

"Edmund Joynson, the paper maker of St. Mary Cray, Kent, while staying in London had attended Mr. Spurgeon's chapel; he was as captivated as my father, and came to him to see if, between them, they could not make better arrangements for the land on which to build the Tabernacle. My father was to carry it through the Fishmongers' Company, getting the Court to sell the land instead of giving a lease. It entailed a great deal of work, but my belief is that it was all carried through successfully. Mr. Joynson paid all expenses, which I believe were £900 or £1,000. If the deeds were examined I believe it would be found that everything was made correct for the future, for I recollect my father saying, 'There will be no difficulties about the land in the future for that church.' As a memento of the service he had rendered the congregation, Mr. Spurgeon gave my father some of his works. The inscription would tell all the tale.

"Mr. Spurgeon wrote to Mr. Henry Edwards, my mother's brother:—

"'Menton, January 17, 1892.

"'Your dear sister's face seems to be smiling upon me now. She looked so loving the last time I saw her in our prayer meeting at the Tabernacle.'

"She died on the 19th."

One of the last things which Mr. James Spicer had read to him was the great preacher's sermon on the text, "I will be to them a little sanctuary;" and one of his last remarks concerning his old friend was, "Spurgeon is as sound as a bell."

Meanwhile the controversy with the Baptist Union was more complicated than at first sight might appear. It was maintained that the Union had no credal basis, and that it never had been intended that it should have. Then if the constitution were revised so as to exclude some of the members, there was danger of their instituting proceedings in chancery against the treasurer. It was supposed to be Mr. Spurgeon's wish that such revision should take place, although in 1873, when some alterations were made, it was said he had protested against time being wasted in such an

operation. At the meeting of the Council of the Union, held on January 18, 1888, Mr. Spurgeon's resignation was accepted; and a resolution was passed that the charges, "in the judgment of the Council, ought not to have been made." At the adjourned meeting, held on February 21, a declaration of faith, somewhat different from what had been suggested by Dr. Angus, was adopted; but when this was sent to Mr. Spurgeon he wrote: "It is not a basis of union such as I recommended. I do not write to complain, but simply to correct your mistake. The Council can, of course, vote at its own pleasure; but if the object is to secure a hearty union it has missed the mark." Mr. Spurgeon had recommended "a simple basis of Bible truths," similar to that adopted by the Evangelical Alliance. At a special meeting of the London Baptist Association, held on March 27, a resolution, calling on the executive of the Union "to prepare a sound evangelical basis," was moved but not carried. This action was followed by Mr. Spurgeon's withdrawal from the Association. The most absurd inferences were drawn by outsiders who did not understand the nature of the dispute. Thus one Conservative journal thought it was clear that the Council of the Baptist Union was made up of agnostics and sceptics. It was in reference to this that The Freeman remarked that the enemies of Nonconformity "take arrows from Mr. Spurgeon's quiver and with them assail Mr. Spurgeon's brethren." The storm was reaching its height. The members of the Pastors' College Conference met, the result being that the old Association was dissolved and a new one formed on a fresh theological basis; but this left many leading men outside who did not approve of the credal basis. Meanwhile an eminent preacher thus reviewed the situation:—

"All readers of Mr. Spurgeon's article will have noticed its martial tone. It is a shrill summons to war. The sword is out of its 'scabbard,' and the 'scabbard thrown away.' Christendom is invited to gaze on a widely-raging contest. Already the conflict has begun; churches, associations, as well as the Assembly of the Baptist Union, are to be turned into battlefields for the continuance of the fight. It might be thought this is a domestic quarrel, and should therefore be left to those immediately concerned; but all the faithful are invited to look on and judge between the combatants. What, then, is the 'Jerusalem' of this last crusade? How does Mr. Spurgeon describe his object? 'The dark conspiracy to overthrow the truth,' he says, 'must be dragged to light.' It is a consecrated war. The Union that in October 'was beginning to look like a confederacy in evil' is actually 'an evil confederacy for those who make void the Gospel' in December....

"The Council has said Mr. Spurgeon 'ought not' to have printed accusations and left them where they cannot be investigated. The Union is to say in April, 'That is precisely what Mr. Spurgeon ought to have done.' The Council questioned the justice of calling the Baptist Union a 'confederacy in evil.' The Union in April is to affirm of itself 'all that I stedfastly believe.' The Council has intimated, with unsurpassable mildness, that Mr. Spurgeon 'ought not to say,' unless he is prepared to prove it, that our ministers 'make infidels,' 'scout the Atonement, deride the inspiration of Scripture, degrade the Holy Spirit into an influence, turn the punishment of sin into a fiction and the resurrection into a myth,' 'make waste-paper of the Bible.' The Union is to say in April, by the voice of its delegates and pastors, 'That is exactly what we do,' not a jot less than can be meant by the proposition 'to reverse the vote of censure,' so called. In short, the issue is this: that Mr. Spurgeon may accuse the whole Union of anything he pleases, but no one among us may presume to whisper doubt about his action in a single case. Will Christendom weigh this? Is it too late to ask Mr. Spurgeon to pause and consider whether this is the best work to which the Baptists of Great Britain and Ireland can be put? Is not the fateful crop of disturbing suspicions, broken

purposes, imperilled churches, and wounded but faithful workers, already in sight enough? Oh! it pains me unspeakably to see this eminent 'winner of souls' rousing the energies of thousands of Christians to engage in personal wrangling and strife, instead of inspiring them, as he might, to sustained and heroic effort to carry the good news of God's Gospel to our fellow-countrymen! Would it were possible even now to reverse the direction of those newly quickened forces and guide them into the application of Christianity to the lessening of the sin and misery of our race!" In regard to the College Conference, it was felt that no steps should have been taken to form a new association until the old one had met; and over a hundred ministers trained in the College signed "a mild protest" against the procedure of inviting only such as made a certain declaration to the Conference. In reply, the President wrote to Mr. C. A. Davis, of Reading:—

"Westwood, February 18, 1888.

"Dear Mr. Davis,—The slip from The Baptist which I posted to you before I had seen your letter is yet a very direct reply to you and the brethren who had signed your request. I could not endure to give up our Conference to one long wrangle to no earthly purpose. The expense, not merely of money, but of my life, would be too great for a purposeless conflict. The strain has nearly broken my heart already, and I have had all I can bear of bitterness. The brethren in London, at my request, suggested the interpretation of the basis, and all the history of the College and all the design of the Conference prove it to be a true one. Then it was put to the vote of you all in the only way in which all, including the foreign men, can possibly vote. I conceive this to be the spirit if not the letter of our rule, and I fail to see ground of complaint. If every man exercises his vote, it is surely better than for those only to have it who can come to London. Still, to avoid any question in future, I propose to resign my office, and I shall hope that those who vote 'Yes' will all support me in forming a new Conference. Your procedure, which I will not describe, has caused me the utmost grief, and forced me to this decision. Yet I blame none of you, for I am sure that the major part of the brethren signing your letter are with me heart and soul. Those who send in 'Yes' on or before the 23rd will not be understood to approve of my mode of procedure, but only the basis as explained. No one of all of you is asked by me to do this; but nothing would give me greater joy than to find many doing so of their own accord. A gross misapprehension of my action, and a distrust of my motive, must have been upon some of your minds; but I do not in the least wonder, since the quantity of dust thrown into the air just now might almost blind angels. I could not expect more confidence than I have received. It is no small solace that nearly four hundred have voted 'Yes' right straight; and it will be a still greater joy if, after the explanation given, many of you will do the like. I feel sure that not a single one of you will join unless you can do so very heartily. By your love to me, I beseech you do nothing which would be half-hearted. We can do each other more good apart in open-hearted honesty than together with suppressed ill-will. It has been my joy to serve you, and I hope it will still be my privilege; but we can only work together on the lines of the old Gospel; and if any of you are in love with 'advanced thought,' why do you wish to stay with such an old fogey as I am? Go your way and leave me an immovable old man, possibly the proper object of your pity, but assuredly not of your enmity, for I have striven to benefit you all according to my light and capacity. May the grace of our Lord be with the faithful among you, leading you to be wholly and boldly on the Lord's side in this day when men cannot endure sound doctrine!—Yours heartily, but in much sorrow, mingled with hopeful love, "C. H. Spurgeon."

There were four hundred and ninety-six papers returned from the Pastors' College men relative to the "basis of Conference," and of these, four hundred and thirty-two voted in favour of the procedure recommended by Mr. Spurgeon. There were fifteen of an opposite opinion, eight gave a qualified "No," and eight a qualified refusal, while twelve were agreed on doctrine, but objected to the procedure. The following was sent to the committee of the College:—

"Dear Brethren,—The action which we judged to be best has been carried out, but in the process so many objections have been raised about points of procedure, about the original basis, about its interpretation, and, indeed, about everything, that I judge it to be the wisest course for us, as an association or conference, to dissolve. I do not know in whom is vested the power to dissolve the Association, for no provision is made for such an emergency. But so far as this power may rest with me, I formally, as president and founder, dissolve the Conference.

"I know that if this resolve were put to the vote, it would, at my expressed request, be carried with a vast majority; but instead of taking up a long time in formal procedure, I dissolve the Association; or, if this is unwarrantable, I personally retire from my office as president. I ask all the members of the late Conference to regard it dissolved for the sake of future peace and goodwill. This last act of love I think those who are most opposed may do for me without sacrifice of any principle; but if anyone should choose to convoke the old Conference, I first enter my protest against his right to do so, and then remind him that all those who are with me have a clear right to attend such Conference. This would bring about an unpleasant collision, and do no one any good. It will be far more wise for each division to go its way in peace.

"I intend to invite all the brethren who signed 'Yes' to unite with me in forming the Conference anew. Papers concerning this action will be submitted to them as early as possible. These brethren will never know how much the enthusiastic love which so many of them have expressed to me and to the old faith has comforted me in a dark hour. The Lord recompense them according to His grace. I thank each one from my inmost soul. I desire to say to others who have not treated me kindly that I am anxious to erase from my memory the whole of the unhappy past, and to begin a new Conference without an atom of resentment towards those who will not be with us in it. On the contrary, I pray for each one of them that they may receive the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ abundantly.

"If they judge me to have spoken harshly, and to have acted unkindly, I must ask them to exercise their charity so far as to believe that I have acted upon principle, and have no personal ill-will to a single person, but the very reverse. The formal dissolution of the Association will, I trust, be so soon followed by its reconstitution that it will make no break in its history. I trust that the brethren will not raise further questions upon the procedure which I now adopt, but will go with me as one man.—Yours very heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon."

While the controversy was thus raging in England, the excitement it occasioned had extended to the United States, and some of the opinions given would seem to have been characteristic of men who were breathing the pure air of the Republic. One leading journal maintained that to know Spurgeon was to love him, but zeal had got the better of his discretion. It was added:—

"As to the charges he brought, not against the Union, but against some few nameless members of it, all that can be said is, 'Non proven.'...As to the Baptist Union itself, the presumption that it is

lying under serious charges is, of course, groundless. For over a quarter of a century it has been doing capital work. The annual addresses, papers, and discussions which have been published under its approval are all open to view. To speak only of the living, Dr. Angus, Dr. Underhill, and Mr. Aldis were champions of the evangelical faith when Mr. Spurgeon was only learning his alphabet.... To assail the Union because, out of its hundreds of members, some half a dozen men are not in full accord with what Mr. Spurgeon holds (and what we hold also) to be the Gospel of our Lord is to set to work to burn down a house because a dozen rats are hidden in the cellar.... The debate is bringing into very distinct prominence the fact that the Baptists of England will have no man to set himself up or to be set up as a ruler over them. If any man might have tried this experiment with a reasonable prospect of success, that man was Mr. Spurgeon. But he himself is the best illustration of our aversion to the bad political principles—'men, not measures.'"

About the same time a well-known religious organ of the strictly evangelical school said of Mr. Spurgeon:—

"His language regarding the Council of the Union is pervaded by extreme bitterness. Their expressions of kindness and brotherly love for him he terms the velvet pad covering the claw. This is hardly becoming language to use regarding men like Maclaren and Angus, and Underhill and Landels, leaders in the Church of God, and known in many lands as men not merely of learning and ability, but of earnest godliness. He throws out insinuations of deceit against the deputation sent to. confer with him—three men of purest character—headed by Dr. Culross, the President of the Union, known in this country by his work on the Apostle John and by other writings—a man of piety and even saintliness. As regards the exhibition of a Christian spirit, Mr. Spurgeon appears at a great disadvantage compared to the men with whom he has had these dealings. The events of the past few months will make a chapter in his history which his biographer will find difficulty in treating. It may be remarked, however, that the extreme consideration and deep respect with which the Council, even under these grave provocations, has treated him show that he holds their love even when they think him wrong. He is a noble man after all."

It might have been added that the bitterness was not all on Spurgeon's side. An appeal was sent to Mr. Spurgeon on behalf of over nine hundred officers of churches, and he was asked to consider "how inevitable are conscientious doctrinal differences in the interpretation of Scripture;" but the only hope of peace and amity was supposed to lie in a credal basis for the Union. "Should there be a decision of the assembly that there shall be an evangelical basis, I am sure you will not regret it," wrote Mr. Spurgeon; "but should there be an unmistakable decision the other way, the inevitable result will be very unsatisfactory to lovers of peace."

While the controversy became more animated as the year wore on, Mr. Spurgeon found solace in hard work; and while some withheld subscriptions on account of his action, others gave more largely because of being in sympathy with him. He was the life of a reunion at the Stockwell Orphanage early in March. On March 20 he gave an address to the Young Men's Christian Association at Exeter Hall, and on the following day he was at Mildmay Hall. No wonder that he suffered from a partial breakdown, which necessitated his resting for a few days at Eastbourne before engaging in the work of the annual College Conference. The first meeting of what was now "The Pastors' College Evangelical Association" opened on April 16. In the Tabernacle in the evening the President showed that his mind was full of the controversy; but he made a bold stand,

and spoke out without compromise and without fear of being misunderstood. "In Paul's Epistles there is a note of what is wanted, a form of sound words implying something like faith; but now, because we ask, 'Let us have some idea of what you believe,' we are said to want to impose a creed. No. While men differ, and yet hold fundamental truth, we do not want it; but when men come in who count the blood of the Covenant an unholy thing, it is time to speak." Some who were present may yet remember what emphasis he put on such words as "I care for no man and for no newspaper, but only for God. I do not wish to impose any doctrine of my own, not even the grand old Calvinism; but it is not a question of Calvinism, but rather of the divinity of Christ."

Mr. Edward Duncanson presided at the meeting of subscribers on the 18th of April, when the collection amounted to £3,700. Mr. Spurgeon stated that he had received hundreds of letters from clergymen and others, as well as one from Bishop Ryle, containing words of encouragement. On the following morning the President also declared in the Conference that the religious people were with them, and this was inferred from the cordial greeting received both at Mildmay Hall and Exeter Hall—from people who were said to constitute the backbone of the religion of London. The meeting of the Baptist Union at the City Temple on Monday, April 23, was densely crowded, but at the end it was hoped that the controversy was closed for ever. Mr. Charles Williams moved a resolution, which the present Dr. James Spurgeon seconded. The report and declaration of the Council, with some alterations, were adopted; but in reference "to recent discussions respecting the evangelical character of the Union, the Assembly places on record its judgment that there has been sufficient vindication of the declaration of the Council and otherwise of the evangelical character of the churches of the Union, and of their pastors, and that additional tests of membership are unnecessary, inasmuch as the Council and the Assembly have ample power under the constitution to determine all questions of membership, and therefore can deal with the case of any church or person that may not hold evangelical sentiments." This was what The Freeman called "the Baptist Reunion." It was added that when Mr. Spurgeon's brother seconded the resolution it was as though clear sunshine had succeeded thunder-clouds. It was not regarded as a victory for anyone when there were concessions on both sides. Those who acted were complimented as striving after peace; but, as the sequel proved, the peace gained was not that abiding peace which many had anticipated. The rupture with the Union and the London Association was never to be repaired.

Chapter 104: Death of Mrs. John Spurgeon

Chapter 104.

Death Of Mrs. John Spurgeon

Death and Funeral of Mr. Spurgeon's Mother—Letters—Conference of 1889—Fugual Tunes-Missionary Convention—Medicine for the Gout—Letters—Dr. Parker's "Open Letter"—At Brighton—William Olney.

While unwell himself, Mr. Spurgeon lost his mother by death in the spring of 1888. She had been ailing for some time, but feeling somewhat better, the invalid was conveyed, at her own desire, to Hastings on May 18; but taking a chill, bronchitis and inflammation came on, and death followed on May 23. The Rev. John Spurgeon and two of his daughters were present at the closing scene. The funeral took place in Croydon Cemetery on May 26, when Mr. Spurgeon gave an address in the chapel. On the following day Mr. James Spurgeon preached on the conversion, call, and charge of young Timothy, and the influence of Timothy's mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois. At the Stockwell Orphanage fete, held in honour of his fifty-fourth birthday, Mr. Spurgeon was able to stay only a very short time in consequence of bodily weakness; the weather was also cold;and cheerless for the season. Early in August he attended the jubilee of Wellington Square Chapel, Hastings, of which the late Mr. W. Barker was the minister, and there he preached, and in the afternoon gave an address, in the course of which he remarked:—

"What a company before the Throne look down on this place—not gaudy in architecture, especially the schoolroom. I believe that grand buildings ruin good fellowship in the church itself. People used to meet in the plain old building and nod to one another; but now in the handsome building people did not speak to one another; it would be unbecoming. They walked up the aisles on stilts with a new pair of gloves on, and entered the stately catacomb places."

Towards the end of August the Baptist Union was again severely criticised in consequence of one being asked to preach the autumnal sermon whose published views on inspiration seemed to deny inspiration altogether as it had commonly been understood. Thus the Evangelical Church papers showed a disposition to vindicate Spurgeon in the attitude he had taken up. "We have no desire to have fellowship with those who would practically rob us of our Bibles," said The Rock. "Far better the intolerant priests, who would by persecution endeavour to prevent us from reading that book, than the so-called preacher of the Gospel who will present us with a book called the Bible, but will at the same time deprive us of our faith in that sacred volume as the Word of God." The controversy, however, flagged; the man chiefly concerned was so feeble in health that he was arranging to leave England as early as possible; yet all the while he showed wonderful energy. Early in September he was the life of the party when Mr. and Mrs. C. F. Allison entertained the tutors and students at their country house, Town Court, Orpington. On the 18th of the month the annual College meeting came off at the Tabernacle, when the President once more lectured in his best style. It was about this time that Spurgeon became a member of the Surrey and Middlesex

Baptist Association. On September 25 he gave a sympathetic address to the Southwark branch of the Young Men's Christian Association in the Tabernacle. In speaking of the influence of early days he made some telling remarks. "As far as I myself am concerned, I cannot imagine what I should have done at the present time if I had not been a servant 'of the Lord Jesus Christ when I was fifteen, and pastor of a church when I was sixteen. Those first years moulded all the rest of my life. If I had not then preached, I should not now have preached, and I think it is so with you." Such extra services had the usual effect, however, and on October 20 he was confined to his bed. About a month later he started for the South of France, and was absent from his pulpit at the Tabernacle for a little over four months. On September 26 he preached at the opening of New Surrey Chapel, and, without knowing it, selected the same text that Rowland Hill had enlarged on at the opening of the old sanctuary in 1783. My friend Mr. Benjamin Senior, the present pastor, has supplied some reminiscences of C. H. Spurgeon and Surrey Chapel:—

"The first time I heard my late dear friend preach was on a Thursday night at the Tabernacle. I said to a gentleman sitting next to me, 'What is the secret of this man's success?' He said, 'Why, the man is real. I will illustrate what I mean. A conversation took place the other day in the house of business where I am employed about the most popular preachers in London. Everyone said that Spurgeon stood the first. One man said, "I used to think that Spurgeon was a humbug until I went to hear him. Ho preached from the text, Am I my brother's keeper?' Among other things he said that he regarded every man as his brother. I said I will test the fellow to-morrow. The next morning I went to his house in Nightingale Lane; I rang the bell. When the servant answered the door I said, 'Will you tell Mr. Spurgeon that his brother wants to see him?' She seemed to hesitate. I said, 'Will you kindly carry my message?' She took the message and at once returned, asking me into the study. 'Well, my friend, what is the object of your visit?' I said, 'Well, sir, I heard you preach yesterday, and you said that you regarded every man as your brother. I am a man and I am out of work, and I thought I would come and see if you would regard me as your brother.' He laughed right heartily and said, 'Well, I have had a good many visitors, but I think you are the strangest I ever had; but keep your seat and you shall have some refreshment.' He rang the bell, and when the girl came he said, 'Bring this good gentleman something to eat. Never mind, cold beef, pickled onions, anything you have got.' I enjoyed the refreshment immensely; he chatted with me all the time; gave me a note to take to one of his deacons, and then prayed with me. I can never forget that visit. Now," said the man, "I was not out of work nor did I want anything, but I thought I would test the fellow and see if he would practise what he preached."' So my friend said to me in the pew, 'That is the best illustration I can give you that the man is real.'

"Yes, he was real, and that was the main secret of his great success. He was real in all that he said and did; in his love, sympathy and benevolence. How often I have had proof of this in my thirteen years' ministry at Surrey Chapel! How his great heart was struck when old Surrey Chapel was lost to the Christian Church! The following letter was received from him in 1880:—

"'Westwood, Beulah Hill, "'Upper Norwood.

"'Dear Sir,—The loss of Surrey Chapel from the Blackfriars Road is a social calamity; and any effort to revive its holy agencies, if it be wisely planned and well supported, will be a blessing to the south of London.

"'C. H. Spurgeon.'

"But how delighted he was a few years after, when I told him that within forty yards of the old chapel we had secured a splendid freehold site in the Blackfriars Road for a new Surrey Chapel; and still later on, when I went to ask him for the loan of the Tabernacle and lecture-hall for the tea and public meeting at the stone-laying, I shall never forget how heartily he congratulated me upon this success, and would have me come and tell them all about it in the Tabernacle that night at the prayer meeting. I did as he asked me, and the next morning The Daily Chronicle gave a report of the address with this title, 'Mr. Spurgeon and the Primitive Methodist.' And what had the Primitive Methodist to do with him? Why, a great deal, as he told them that night how in a little chapel of our3 he was converted. I need not give the details, as they are so well known. He came and preached the opening sermon of our new chapel; and here a most remarkable thing occurred. Without knowing it, he took the same text that Rowland Hill preached from over a hundred years before, when he opened old Surrey Chapel. The text was, 'But we preach Christ crucified.' It was indeed a most remarkable sermon. I was in the pulpit with him when he sat down, and told him what he had done, when he exclaimed, 'How strange that I should have had the same text!' I told the congregation, and they were immensely delighted. I have had the two sermons published, and they are said to be two of the most remarkable sermons preached from the same text. The first edition of twenty thousand copies is being sold. When Mr. Spurgeon had finished his sermon he gave me a cheque for £10, and promised £10 for each £1,000 until the debt was paid off; and one of the last cheques that he wrote was just before he left England for Menton. How he delighted to speak of Rowland Hill and old Surrey Chapel! In this sermon he gave a striking illustration of his soul-saving power, when our eighty-years-of-age Rowland Hill and C. H. Spurgeon were in many respects alike in their intense love to Jesus Christ and their passionate love to save the souls of men. How fully they succeeded in saving souls will never be known. Surrey Chapel and the Tabernacle are places of world-wide interest. It was at Surrey Chapel that the first Sunday-school in London was commenced; the first meeting of the Religious Tract Society and the first meeting of the Ragged-School movement were held here. A well-known minister, preaching at the closing of old Surrey Chapel, said he believed that as many souls had been saved in that chapel as there were bricks in the walls. Could this not be said of the Tabernacle? Would to God that it could be said of every other place of worship! Oh! that the soul-saving passion may take hold more fully of the ministry and the church! It is a sweet memory for us to think of the two honoured servants of God who for so many years preached the glorious Gospel of the blessed God in London, and whose sermons have been made such a blessing to so many millions of people in this and other lands. Their life and work will still be an inspiration to the Christian ministry and to the churches of this and other lands. May we follow them as they followed Christ, and may our lives be full of the fragrance of holy toil for the good of others!" In connection with the controversy with the Baptist Union a resolution of sympathy was passed by the Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces of Canada, to which this reply was sent:—

"Upper Norwood, London, "October 5, 1888.

"To the Ministers and Delegates forming the Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces of Canada.

"Dear Brethren in Christ,—I heartily thank you all for the words of cheer which you have sent me. Such a resolution, from such brethren, at such a time, gladdened me greatly. From the depths of my soul I thank all the brethren, and I pray the Lord richly to recompense them. I am grateful that

you have not misjudged my action in reference to the English Baptist Union, from which I have felt bound to separate myself. I have not acted from sudden impulse, much less from any personal grievance; but I have been long protesting quietly, and have been at last compelled to make a stand in public. I saw the testimony of the churches becoming obscure, and I observed that in some instances the testimony from the pulpit was very wide of the Word of God, and I grieved over the state of things which is sure to follow upon defection from the Gospel. I hoped that the many faithful brethren would be aroused to the peril of the situation, and would earnestly endeavour to cleanse their Union of the most flagrant offenders. Instead of this, I am regarded as a troubler in Israel by many, and others feel that, important as truth may be, the preservation of the Union must be the first object of consideration. Nothing could have more fully proved to me that my protest is rather too late than too early.

"On surveying the position, I perceive that the basis of our Baptist Union afforded nothing to work upon if a reform were attempted, for any person who has been immersed is eligible for membership. So far as anything found in the printed basis is concerned, every immersed person has a right to join it. Within its bounds there is neither orthodoxy nor heterodoxy, for all have an equal right of place. This does not appear to me to be the right condition of matters, and therefore I quitted the confederacy. Altogether apart from the soundness or unsoundness of individuals, the compact itself is on wrong grounds, and can never produce real unity. There are numbers of faithful, honoured, and beloved brethren in the Union; but these, by their presence and countenance, are bolstering up a confederacy which is upon a false foundation. It is not for me to censure them, any more than it was for them to censure me; but I cannot but feel that a more decided course of action on their part would have secured for our country a testimony to the truth which is greatly needed in these evil times; whereas their shielding of the false and erroneous has given a sanction to evil teachers which they are not slow to perceive.

"The pain I have felt in this conflict I would not wish any other man to share; but I would bear ten thousand times as much with eagerness if I could see the faith once for all delivered to the saints placed in honour among the Baptist churches of Great Britain. I resolved to avoid personalities from the very beginning; and, though sorely tempted to publish all that I know, I have held my peace as to individuals, and thus have weakened my own hands in the conflict. Yet this also I had rather bear than allow contention for the faith to degenerate into a complication of personal quarrels. I am no man's enemy, but I am the enemy of all teaching which is contrary to the Word of the Lord, and I will be in no fellowship with it.

"Nothing has occurred to cause my mind the least alienation from Baptist brethren who hold the doctrines taught in Holy Scripture. Far otherwise. I have never had a doubt as to the Scriptural correctness of our view of baptism; and I rejoice that with the mass of those who obey the Lord in this matter I am still in hearty union. Assuredly I am one with you, and all the more consciously so because you have not hesitated to stand by me in the hour of trouble, when many shun my company and condemn my conduct.

"God bless you, my beloved brethren, and keep you in His faith as at this day! May the Lord increase and strengthen you more and more, and bless all the 'Maritime Provinces' through your works of faith and labours of love. You are not ashamed to state your beliefs. You do not wish to cover up error by a cloudy, indefinite state of things, which, like darkness, encourages evil. You

love the truth, and therefore do not shun the light. May the Holy Ghost be with all your ministers, and dwell in all your members! Peace be to you and grace!

"Unable to write all that I feel, I turn to prayer, and beseech our God in Christ Jesus to bless you exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think.—Yours most gratefully and lovingly, "C. H. Spurgeon." In a note accompanying this letter it was added:—

"Weary and worn and ill—my motto is 'faint, yet pursuing.' 'He is near that justifieth me.' The inspiration of Scriptures is the point assailed, and with it all true religion stands or falls. May you be kept from this dread tidal wave which is rolling over our country! " On November 18, or just about the time that he left England for Menton, he sent the following letter to his congregation:—

"Dear Friends,—May this be a great day among you—a fit sequel to so memorable a week. I wish that by any means the work of grace, which has now begun, may be followed up. Let all the soul-winners be alive to look after those who have come under Divine power. To-day also bring an offering to aid the evangelical work, and to discharge the cost of the services. You will not fail to do this if you have seen what God has done. My dear friend, Mr. Hugh D. Brown, of Dublin, who was to have preached next Lord's Day, is obliged to keep his bed. I am therefore very grateful to Dr. Monro Gibson and Mr. Frank White for consenting to take the services at so short a notice. A whole fortnight has been cut out of my rest by my sheer inability to move; but now I can walk a little, and hope on Monday to make a short journey towards the place where I have so often found restoration. I trust you will have patience with me, and that in my absence God will bless you as much as He has done when I have been with you. I feel peculiar love and gratitude to the officers of the church and many ready helpers who have spent the past week in seeking the souls of others. May they find, through the supply of the Spirit, that in blessing others they have themselves obtained a blessing most surely. I hope those who have found the Lord will be prompt to confess His name in His own way. May great peace be upon you all through our Lord Jesus!—With constant affection, your old and feeble minister, "C. H. Spurgeon."

Unhappily the expression "your old and feeble minister" was true to life, for Spurgeon had become prematurely old, and, as time was proving, he was growing feeble past recovery. When, on the last Sunday of the year, Mr. E. H. Ellis preached at the Tabernacle, the following letter was read:—

"Dear Friends,—I wish you all, in the deepest and highest sense, a Happy New Year—a year of the Lord loaded with His benefits. I heartily wish myself among you, whatever the cold and the fog may be, for I feel anxious for the welfare of the new converts, and to see the faces of my veteran fellow-soldiers. Up till now I can only call myself 'well, but weak.' The swelling of the feet is greatly diminished each evening, but it has not gone so completely as I hoped. I shall always be liable to fail in my bodily standing; but I think I am more firm than ever in my standing spiritually upon the old Rock of Divine truth. I have borne no false testimony among you. I have nothing to retract nor even to modify, but everything to repeat with more full assurance and affection. 'Abide in Him.' Your prayer will be to Him, 'Abide in us.' I should like to come home rejuvenated—made young again; but if this cannot be, I hope you think that 'the old is better.' An old friend, who will set before you the old Wine of the Kingdom and tell you again the old, old story, is all you may expect. To you all I send the old blessing—'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.'—Yours in the Lord, "C. H. Spurgeon." On the last Sunday of the year he met with an accident at Menton which caused friends some alarm.

After conducting a service he and some friends retired to an unoccupied house overlooking the sea; but, on descending the carpeted marble stairs, Mr. Spurgeon happened to place his stick outside of the carpet, when it slipped, and he fell violently down, two teeth being knocked out, while some of the money in his pocket found its way into his boots. On being raised the pastor remarked, "Painless dentistry!" but he had to take to his bed, and the telegram sent to the congregation on Sunday, January 6, was not reassuring:—"I am worse than my fall led me to think. It has caused a sort of total injury. It will take time; but I shall yet walk, speak, and be glad." A week later the preacher was able to write himself:—

"Kind Friends,—My injuries are far greater than I supposed. It will take some time before foot, mouth, head, and nerves can be right again. What a mercy that I was not smashed quite up! The angels did their work well, for another stone would have brought me to mine end.

"Through what a stupor I have passed! Yet in a day or two I shall be none the worse. I am overcome with gratitude. May I be spared to keep my own footing to the end, and let the down-graders know how terrible is a fall from the high places of the Lord's truth.—Yours very truly, "C. H. Spurgeon." The invalid made some progress, and when the Rev. John McNeill preached at the Tabernacle on the last Sunday of January the following letter was read:—

"Menton, January 24, 1889.

"Dear Friends,—I have to sing of the mercy of the Lord towards me. This morning I feel as if within sight of harbour. I cannot yet walk, nor could I even stand for five minutes; but there is every sign that the knee is gathering strength and recovering from its injuries. The friends—deacons and elders, one and all—have left me in the utmost freedom; and most of these who have endeavoured to influence me at all have suggested longer rest. This makes my position the more responsible, and I am the more anxious to do the very best and rightest thing. Turning everything over with the single eye to God's glory and the permanent good of the church, I can get no further than this—as soon as I can stand through a sermon, and walk without pain, I will take it as my order home. Soon may the glad token be given me, for I long to be among you after these months of weakness interset with weeks of pain. All things being thus uncertain, I yet propose to set before me as the desired thing to be preaching among you on February 17. If I improve from day to day, as I now do, this is not too sanguine a hope. If I do not improve, it would be useless for me to travel home merely to crawl to bed or keep indoors. I am in the Lord's hands, and your loving prayers will be my surest restoratives. May the Lord richly bless you! Never had man a kinder company of friends, or felt more bound to them. Let us pray for a blessing exceeding all we have hitherto known.—Yours very heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon"

Notwithstanding recent differences, a telegram of sympathy was sent to the invalid by Mr. T. V. Tymms on behalf of the London Baptist Association, and this reply was returned:—

"Menton, January 23, 1889.

"Dear Mr. Tymms,—I received the telegram of the L.B.A. a little after seven in the evening—too late for me to communicate an answer to the assembled friends. Had it not been for the long time taken up in transmission, you should have had a reply to read. As it is, I thank the Assembly of the L.B.A. with all my heart for their generous thought of me, and their sympathy with me in my personal affliction. My heart's desire is that each man in his turn, as he shall press through the

glooms of life, may have the help of God, and may have it in measure in the form of fraternal sympathy. This is a golden chalice for the wine of consolation.—With sincere gratitude, yours truly, "C. H. Spurgeon."

He left Menton on Monday, February 18, arrived at Paris on Tuesday, where he passed the night, and reached home on the following day. He was welcomed back to the Tabernacle by an immense assembly on February 24, while the deacons urgently requested him to husband his strength in future for home duties. Such advice was no doubt highly necessary; but ordinary persons found it hard to believe that a man was really fast wearing out whose flow of humour seemed as youthful as it had been a third of a century before. Thus, in introducing Mr. Frank Smith to a meeting at the Orphanage on April 5, he remarked that the Smiths were a most respectable family, said to be of Shemite extraction. The story went that while the Temple was in course of erection at Jerusalem, Solomon gave the workpeople a holiday; but certain of the artisans would not allow the smiths to dine with them. On the next day when a number of tools were brought in to be sharpened the smiths objected. "No, if we are not good enough to dine with you, we will not sharpen your tools!" So it happened that Solomon had to get up another dinner for the Smiths on their own account, and since then they had been the most respectable family in the world. The College Conference opened on May 6 at Dalston Junction Chapel; and the President's address on the following morning was on "Our Power, and the Conditions of Obtaining it." The collection at the supper on the following day amounted to £2,800.

After the Conference he wrote to Mr. Toller:—

"Westwood, May 22, 1889.

"Dear Friend,—I am very grateful for your kind help. Working on from day to day with the College, it is a great mercy to be preserved from all anxiety as to money matters. I praise God for moving His servants to supply the needs of the Institution, and I thank you for being one of them. The sum of two guineas has been safely received by me. The Lord have you ever in His holy keeping!—Yours, with hearty thanks, "C. H. Spurgeon.

"P.S.—I wonder you can give as much as you do, for farming seems very bad. Success to you!"

About three weeks later he wrote again:—

"Westwood, June 15, 1889.

"Dear Mr. Toller,—I am now over-pressed with many labours, and to remain at Waterbeach all night involves losing the next day. It takes me a very long time to get here; I am then wearied and unfit for anything all day. If I get home at night, I get a good night's rest in my own bed, which is everything to a feeble man, and then I have the day before me. I am sorry it is so, for I should like to have seen more of my old friends, but this is the best I can do. You won't get Mr. Brown—it is hardly likely; you do well to try. Have a public meeting in the evening should preacher fail. I shall want you to get me to Cambridge by 7. Then I shall not be here till 10, or later. It is so bad getting across London. As it is Tuesday, I can get to you by 12.37.—Yours very truly, "C. H. Spuegeon."

Thus the work of the year continued, and if the elasticity of former years was wanting, there was still plenty of enthusiasm. Spurgeon addressed the colporteurs in May; in June a party of sailors had a sermon at the Tabernacle; and during that same month he addressed a large assembly who

met to hear some of the old fugual tunes of other days. It was also during this same month of June that Mr. Spurgeon officiated at the marriage of the Rev. David Davies, minister at West Brighton, and Miss Ellen Higgs, of Brixton. In July he paid a memorable visit to Guernsey, when a number of special services were held in connection with the work of Mr. F. T. Snell. At the Stockwell Orphanage festival, Mr. Charlesworth, the head master, received a testimonial on completing his fiftieth year. In twelve months six thousand applications for admission came to hand, out of which only sixty could be entertained. The All Day Missionary Convention at the Tabernacle on October 15 was one of the chief events of the year. There were three meetings, and Mr. Spurgeon, Dr. Maclaren, and Mr. McNeill were the principal speakers. The scene was one of great enthusiasm when Spurgeon descended from the upper to the lower platform to shake hands with a number of young men and women who were going out to China.

Mr. S. G. Richardson, the Sheffield Master Cutler elect in 1889, invited Mr. Spurgeon to his banquet and received this reply:—

"You are most kind, and so is the Master Cutler; but I am so taken up with work that I must not leave home. Really I am not a man for a feast, even if I could come. Our Lord Mayor pressed me to meet the Archbishop and bishops at a banquet; but I could not bring my soul to it—the banquet. I had no objection to the bishops. Last week I had tea at the Archbishop's and luncheon with the Bishop of Rochester; but the banquet was out of my line. I am best at work—my own work. Still, God bless you and the Master, and all the good folk!"

He had had occasion just before this to ask a question of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and in course of his reply the Primate said it would be a pleasure to see Mr. Spurgeon at Addington at any time, and the invitation appears to have been accepted, as referred to in the note to Mr. Richardson. As he was now a member of the Surrey and Middlesex Association, he attended at the autumnal meeting at Wimbledon on October 28, and preached in the afternoon at the Congregational Chapel on "Mary at the Sepulchre," John 20:11-16. It was about this time that an American lady sent him a box of "A Remedy for Rheumatism," which the sufferer himself acknowledged:—

"The medicine has just now arrived, and as I happen to be suffering from an attack, it comes at the right time. I have already taken so many drugs that I am like the woman who suffered many things of many physicians, and was nothing bettered. Yet I will try again. May God bless the means! The newspapers represent me as soon to be done for; but I shall outlive many of them, and be heard when some of their thunder is hushed in the eternal silence." On November 17 he preached for the last time before going to his winter retreat; but he was suffering so severely that "it was apparent to any observer that his shoulder was drawn up as if by sharp hitches of pain." One of the deacons was heard to remark to one of his comrades, "I've just told him that he'll pull through all right;" but such symptoms were becoming more and more ominous, though the sufferer himself still looked on the brightest side of all things. On arriving at his sunny destination he wrote to his people:—

"Christian Friends,—For some reason or other I have lost my voice; but I rejoice that it has left me just now when I can be quite quiet without loss to anyone. I have not, however, lost my heart or my pen, and I therefore send warm Christian salutations to all of that army of friends who are with me in the work of our Lord. It is a heaven below to remember your love. I pray you gather up the fruits of the special mission That we may have a large increase to the Lord's glory. Our delightful

brother, Dr. Pierson, will urge you on to a sacred crusade for our Lord. I hope his trumpet call will bring out many a missionary. Keep up the prayer meetings. Grace, mercy, and peace be with you all.—Your loving friend and minister.

"C. H. Spurgeon." On December 19 he sent his Christmas greetings to the congregation:—

"Beloved Friends,—I wish you a joyful Christmas and Happy New Tear. I am informed of all that is going on at home by the coming to me of Mr. Allison. My own Lord continues His shepherd care of all the flock, and feeds you by the hands of the beloved brethren who fill my place. To them who are newly converted be lovingly attentive, and endeavour to lead them to know the Lord more fully. To the meetings for prayer I entreat you to pay special heed, that there be no flagging in this the central channel of power. This is a season for thanksgiving. Let us be specially mindful of the needs of the Lord's work and the necessities of the poor. Set aside also a portion for the Surrey Gardens Memorial, which is to be the work of the coming year, a token of gratitude to the Lord our God. I am well in all but the voice. The doctor says that I have the gout in my throat, and I have no doubt that it is so. It will soon be gone. I rejoice that this loss of voice only comes when there is no need for me to speak aloud. I hope to return to you restored in body, refreshed in mind, and revived in spirit. Then, too, I trust the voice will again be the force needed for making all hear in our great sanctuary, Grace, mercy, and peace be with you all for evermore. Please pray for me always, for I always need it, and the Lord is always ready to bless. With the New Tear may all enter upon an era of fuller consecration, greater holiness, and larger usefulness.—Your loving minister, "C. H. Spurgeon." His so-called rest at Menton this year was devoted to the preparation of his posthumous commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, and extracts from the MS. were read to the company which assembled daily at family prayer. On February 2 the pastor's voice was again heard in his own pulpit. He entered very heartily into various works; for early in March we find him earnestly advocating the Blue-ribbon movement at the Tabernacle, and a little later paying a visit to Westbourne Grove Chapel on behalf of the chapel renovation fund. On March 1 he wrote to his Waterbeach friend:—

"Dear Mr. Toller,—I wish I could be constantly out; but I do not get any stronger, and every year I have more to do. If I get to Beach every other year, it is as much as I can hope to do, for I have so very many to visit that I cannot get round the list even when well. I rejoice in all your prosperity. It makes me happy to feel that you are getting on. I have been laid up three days with swollen left hand and pain. I may expect a good deal of this. Still, I shall hold up as long as I can. Do not expect me this year." At the opening of the annual Conference at Talbot Tabernacle, Notting Hill, he appeared to be in excellent spirits, and the collection of £2,706 at the supper was again strikingly large. He met the colporteurs also, as usual; and appeared to be in good spirits at the Stockwell Orphanage birthday fete, when he was fifty-six years of age. It was during this spring that Dr. Parker's "Open Letter" to Spurgeon made some stir and drew forth some comment, though Spurgeon himself never replied. His address at the Bible Society anniversary at Exeter Hall was one of the great speeches of the May meetings, and a profound impression was produced. A little later, on July 1, he honoured his friend, Mr. Charles Cook, by speaking at the Metropolitan Music Hall, Edgware Road, on behalf of the Hyde Park Open-Air Mission. On account of Mr. Cook's extended tours among foreign prisons, Mr. Spurgeon called him the modern Howard. On September 9 he preached for his friend, Mr. David Davies, at Holland Road Chapel, West Brighton, a beautiful building erected at the cost of Mr. G. T. Congreve. The great preacher was

certainly at his best on that memorable occasion. After the service the news of the death of Canon Liddon saddened many hearts. A week later he was at Hackney College, addressing the students in his old characteristic way, showing that all preachers should look for large results. Meanwhile he must have realised that his old friends were falling one by one. Dr. Trestrail and Dr. Hannay passed away, and so also did William Olney, the pastor's right-hand man at the Tabernacle, whose work was well-nigh as effective as that of a successful co-pastor. A loving tribute was paid to the good deacon's memory at the laying of the memorial-stones of the Surrey Gardens Memorial Hall on Monday, October 20. Spurgeon also attended the meeting of the Surrey and Middlesex Baptist Association at Maiden, Surrey, when he made the proposal that the name should be altered to the Home Counties Association. As soon as he was able he left England. The following letter was read to his people; and I believe that some outsiders, not supposed to be uneducated, put a literal interpretation on the coach turning over and the horses going down:—

"Dear Friends,—How much I wish that I could have held out till to-day, but last night my coach turned over and the four horses went down.

"I have had a week of special pain and sleeplessness and unrest of brain. These evils will soon be gone now that I am to have a season of rest. There are so many matters pressing upon me when I am in work that I get brain weary. I have had too much of late. I do not sit down this morning to tell my woes, but to thank the Lord. I could not see you on Friday; but. you brought what was needed all the same, and one hundred pounds more. Never people responded more heartily, lovingly, and generously; each one gave according to his means. You saw it needful, and you did it for the Lord's sake. You have made me very glad, and I am proud; only when you have an aching head one cannot comfortably be exultant. Accept my loving thanks. God bless you all!—Your grateful pastor, "C. H. Spurgeon" On December 14 the following letter was read to the congregation:—

"Beloved Friends,—Although not quite well, I am now free from pain. I am grateful in the belief that I shall soon receive physical and mental power, and that I shall soon return to the ministry. I pray that I may also have spiritual power given to me. Have been able to work a little. 'The name of that city is, The Lord is there.' May that be the name of our church. Then holiness will be plenteous, vitality will be strengthened, power will be increased, usefulness will be ensured, and happiness will abound. If He be with us, He will supply us with grace, and raise for us men to fill up gaps which death has caused. His Spirit will abide and His precious Word will remain. God bless you all. Bear with me if I shall be a long time away. Send true Christian love to every member of the church, to my most attached people. Stand firm in the faith, and you will cheer the heart of your loving pastor, "C. H. S."

During the pastor's absence the Tabernacle was cleaned, repaired, and painted, an operation which involved an outlay of over one thousand pounds.

About this time he showed great interest in the establishment of a magazine for the defence of the evangelical faith, which he thought to be now unduly assailed. He wrote to the editor at Weston-super-Mare:—

"November 13, 1890.

"Dear Mr. Urquhart,—I like No. 1 'King's Own' very much. It is of a high class, and ought to secure a high-class position. I am glad that you will now have a gunboat of your own, and will not ask

leave to fire your shots at error. Another rallying-point for the good and true is now found. The importance of such an organ of orthodoxy it would be hard to estimate. May you prosper even beyond your most sanguine hope!—Yours heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon."

While the controversy was still in progress, the chief combatant wrote again to Mr. Urquhart:—

"I am pleased to see that the magazine is bearing a testimony. There had need be plain speaking, for things are no better.—Yours ever heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon."

Chapter 105: Last Days, Death, and Funeral

Chapter 105.

Last Days, Death, And Funeral

Opening of the Year 1891—Family Prayer at Menton—Return to the Tabernacle—Last Conference—The Influenza—Preaches at the Tabernacle for the Last Time—Final Breakdown—Great Sympathy of the General Public—Immense Number of Messages—The Prince of Wales—Mr. Gladstone's Letter—Daily Prayer Meetings—Letters—Eastbourne—Last Days at Menton—Death—Striking Scenes at the Funeral.

The year 1891 opened ominously, though it may not have been possible for any ordinary spectator to understand its portents. As might well be the case, Spurgeon was depressed by seeing those veterans fall on the right hand and on the left whom he had regarded as his standard-bearers in the holy war. Thus the death of William Olney was quickly followed by that of the devoted B. Wildon Carr, a deacon of the Tabernacle, and a man who successfully laboured for a lengthened period in the pastorate at Newcastle-on-Tyne. He had been associated in one way or another with Spurgeon from early days, and being a man of culture, who saw eye to eye with the great preacher in theological matters, he frequently rendered acceptable assistance of a literary kind. If an outline of the history of the church was needed for any particular occasion, Carr would most likely be called upon to occupy the place of honour. He wrote many reviews of theological works for The Sword and the Trowel, and not very long before he died he edited the new edition of Gaussen's well-known work on the Inspiration of Scripture at Mr. Spurgeon's special request. The opening weeks of the year were passed at Menton, and were, on the whole, as happy a season as had ever been passed in that sunny retreat. The daily family-prayer congregation increased from over thirty to nearly sixty, all having to be in their places by half-past nine o'clock, though some had to walk several miles to be present. "They said they would have walked for three hours rather than not attend," remarked Mr. Spurgeon to his students after his return. "It needed not that the speaker should say anything fresh. If I had had to give a poem or a tale I should have broken down, but the Holy Spirit made truth ever new." He said this in order to show that "there was a wonderful power in the Word," for morning by morning he expounded the Book of Genesis. On Sunday, February 8, he once more appeared at the Tabernacle, the subject of the sermon being "A Call to Prayer and Testimony" (Isa 62:6-7). On the following evening at the prayer meeting he was in excellent spirits, and remarked that, although he was ill when he left England, and had been ailing during the first month of his stay at Menton, he had returned in what he hoped was full health, so that he was looking forward to a lengthened term of happy service. Just before, Mr. William Stott, of Abbey Road Chapel, St. John's Wood, had been appointed assistant minister at the Tabernacle, and the chief pastor already set a high value on his friend's services. Though Mr. Stott was not a Pastors' College man, he had been acquainted with Spurgeon from early days, and was a great favourite. The work at St. John's Wood was taken up by Mr. H. E. Stone, one of Spurgeon's "own men," who for some years had carried on an effective work at the Nottingham

Tabernacle. On Friday afternoon, February 13, I heard him address the students at the College for the last time, so far as I was personally concerned, the subject being "Styles of Preaching." He pointed out that there were many preachers who did not sufficiently take into account the varied conditions their hearers were in, or under which they listened. He thus compared their discourses to the Prayer-Book, which seemed to be intended for all, as though all were in the same state. Practically, I suppose, this would correspond to that defect which John Foster detected in the preaching of Robert Hall—it was too general. "You must know who are in Christ and who are out of Christ," said Spurgeon, looking earnestly round the lecture-room, many settled pastors being present with the students. "There are some duties common to all," he added; "but the unconverted need to be told that it is not by these, but by the blood of Christ, that they must find acceptance." Those who were present will not soon forget the way in which he mentioned a widely circulated brochure as "shaving near to Scripture. There is rest to be found, but the reader has to obtain it by character. This is salvation by works, and the Reformation in England will have to be fought over again. In drawing lines, however, you must take care that you do not shut out any part of Scripture. All things considered, we have the greatest possible reason for sticking to the old truths. The truth reached me when a lad, and the same kind of preaching reaches the lads still." As he walked from his private room to the lecture-hall on that memorable afternoon he seemed to be in excellent spirits, and even to walk with some elasticity in his step. He was not really so well as he appeared to be, however; and the severe cold which obliged him to stay away from the Tabernacle prayer meeting on the Monday following was not reassuring when influenza was in the air. Nevertheless, he was able to preside at the annual church meeting on Tuesday, February 17, when special allusion was made to the seventy-four members who had died during the year. The decrease of membership in 1892 was somewhat greater than the increase, though the total number was 5,328. Connected with the church there were also twenty-three mission stations, with sittings for nearly 4,000 persons, besides twenty-seven Sunday-schools with 8,000 scholars and nearly 600 teachers. Such was the outlook at the last church meeting at which the great preacher was permitted to preside. The work continued to prosper in such a degree that in the course of a few weeks after his return from the Continent the pastor had eighty-four persons to propose for church membership. The Sunday-school building, raised as a memorial of the Surrey Gardens services, was also approaching completion. A good deal continued to be said about false doctrine, churches providing their members with amusements, etc.; and, at the same time, some sensation was caused by Spurgeon's secession from the Liberation Society. In this instance his own words were quoted against himself; for what he had written years previously in his article, "A Political Dissenter," seemed hardly to tally with the reasons he now gave for breaking away from the Society.

Many heard Spurgeon's voice for the last time on Easter Tuesday, March 31, when the Tabernacle was densely crowded to hear Mr. Charles Cook describe his experiences as a visitor of Russian prisons. Great interest was shown in the subject, and it was generally felt that the Government of the Czar represented an iniquitous system. The last Conference of the College in which the great preacher would ever take part opened on Monday, April 20, at Upton Chapel, Lambeth Road. If he could have known that his life-work was so nearly completed, the founder of the College would have derived some solace from the results achieved, as well as in the general outlook. To that date eight hundred and forty-five men had been received into the institution, and six hundred and eighteen were still labouring in connection with the Baptist denomination. No less than four

hundred and fourteen churches supplied statistics for 1890, and these reported close upon eight thousand persons received into communion. He might well have reminded those present of a great general speaking of his veterans, when he said at the public meeting in the evening: "The brethren present have come from the war, and they have brought their shields with them. They remind me of the Spartan woman who told her son either to bring his shield back or to come back on it." As regarded the Lord's second coming, he said: "The wheels of Christ's chariot are already red-hot. He went to heaven to prepare and to set all things right that Satan had ruined, and He is coming back quickly."

He entered the Conference Hall at the College on the following morning with a bad headache; but, notwithstanding, he rose at or about noon to give forth that last great manifesto which has since found its way into all English-speaking countries as "The Greatest Fight in the World." Mr. F. W. N. Lloyd presided at the annual supper on the following evening, when the collection amounted to £3,100. It was then that Spurgeon mentioned that Norcott's little work on Baptism, which he had republished, had been translated into four of the languages of the East, while he had received a bottle of otto of roses from Bulgaria from those who had benefited by the book. "There an order has gone forth that Servian priests must preach; but there are pulpits in that country in which no sermon ever has been preached, and the only thing to be done is to read Spurgeon's sermons, which have been lithographed for the purpose. Thus we have only to blow the seed," he added, "and it will blow across the Bosphorus." On Friday, April 24, he preached before the College Association for the last time, the text being John 16:14 : "He shall glorify me," etc. This sermon, the last I heard him preach, was in all respects one of his greatest efforts. An epidemic of influenza was then raging in London, but Spurgeon worked on, apparently alike defying his own physical weakness and the stealthy march of the pestilence which seemed to walk in darkness. He had been exhausted by the Conference, delightful as the week had otherwise been to him, but none the less he seemed to enter into the religious festivals of May with all of his old enthusiasm. It was reckless ardour, nevertheless—the last supreme effort of the great man, who was visibly breaking down. On Monday, May 4, after preparing that week's sermon for the press, and seeing a number of inquirers at the Tabernacle, he presided at the prayer meeting in the evening, when he asked his friends to pray for a blessing on the services of the coming days, and made reference to a collection of old Bibles in which he showed particular interest. On the following evening he preached a sermon to Sunday-school teachers at Bloomsbury Chapel; and on Thursday evening he gave a special discourse to sailors in the Tabernacle from Job 7:12 : "Am I a sea, or a whale?" On Friday he attended the Ministers' Fraternal Society at Hendon. On May 15, in a weakly bodily condition, he spoke at Exeter Hall on behalf of Presbyterian Missions; and when it is remembered that all of these engagements were supplementary to the Sunday services, no one will be surprised that there was a sudden breakdown. He preached on Sunday morning, May 17. He intended to do so in the evening; but though he appeared in the chapel, he was overtaken by pain and sickness, which obliged him to hurry away to take to his bed, leaving Mr. Stott to give the sermon and finish the service. A few days previously I saw Mr. Spurgeon, and heard his voice for the last time, the occasion being the meeting of the colporteurs at the Pastors' College, when he and Mr. Scott, of 12, Paternoster Buildings, addressed the men. The illness from which Mr. Spurgeon was suffering was said to be influenza; and by the first week in June he was thought to be so far on the high road to recovery that he decided to preach on the morning of Sunday, June 7. The sermon then given, and founded on 1Sa 30:21-25, concluded his great life-work at the

Metropolitan Tabernacle. Though he had not quite completed the fifty-seventh year of his age, he had preached the Gospel for forty years.

He was in such good spirits that he thought to hasten his recovery by taking an excursion to the scenes associated with his youth—his grandfather's country. He was the guest of Mr. Gurteen at Haverhill, and enjoyed greatly the opportunity of visiting the old-time sites and scenes. On Thursday of that week a severe headache came on, however, and on the following day he was so much worse that he had to hasten home, as one who had completely broken down. This was on Friday, June 12, and the symptoms soon became more alarming. The Lord Mayor (Mr. Alderman Savory) and the Lady Mayoress, as well as the late Dr. Donald Fraser, attended the Stockwell Orphanage festival on June 18; but the Vice-President had to do duty on behalf both of himself and his brother. Mr. Spurgeon had also been looking forward to the opening of the new schools, called the Surrey Gardens Memorial; but when his brother also undertook that service the great preacher of M. Jullien's music-hall was too prostrate even to send a message. The patient grew worse day by day. Dr. Miller, of Norwood, desired to have the professional opinion of Dr. Kidd; and friends at the Tabernacle became so anxious that an all-day prayer-meeting was held on Monday, June 29. The meeting was maintained from seven o'clock a.m. to nine p.m.—fourteen hours—and the day was in all respects remarkable. Clergymen of the Establishment and ministers of all denominations attended, while the number of letters and telegrams received was quite extraordinary. For the time all were sanguine, but some days later the symptoms became so serious that Dr. Kidd said: "The case is a very difficult and dangerous one." The number of messages received at Westwood was overwhelming; the telegraph-office at Norwood broke down under the pressure. Among those who sent inquiries were the Prince of Wales, several members of the nobility, and high dignitaries of the Established Church. The Chief Rabbi sent a cordial letter, while Mr. Gladstone wrote to Mrs. Spurgeon as follows:—

"Corton, Lowestoft, July 16, 1891.

"My dear Madam,—In my own home, darkened at the present time, I have read with studied interest the daily accounts of Mr. Spurgeon's illness, and I cannot help conveying to you the earnest assurance of my sympathy with you and with him, and of my cordial admiration, not only of his splendid powers, but still more of his devoted and unfailing character. May I humbly commend you and him in all contingencies to the infinite stores of the Divine love and mercy, and subscribe myself, my dear Madam, faithfully yours, "W. E. Gladstone."

When a reply was sent to this letter, this was added by the invalid himself:—

"P.S.—Yours is a word of love such as those only write who have been in the King's Country and have seen much of His face.

—My heart's love to you.

"C. H. Spurgeon."

Though the sufferer's condition might seem to vary from day to day, the alarming fact that the ailment was Bright's disease of a severe type must have driven hope from many a breast. The doctors found it a difficult thing to write a bulletin every day exactly describing the patient's condition. At length, when the Rev. C. H. Kelly, the ex-President of the Wesleyan Conference,

preached on August 9, the following letter was read in the pastor's own handwriting:—"Dear Brethren,—The Lord's name be praised for first giving, and then hearing, the loving prayers of His people. Through those 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.—Yours most heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon."

The prayer-meetings at the Tabernacle continued to be held twice a day. At length the distressing delirium from which Mr. Spurgeon had suffered ceased, and he was reported to be getting better, he himself being confident of going on to recovery. On September 12 his old friend, George Rogers, the ex-Principal of the Pastors' College, and the oldest Congregational minister in England, passed away; but while the College still retained the services of such tried veterans as his own brother, David Gracey, and F. G. Marchant, there was no anxiety as to its future. The early days of September were fine and warm, so that for the first time since his rallying, a drive could be indulged in, though the story that he was seen leaning over Westminster Bridge looking at the little vessel Goodwill, intended for the Congo, was quite devoid of truth. On Sunday, September 13, the following letter was read to the congregation:—

"September 13, 1891

"Dear Friends,—I cannot write much, but I cannot withhold my heart and pen from saying, 'O bless the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.' This week has, by its fine weather, set me free from a three months' captivity. Those believers of all denominations who so lovingly prayed for me will now help me to praise the Lord. Verily, the loving Lord heareth prayer!

"I fear my doctors would have a mournful tale to tell of my disease, and from inward consciousness I must agree with them; but I feel better, and I get into the open air, and therefore I hope my face is turned towards recovery. Reading, writing, thinking, etc., are not yet easy to me. I am forced to vegetate. I fear it will be long before I can be at my beloved work.

"I send my hearty love to you all, and my humble gratitude to that great army of praying people who have been heard of the Lord in their cries for the prolongation of my life. May we believe more, pray more, and therefore receive more!—Yours, in bonds of true affection, "C. H. Spurgeon."

Colder winds and rainy weather hindered his getting out into the open air; hut on Sunday, September 20, the following was read:—

"Beloved Friends,—May this Sabbath be a high day with you. May this be a day wherein the Good Shepherd shall find His lost sheep and lay them on His shoulders, rejoicing! Mr. Fullerton, whom I greatly love in the Lord, has won many souls abroad. May he again have many gracious captives among us at home. I would not write of myself, only you want to know, and you desire to know, all that I can tell. I am sitting up this morning to write you before the doctor comes at half-past eight, and so I cannot tell what he will say of me. The affectionate and effectual prayers of the saints dragged me back to life, and only by the same means shall I recover strength. I will not touch upon my present affliction. You will guess at it when I say that, although the stairs to my bedchamber are very easy, I cannot ascend them, but have to be carried up by others. The heart as yet will not endure even that small climb; therefore I need your prayers still, and I know I shall have them, for your love never ceases. You have kept together most lovingly during the four months now nearly

over. Can you abide my further absence, which is painful to me, and yet absolutely needed? The Lord grant it, I shall come among you fit for service; but it cannot be for months. The Lord does not give half mercies. He will perfect that which concerneth us. How He has heard prayer! Had I died, all infidelity would have noted it as a proof that prayer was useless. We have a right now to score one on the other side. You would have been much discouraged if prayer had not been answered, and it is fair that now you should be equally encouraged and established in your confidence in the prayer-hearing Jehovah. The Lord bless every one of you! Let our love continue in all patience of hope.—Yours ever heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon." The next letter, read by Mr. A. G. Brown at the Tabernacle on September 27, well described the invalid's condition at the time:—

"Dear Friends,—Every time I see a church officer I am cheered by tidings of your good condition as a church and people. In this there is joy to me. May our Lord keep us evermore united in love, fervent in prayer, and diligent in service. As for myself, I have made no progress this week, but have rather gone backward than forward. When a man cannot eat how can he gather strength? I should have left home for the seaside if I had felt equal to the effort; but I am without energy, and must stay where I am. Oh, that I could be among you! But I must be patient and wait our Father's will. Your prayers included health and strength for me, and these I shall yet have; for mere life is scarcely a blessing without them. May I beg you to continue in supplication? I am sure you will. If sharp pruning makes fruit-bearing branches bring forth more fruit it is not a thing to be lamented when the great Vinedresser turns His knife upon us. If I may in the end be more useful to you and to those who come in and out among us, I shall rejoice in the woes which I have endured. May you each one when tried with sickness improve your school-time, that you may be the sooner able to learn and know all the Master's mind. God bless you this day, through my dear brother A. G. Brown. May he be happy in your midst, and may God be glorified. Few are the men like-minded with Mr. Brown—a brother tried and proved. Peace be to you and to your families!—Yours most lovingly, "C. H. Spurgeon." On Saturday, October 8, he went to Eastbourne, and derived some benefit from the change. He returned on Friday, the 16th; and no sooner was it understood that he was a little better than he received a large number of begging letters. He left for Menton on October 26, and at the same time Dr. A. T. Pierson, of Philadelphia, commenced his ministry at the Tabernacle. The first letter written from the sunny South seemed to come from one who was decidedly on the mend. "All the story of my cure has been marvellous, and this last part of it is all of a piece with the rest," wrote Mr. Spurgeon. "My brother, whose care has made the journey less formidable, when he returns will have a cheering tale to tell of me and of my dear wife, whose presence with me makes every single enjoyment into seven." In the letter read to his people on November 8 his great weakness became very apparent, however:—"To go up a few steps, to take a short walk, to move a parcel, and all such trifles, becomes a difficulty; so that Solomon's words are true, 'The grasshopper is a burden.' I think I could preach, but when I have seen a friend for five minutes I begin to feel that I have had as much of speaking as I can well manage." In his letter of a week later he had "no striking progress to report." Then he added, "But I feel I must be better, whatever the signs may say. Still, feelings are doubtful evidences. One thing is forced upon my mind—namely, that I am weak as water, and that building up is slower work than pulling down." The last letter I ever received from him came to hand towards the end of November, and in this he asked me to write an article for The Sword and the Trowel on the Flower Girls of London. This was in connection with the Flower Girls' Mission, which has its headquarters at Clerkenwell Close, and of which Mr. John A. Groom has been the hon. superintendent for nearly thirty years. This work

was an enterprise in which the late Earl of Shaftesbury had shown the keenest interest. A third of a century ago a flower-seller would hardly have been met with in the streets of London; but in consequence of the development of the cut-flower trade, the girls, women, and children engaged in this industry in the Metropolis alone number several thousands, many being Roman Catholics who have come over from Ireland. The Flower Girls' Brigade is for the teaching of artificial flower making, and many find their way into service. It is altogether a most valuable work.

Both Spurgeon himself and those who had accompanied him from England really thought that he was gradually recovering. There was a time, indeed, when the invalid felt "strangely better," and planned impossible schemes, such as surprising his congregation by suddenly appearing in their midst. He issued his brochure, "Memories of Stambourne;" and the accounts in December seemed to be more cheering. "In compensation for these dumb Sabbaths the Lord will give me years of free utterance of His Word," remarked the invalid, and what he wrote he believed most sincerely. A week later he said: "I feel better, and have no fear but in due season I shall be as strong as aforetime." A fine Kerry cow arrived at West wood, from the west of Ireland, from an anonymous donor, the milk being of a specially nutritious kind.

Writing shortly before Christmas to Dr. Newman Hall, Mr, Spurgeon said: "I feel I have turned the corner;" and in a letter to the people he expressed himself as peaceful and hopeful. On the shortest day he wrote to his great family at the Stockwell Orphanage:—

"Menton, December 21, 1891.

"Dear, Boys and Girls,—I send you all my love so far as the post can carry it at twopence-halfpenny for half-an-ounce. I wish you a real glorious Christmas. I might have said a jolly Christmas if we had all been boys; but as some of us are girls, I will be proper, and say, 'A merry Christmas!' Enjoy yourselves and 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. Feel very grateful also to the trustees. These gentlemen are always at work arranging for your good. Give them three times three. Then there are Mr. Charlesworth, Mr. Ladds, and all the masters and the matrons. Each one of them deserves your love and gratitude and obedience. They try to do you good; try to cheer them all you can. I should like you to have a fine day—such a day as we have here; but if not, you will be warm and bright indoors. Three cheers for those who give us the good things for this festival. I want you for a moment in the day to be all still and spend the time in thanking our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus for great goodness shown to you and to me, and then pray for me that I may get quite well. Mrs. Spurgeon and I both send our love to all the Stock well family.—Yours very heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon." On Christmas Eve, being Thursday, he wrote to his people: "I have nearly finished thirty-eight years of my ministry among you, and have completed thirty-seven volumes of published sermons preached in your midst. Yet we are not wearied of each other. I shall hail the day when I may again speak with you." The first number of the sermons for 1892 was entitled "Gratitude for Deliverance from the Grave" (Psa 118:17-18), the text which Luther had inscribed on his study wall, and which may also be seen on the memorial slab of Jubilee House at the back of the Tabernacle. On January 4 Archibald G. Brown celebrated his pastoral "Silver Wedding" in East London, and his chief wrote:—

"Menton, January 2, 1892.

Beloved Brother,—Receive the assurance of my heart-love, although you need no such assurance from me. You have long been most dear to me; but in your standing shoulder to shoulder with me in protest against deadly error we have become more than ever one. The Lord sustain, comfort, perfect you! Debtors to free and sovereign grace, we will together sing to our Redeeming Lord, world without end.—Yours most heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon.

"To your faithful church the abiding presence of the Lord and the continued manifestation of His power."

About the same time he wrote to Mr. John Kirk, of the Ragged School Union, in reference to the death of Mr. Francis Passmore, superintendent of the school at Lansdowne Place, "God bless ragged-schools this next year, and make 1892 a true year of our Lord"; and then he spoke of himself as "weak, but hopefully improving." To his people on the first Sunday of 1892 he wrote in a still more sanguine mood:—

"I believe I am right in reporting a greater change in the disease than could be spoken of before. It is still a great drain upon me; but as it has improved so far, I believe it will make more rapid diminution. What a joy it will be to be within measurable distance of the time to return to my pulpit and to you! I have not reached that point yet."

Among the last letters that he wrote at Menton was one to the late Dr. Doudney, the then venerable editor of The Gospel Magazine, who had written to thank Mr. Spurgeon for his article, "Sweet Experiences in 1842 and 1892":—

"Menton, January 6, 1892.

"Dear Venerable Brother,—I know that a bit of real deep and grateful experience like my grandfather's is sure to suit you even as it does me. We rejoice to hear from our old friend. The Lord bless thee. You are now enjoying ripe fruit. The Gospel is good when it is green and new to us, but it suits us better and better as our autumn of life mellows our knowledge. We have no inclination to change: I might almost say 'no temptation to alter.' None but Jesus; nothing but grace. Our love to you. I am slowly improving.—Yours heartily, "C. H. Spurgeon."

Three days later, on January 9, Mr. Spurgeon wrote to Mr. Cuff, Pastor of the Shoreditch Tabernacle:—

"I cannot write letters, but I can manage to sign a cheque. It is with much pleasure that I send this £50, and I wish that you might not have need of any more, though I see you will; yours is a long task, and I wish I had a long purse with which to help you; but wishing will not bring it. Doctor says I hold my own. In this broken weather it is all I can expect, and more. I am truly grieved that you have so much family affliction. What fine clusters our Vinedresser will yet get from so much pruning! Is it not a happy thing to live to see some of you who were my young lads becoming such truly great fathers in Israel, with your fruitful churches around you?.... The rest I need not write." The now ever-memorable addresses which he gave on the last evening of 1891 and the first morning of 1892 were the last he was destined to give. Still he continued so hopeful that in the letter read to his people on January 10 he said that "the steady and solid progress which had begun is continued and will continue." His last written communication was read at the Tabernacle on Sunday, January 24: "The sun shines at length, and now I hope to get on." That cheery

message, however, was followed by a telegram telling of a serious relapse. Some even still clung to hope; but the preacher at length seemed to realise that his work was done. Just before the stupor of death came over him on the last day of his life he dictated his last message of love to his church, sending one hundred pounds for Tabernacle expenses. "They will want to know how you are," said his secretary; but the characteristic reply was, "Let them find out!" A little later—in the last hour of January, 1892—he passed away into eternal rest. Among the last messages he sent was one to the Prince and Princess of Wales on the occasion of the death of their eldest son.

Though it was not unexpected, the death of Spurgeon seemed to startle the English-speaking world on the morning of Monday, February 1; and on the following Sunday references were made to the event in thousands of pulpits. On Monday, February 8, the remains of the departed preacher arrived in London, and on the following day over sixty thousand people passed through the Tabernacle to see the coffin, which, surrounded by palm-branches from Menton, and with many memorial-cards attached to it, bore the inscription— In Loving Memory of CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON, Born at Kelvedon, June 19th, 1834.

Fell Asleep in Jesus on Sunday, January 31st, 1892.

"I Have Fought A Good Fight, I Have Finished My Course, I Have Kept The Faith."

The funeral services took place on Wednesday and Thursday in the Tabernacle, and were very fully attended. The morning meeting of Wednesday was for members of the church, and for those who laboured in connection with the forty mission-stations connected with the Tabernacle. The afternoon meeting was for ministers and students of all denominations; the gathering at seven o'clock was for Christian workers; and a fourth meeting at 10.30 p.m. was for the general public. The service of the following morning was for the chief mourners and friends associated with the Tabernacle, or for those specially invited. When at noon the coffin was carried out of the chapel to be placed on the funeral-car, the scene without was as though London had for the time suspended business to witness the procession to the grave in Norwood Cemetery, five miles distant. Since the burial of the Duke of Wellington, about forty years previously, no such funeral had ever been seen in England. The occasion will live in the memories of those who witnessed it as something quite unique of its kind—a national tribute to the memory of Spurgeon. The departed preacher's valued friends—the Bishop of Rochester, Dr. Pierson, and A. G. Brown—conducted the service at the grave, and Mr. Brown said:—

"Beloved President, faithful pastor, prince of preachers, brother beloved, dear Spurgeon,—We bid thee not farewell, but only for a little while, 'Goodnight.' Thou shalt rise soon at the first dawn of the Resurrection Day of the redeemed. Yet is not the 'Goodnight' ours to bid, but thine. It is we who linger in the darkness; thou art in God's own light. Our night, too, shall soon be past, and with it all our weeping. Then with thine our songs shall greet the morning of a day that knows no cloud or close; for there is no night there. Hard worker in the field, thy toil has ended. Straight has been the furrow thou hast ploughed. No looking back has marred thy course. Harvests have followed thy patient sowing, and heaven is already rich with thine in-gathered sheaves, and shall be still enriched through years yet lying in eternity. Champion of God, thy battle, long and nobly fought, is over. The sword which clave to thine hand has dropped at last; the palm-branch takes its place. No longer does the helmet press thy brow, oft weary with its surging thoughts of battle; the victor's wreath from the Great Commander's hand has already proved thy full reward. Here, for a little

while, shall rest thy precious dust. Then shall thy Well-beloved come, and at His voice thou shalt spring from thy couch on earth, fashioned like unto His glorious body. Then spirit, soul, and body shall magnify thy Lord's redemption. Until then, beloved, sleep. We praise God for thee, and, by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, hope and expect to praise God with thee."

Thus lived and died a great—if not the greatest—preacher of the nineteenth century, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He, being dead, yet speaketh; his work lives after him; he has left his mark on the age. It was in a great degree a career of suffering as well as of commanding influence. Though he wished for life to carry on his aggressive work, death, in his case, was a release from pain; it was what he would himself have called the consummation of life: the battle was fought; his work was done. We no longer think of him as the suffering champion of the church militant; his untrammelled spirit is in the land of eternal freedom and of unending rest—

"Thou art gone, my brother, to climes afar, Where seraphs, saints, and angels are; Where fruits and flowers immortal grow, And silent streams of silver flow; Where sweet sounds float on the balmy air, Where all is pure and bright and fair:

Through the dark portals of the tomb Thou hast passed to that land of bliss and bloom."

Chapter106: Public Opinion on Spurgeon's Life and Work

Chapter 106.

Public Opinion On Spurgeon's Life And Work The utterances of eminent persons and of the daily and weekly press on Spurgeon's character, his service, and his influence, at the time of his passing away demand some notice; and this biography would hardly be complete without some references to this subject, accompanied with illustrative extracts. It may be said without any approach to exaggeration that no great statesman in ending his career was ever more universally noticed by the journals of the day; and it has fallen to the lot of few men of commanding position to have such a chorus of encomiums uttered over their graves. There was, at the same time, so much of fair or discriminating criticism, that one who took the trouble to read any considerable number of the articles referred to was not only helped to make a worthy estimate of the preacher's character, he saw more clearly than before in what light the pastor of the Tabernacle was regarded by the great world outside the community with which he identified himself. Proof more emphatic than was ever possible before was given that Spurgeon, by his unselfishness and devotion to work, had won the sincere regard of the nation. None will know better than the readers of this biography that it had not always been so; but the very papers which had most roundly abused and misrepresented him in former years now excelled their contemporaries in sounding out his praise. It is one of the most remarkable instances on record of a supposed charlatan, a mere adventurer, living down opposition and winning the respect and regard of all.

Before turning attention to the public press, however, I will give some personal opinions on Spurgeon, which, as signs of the times, deserve to be registered. There were some religious teachers, even in supposed orthodox denominations, who still regarded the great preacher with extreme dislike. No sorry quidnunc who visited the Surrey Gardens in 1857 to write a caricature of the proceedings could have been more bitter in denunciation than certain of these critics. Thus a Free Church Edinburgh professor, who once went to hear Spurgeon, now very boldly gave his opinion:—

"The theology was revolting, the concluding appeal to the terrors of hell forced and unimpressive, and the whole sermon a failure. How much of this coarse, unscriptural exegesis men of the Spurgeon type perpetrate in the course of a long ministry, and how much mischief it does, alienating many from church and religion!" To the above a correspondent replied:—

"I wonder did he ever hear it said that the failure may often be in the hearer. On high authority we are told that the seed may fall upon a great variety of ground, and it strikes me in the case before us the cause of failure may have been in the hearer, as it is with even the most eloquent and accomplished preacher that would become intelligible to a man who writes about 'perpetrating an exegesis,' whatever that may mean." The late Principal Tulloch was hardly of the school of Spurgeon, but he knew how to be just and generous. Principal Tulloch died before the popular preacher, but had he lived we know enough about his sentiments to be assured that he would have regarded the death of the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle as a sore national loss.

During one of his visits to London, in company with Professor Ferrier, Principal Tulloch wrote to his wife:—

"We have just been to hear Spurgeon, and have been both so much impressed that I wish to give you my impressions while they are fresh. As we came out we both confessed 'There is no doubt about that;' and I was struck with Ferrier's remarkable expression, 'I feel it would do me good to hear the like of that, it sat so close to reality.' The sermon is about the most real thing I have come in contact with for a long time. Guthrie is as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal to it; and although there is not the elevated thought and descriptive felicity of Caird (the latter especially, however, not wanting), there is more power. Power in fact and life are its characteristics.

"He began the service with a short prayer, then sang the 23rd Psalm; but instead of our fine old version, some vile version, in which the simple beauty of the hymn is entirely lost. Then he read and expounded the 32nd chapter (I think) of Numbers. His remarks were very good, and to the point, with no display of misplaced emotion. He then prayed more at length, and this was the part of the service I least liked. He preached from the same chapter he read, about the spies from the land of Canaan—the good and bad spies. It was a parable, he said, of religion. Then, after speaking of men of the world judging religion (which, however, they had no right to do) from those who professed it rather than from the Bible—which in thought and grasp was the fullest part of the sermon—he said he would speak of two classes of people, the bad spies first and then the good spies, those who made a great ado about religion and did not show its power.

"His description here was graphic beyond what I can give you an idea of; the most telling satire, cutting home yet not overdone, as he spoke of the gloomy religionist who brought up a bad report of the land of religion, making himself and his wife and children miserable, drawing down the blinds on a Sunday, 'always most religious when most miserable, and most miserable when most religious;' then the meek-faced fellow who can pray all Sunday and preach by the hour, and cheat all Monday, always ready with his prayer-book, but keeping a singular cash-book, wouldn't swear, but would cheat and lie. Then, again, he showed still higher powers of pathos in describing the good spies—the old blind saint who had served God for fifty years, and never found Him fail; the consumptive girl testifying to the goodness of her Saviour as the dews of death gathered on her brow. And then of all who only lived as Christians—the good wife who converted her husband by her untiring gentleness, and having supper ready even at twelve o'clock at night; the servant who, because she was religious, cleaned knives better without losing their edge; the Christian merchant; the wife who, unknown to fame, and having no time for teaching or district visiting, achieved her household work day by day.

"In fact, the whole was a wonderful display of mental vigour and Christian sense, and gave me a good idea of what good such a man may do. The impression made upon Ferrier, which he has just read over to me as he has written it to his wife, is 'driving downright.' He improves in look, too, a little as he warms in preaching. At first he certainly is not interesting in face or figure; but his voice is of rare felicity, as clear as a bell—not a syllable lost."

Writing from quite another standpoint, "Sacerdos Hibernicus" remarked:—

"I willingly admit that Mr. Spurgeon in his day kept many a man morally good—kept him from substantial sin and therefore morally good. Again I willingly admit that men who entered the

'Tabernacle' to 'scoff' left it 'not scoffers,' left it in the belief of some moral laws, left it not the worse because of Mr. Spurgeon's teaching. This certainly was a gain. Better have a belief in some moral laws than believe all moral laws to be shams. But when you say he was a reliable teacher because he was 'sincere, simple, unpretending, and straightforward' in his teaching, I cannot agree with you; because, I suppose, every teacher would claim for his teaching similar adjectives. Again you say, Mr. Spurgeon sought not himself but his 'Master'—and you could not say in his favour a bigger thing. Nor am I in a position to contravene your statement; nor, if I were, would I—a Catholic priest—do so. I leave Mr. Spurgeon in his 'Master's' hands. But his 'Master' came on earth in a twofold character: as a 'saviour' and as a 'teacher.' Of course, Mr. Spurgeon believed—and rightly believed—in his 'Master' as a 'saviour.' But as a 'teacher,' Mr. Spurgeon's office, as a disciple of his 'Master,' would be to teach what his 'Master' taught—that and only that. Might I ask you where Mr. Spurgeon got his mathematical knowledge of what his 'Master' taught?" To the above another correspondent added this testimony:—"...Both Cardinal Manning and Mr. Spurgeon were extreme men. We English dislike extremes, but extremes carry the day. Viæ mediæ have never produced enthusiasm nor leaders of men—it is contrary to all law that they should—and the Church of England is, by her first principles, a via media, both in doctrine and practice. She attempts to stand well with the classes and the masses. How to serve the two masters of Capital and Labour is the problem which is perplexing the minds of her foremost clergy at the present moment. This problem the Cardinal and the Preacher solved each in his own way. With true statesmanlike instinct, the former was a Democrat, and knew when to sink the dignity of the office before the man. Mr. Spurgeon's first victories were won amongst the dominant people of his early life. The sphere of his work lay with the great middle class. He cared to influence the two extreme sections of the nation only through them. The two men who, amongst the Anglican clergy in the last twenty years, have come nearest to the influence and power of Cardinal Manning and Mr. Spurgeon were Bishop Fraser and Dean Stanley. Students of their lives seem to see that they failed only when they could not shake themselves free from the trammels of their system.

"It is also worthy of notice that both of the two great Nonconformists held independent positions at a very early age. This is almost impossible except under the most favourable circumstances in the State Church.... The State Church, as at present constituted, has no special attractions for men of mark. She is, as a rule, only a kind and beneficent mother to those of her clergy who hold narrow views, possess private means, know how to toady, or are well connected. She strongly resents any interference in her domestic peace by the original or the strong." In a letter to The Times Dr. Parker wrote:—

"The only pulpit-name of the nineteenth century that will be remembered is no longer the name of a living man. Mr. Spurgeon was absolutely destitute of intellectual benevolence.... But who could compare with him in moral sympathy? In this view he was in very deed two men. The theologian and the philanthropist lived at opposite sides of the universe. Those who were damned by the theologian were saved by the philanthropist. Mr. Spurgeon's was emphatically religious or spiritual preaching. He had but one sermon, yet it was always new." Dr. Parker and Spurgeon are said to have been on cordial terms until H. Ward Beecher was admitted into the pulpit of the City Temple. Dr. Parker adds, in reference to Spurgeon:—"No good could come of my reasoning with him, because it was impossible for him to change. I had no apology to make. The greatest honour conferred upon my pulpit was Mr. Beecher's occupancy of it. So we parted; yet I trust to meet

where we shall see all things in a clearer light. Mr. Spurgeon's career has proved that evangelical teaching can draw around itself the greatest congregation in the world, and hold it for a lifetime.... The great voice has ceased. It was the mightiest voice I ever heard—a voice that could give orders in a tempest, and find its way across a torrent as through a silent aisle. Meanwhile, the stress is greater upon those who remain. Each must further tax his strength so as to lessen the loss which has come upon the whole Church."

Principal Charles Edwards, of Bala Theological College, drew some distinctions between Spurgeon and Liddon:—

"Liddon is rhetorical, too rhetorical. His style lacks simplicity and crispness. You listen with admiration to the eloquent flow of words. The preacher at the outset pitches his voice high—a voice clear, piercing, finely-cut. He raises it gradually from beginning to end. At last he seems, with a sudden turn of the head, to be flinging it to the farthest corners. When he closes his manuscript, the congregation, after an hour's rapture and breathless attention, appear as if a weight had been lifted from their spirits. It is a real relief to be able to assert your own individual existence after the untiring pressure of the great preacher's profound earnestness. For Liddon was profoundly earnest. He had in him more of a prophet's wail than Spurgeon.

"Both were prophets, preaching to a cynical and self-indulgent generation. Liddon was the Jeremiah of our age. But Spurgeon was its Isaiah. He is not rhetorical. If anything, he is sometimes too familiar. He does not pitch his voice at all, anymore than a person pitches his voice in his own parlour. He knows he is speaking to some thousands. But, without the slightest apparent effort, he speaks so that the man that sits furthest from him can hear, and not more than hear, every syllable. Even the 's' at the end of a word comes on its own wings, and reaches the ear in its own separate moment of time. His voice is not sharp and piercing, but full, most musical, like a sound from the great organ. He does not raise it gradually. He plays with its ups and downs. He fences with it as with a rapier, thrusting quarte and tierce. But it is no foil. He means to draw blood, and seldom fails to make it spurt. Liddon convinced his hearers every time he preached that he was in earnest. I am bound to confess Spurgeon did not produce a conviction of this sort in my mind as he preached. The question did not occur to me. He was so perfectly natural! Liddon's earnestness was a distinct element of his ministry. It was like the seriousness of a great Welsh preacher. Every reader that heard him will know whom I mean. Neither he nor Liddon could tolerate humour in the pulpit. The Welsh preacher was brimful of it by nature—wrth naturiaéth. But then nature is evil, and must be crucified. Spurgeon was fortunately more illogical, and refused to banish from his preaching an element so richly poured into his soul. He consecrated it, as he consecrated every other gift, to the work of winning men to Christ."

Among the thousands of pulpit references to the departed preacher on Sunday, February 14, none was more cordial and emphatic than that of Archdeacon Sinclair at St. Paul's Cathedral:—

"We cannot hear untouched that our country has lost its greatest living preacher. I use the words deliberately, because I do not believe that there are any of us who remain who for thirty years, every Sunday during the twelvemonth, could gather together, morning and evening, more than six thousand earnest, patient hearers, eager to receive from one untiring tongue the Word of Life. Analyse the gifts of that powerful evangelist as accurately as you can; measure, as closely as may be possible, the secret of his influence; but I do not believe that you will find any other teacher

whose printed sermons would be read week after week, year after year, by tens and hundreds of thousands, not only all over England, Scotland, and Wales, but in the backwoods of Canada, in the prairies of America, in the remotest settlements of Australia and New Zealand, wherever an English newspaper can reach, or the English tongue is spoken. The thing is absolutely unique. It has no parallel. You reverence your own Church with all your heart and soul as the pure and apostolical branch of Christ's visible communion planted of old in this country by God's saints, purified and reformed in the long course of ages; but does that prevent you from recognising and honouring those whom the accidents of history have separated from your outward fellowship? It is probable that never once in his whole life did it occur to the great preacher, even as an intellectual possibility, that he should join the national Church, any more than you think it conceivable that you should be found within the scornful pale of Rome. It is the privilege of a national Church to unite and not to separate; to give prominence to points of unity instead of distinctions; to promote mutual understanding and charity, not to exaggerate divergence of opinions. What was it that gave this plain, uncultured preacher a religious influence so unparalleled in our day, and made his name a household word all over the wide world? No doubt he had rare gifts. He was courageous, resolute, and lively in these times of the faint heart, irresolution, and dulness. He had that genuine eloquence which is all the more effective because of its directness and simplicity. He had a matchless voice, powerful, and vibrating with every quality of earnestness and variety. He had abundant humour, tender pathos, and never failed to be interesting. He was utterly untrammelled by the questionings of criticism. But it was, above all, the splendid completeness, the unswerving strength, the exuberant vitality of his faith in God's revelation to man through His Son Jesus Christ, combined with the width and warmth of his zealous love for souls, that gave him that unbounded power which he exercised so loyally for Christian belief among the middle classes, who are the very backbone of England, and throughout the English-speaking race." At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, on the same day, Dr. Pierson corrected some false rumours, and gave some striking facts in connection with the late pastor's life-work:—

"Some of the daily newspapers have been saying that the Pastors' College would not be continued, and that even if the pastor had survived it would have been given up. It is a great surprise to the officers of the Tabernacle, who have not been favoured with the recent intelligence upon the subject which seems to have been given to the editors of some newspapers. I pray you, my friends, let no such incredible statements make the slightest impression upon your minds. They are most assuredly inventions of the devil, to imperil that institution in which, as Mr. Spurgeon wrote me only a few weeks ago, his heart was specially enlisted. The training of young men to the ministry of the Gospel was to him one of the transcendent responsibilities of his life, and the Pastors' College, by the grace of God, will go on doing its magnificent work.

"Some people talk about the Church going into a decline. It would be the greatest reproach to the ministry of your pastor and to Christ if any paralysis should come upon one of the institutions connected with this, the greatest Christian Church in the world. I have been making a computation, and I find that Mr. Spurgeon must have preached the Gospel to no less than 10,000,000 of people. During his pastorate he must have received into communion between 10,000 and 12,000 converts. His sermons must have reached a total of between 20,000,000 and 40,000,000 of readers, and it is probable that to-day there are more than 50,000,000 of people reading of the Christ whom he loved, and of his labours in the past. Most of you know how those sermons have

gone round the world, translated into twenty-three tongues and dialects that we know of—French, Italian, Spanish, German, Dutch, Swedish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Syriac, Arabic, South American tongues, those of the islands of the South Seas, of the continents of Asia, of Africa, and of Europe. Into every part of the earth they have gone, and it is impossible for us to form a correct or exact estimate of the marvellous influence of that one voice and of that one pen. I have made no reference to the multitude of works besides sermons which were produced by his pen. Testimony has been given throughout the services of the past week that he was the greatest preacher of this century, and no doubt his Gospel messages have more rapidly and more distantly permeated the works than those of any other man in that century. I want to ask you whether it would not be a privilege to serve the same God, and so in course of time to receive the same reward and hear the words, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant'?"

Mr. G. T. Palmer, Rector of Newington, in which parish the Metropolitan Tabernacle is situated, wrote to The Times:—

"The announcement you made in The Times of Saturday, that I was to take part in a memorial service in connection with the funeral of Mr. Spurgeon, has been the occasion of surprise to some and of offence to others.... No doubt I shall feel myself in a somewhat strange position should I be on the platform of the great Tabernacle. I have never been in a Nonconformist place of worship since I was ordained by Bishop Wilberforce in 1858. Once before I had been in such a place of public worship, and that was as a Cambridge undergraduate to hear Mr. Spurgeon. I have no reason, therefore, to suspect myself of an unorthodox eagerness to take part in modes of worship unsanctioned by the Church. But the late Mr. Spurgeon was unique as a minister of the Gospel. The esteem felt for him by all sorts and conditions of Christian men is exceptional, the sorrow occasioned by his death is one in which they all participate. As rector of the parish in the heart of which the Tabernacle has been built, my relation to him was peculiar. It might have given rise to ill-will between us. As I look over his letters and remember his words in conversation, I am touched by thoughts of his Christian courtesy, gentleness, and humility. Will Christian orthodoxy or Church discipline suffer if I try to give these thoughts expression on a very exceptional as well as sad occasion, although it may be in a place where prayer is wont to be made in words other than those of the Book of Common Prayer?"

Dr. Robertson Nicoll wrote like one who understood the preacher and his work:—

"His style was famous as a model of clear Saxon. It is often tinged with beauty, and shows always that the preacher has gathered material from far and near; but the best merit that belongs to it is unfailing clearness and force. Mr. Spurgeon can rise on occasion to a high and stirring strain of eloquence, and is never more powerful than when he launches thunderbolts against evil in every form. He is deeply read in the theology of this country, and has taken from it its homeliness, directness, and unction, while leaving behind what is involved, cumbrous, and technical. Mr. Spurgeon loves to call things by their name, and is not careful to avoid raising a smile, though occasions of laughter are much less frequent in his sermons than they used to be. He introduces anecdote and illustration into his sermons to a considerable extent, though not so much as in former days. Many have taken exception to the frequency with which his own experiences are narrated, but, as we think, without much reason. The power of personal reference in securing the attention of an audience is very great; and if the employment of this source of strength is attributed

by some to egotism, it cannot be helped. No preacher can afford to disregard it. The illustrations are gathered from an immense variety of sources, and bear witness to his wide knowledge. With all this he combines the manliness of a genuine Englishman. There is nothing weak or morbid about his mind; indeed, if he has a defect, it is that there is too little pathos in his sermons. He is, if we may be allowed the expression, a typical John Bull, and it is his John Bullism in religion that has made him so popular with all classes of the community. All know him to be every inch a man, and even those most hostile to his opinions are proud of him. The charity child who, on being asked who was the Prime Minister of England, replied, 'Spurgeon,' was not far from the truth." As Spurgeon and Manning died much about the same time, contrasts between them were drawn, and, according to the leading journal, the Cardinal "was rather a social than a spiritual force."Spurgeon the preacher is thus depicted:—

"He varied his teaching in a thousand ways, but from whatever point he started it was to this that he soon came round. His jokes and anecdotes and rough pleasantries were thrown in by the way, but not so as to obscure or interfere with his main drift. His audience might laugh if they would. His care was to make sure that they did not go to sleep, and in this he was singularly successful. We doubt if, from first to last, he told any of them anything which every one of them did not either know or believe. His art was to put old truths into a new dress, or to present them in a new form in which they were more likely to come home to the apprehension and to the hearts of his hearers. In all this his want of learning was in one way a distinct advantage to him. His range of vision was narrowed by it, but his standing-ground was the more secure. If he had known more, he might possibly have been less confident in himself, and therefore the less fitted for his special ministerial work. But whatever judgment we form about his faults or merits, the facts remain that he could command the attention of 24,000 eager listeners, that he never preached except to full benches, that his printed sermons have circulated by hundreds of thousands, and that he retained for nearly forty busy years an undisputed leadership in his own denomination, and beyond it. Such a man as this it is who has now gone from us, and his death will be felt within wide limits as a very real public loss."

Spurgeon's supposed want of education is here exaggerated until a false impression, is conveyed. It goes nearer the mark to say that Spurgeon owed "nothing to the ecclesiastical turmoils of his time":—

"He had no ambition save that of saving souls in his own way. He was his own Pope, and the Pope of his congregation, and he neither needed nor would ever have tolerated any other. Rome itself was not more infallible nor more unchangeable than he was. Indeed, the canon and inspiration of Scripture might well be thought by those who share Spurgeon's views of their character to be safer in his inflexible hands than in those of Rome as represented by the flexible and versatile Manning....

"To some of us this unyielding attitude will seem to have been his strength, to others his weakness. But without debating that point, we may say with confidence that his real strength lay in his grasp, at once homely and profound, of vital religious truth, and in his power of delivering that truth straight into the hearts of those who heard him. 'When he left the pulpit,' said Lord Houghton, 'he was an inspired apostle.' He has left the pulpit for ever, but his apostleship lives on in the quickened hearts and heightened lives of his innumerable hearers, and his inspiration is

acknowledged of all men. That is why his funeral will be made almost a national occasion, and why all good and devout men among his countrymen, without distinction of faith or sect, will stand in spirit round his grave." The Conservatives were naturally pleased because Spurgeon was not, in Mr. Gladstone's sense of the phrase, a Home Ruler. In a more general way one of their organs thus referred to his character and work:—

"No estimate of his worth would be adequate which failed to take account of the work he did for his people and his denomination at Newington. Those who share his convictions would resent any attempt to explain his power by the mere form of his discourse. Vain, in their opinion, would have been his command of all the resources of the orator, his flow of homely or of graceful imagery, his rapid transitions from grave to gay, from invective to entreaty, from solemn pleadings with the innermost soul of each individual hearer to grotesque illustration and racy colloquialism—had they not felt that he was speaking straight from his heart to theirs, and working, not for his own fame, but for their profit. This is not the place to define, much less to criticise, Mr. Spurgeon's theology. It was, in his own language, of the good old Evangelical type—dogmatic enough on the one or two points held to be vital; loose, vague, and indifferent on all that concerned the mere niceties of creeds and confessions. In this respect Mr. Spurgeon was not original, and would have indignantly repudiated the suggestion that he had added to or varied the message he had received from his predecessors in the great work of conversion. The Rev. Charles Simeon and the Wesleys had, after the long reign of laxity and latitudinarianism of the early part of the eighteenth century, framed and elaborated the system of which Mr. Spurgeon was a singularly energetic exponent. Nor can it be said that his gifts as a preacher, pre-eminent as they were in his own day, were unique. He did not follow in the lines laid down by Whitefield and Rowland Hill, and many others. He confined himself to more select audiences than the men who rushed over the United Kingdom, and spent, themselves in incessant harangues to vast crowds of illiterate, and sometimes almost savage, men and women. The difference of the conditions under which Mr. Spurgeon worked from those which the itinerant founders of Revivalism had to confront indicates the space which Evangelicalism has traversed. Whitefield contentedly faced missiles and execrations with no pulpit save a cart and no roof except the sky. When Mr. Spurgeon, for want of a more commodious meeting-house, took to preaching in a public hall, some of his congregation declared themselves scandalised."

Another paper, which had in course of years changed from a violent opponent to a great admirer of Spurgeon, said:—

"From the Bible, the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' and the writings of the Puritan Fathers, he derived the simplicity of utterance and nervous energy of phrase which made the common people hear him gladly, and the educated listen with appreciation as to a half-forgotten melody charged with the pathos of the past. To the primitive plainness and directness of English speech the dead preacher united perfect clearness of argument. A hearer might not agree with his opinions, but he could never mistake them. While avoiding the elaborate and formal structure which characterised the early Puritan sermons, Mr. Spurgeon, who knew them better, perhaps, than any man now living, emulated all their higher qualities, and brought to the emotional speech of the nineteenth century the perspicuity of severer and, perhaps, more logical utterances. We have dwelt upon those aspects of the striking individuality now lost to us with which the world was most familiar; but much might be said of Mr. Spurgeon, in his capacity as a Christian philanthropist, whose hand was ready

to any good work, and whose zeal for the poor and needy will 'smell sweet and blossom in the dust'; much, also, of his capacity as an administrator, and of the knowledge of human nature which enabled him to deal with the concerns of a vast and varied enterprise without offence to any. His sterling honesty, fearless outspokenness, and unflinching fidelity to a creed not all the clauses of which are now fashionable, should equally be remembered to his credit. These things, however, need no assertion. They were well-known constituents in a character which reflects honour upon our age and country. Assuredly among the Christian worthies of the nineteenth century whose names will go down to late posterity not the least honoured by all good men will be Charles Haddon Spurgeon." A Liberal organ referred to the preacher's descent:—

"Mr. Spurgeon did not belong entirely to the people whom he served. He was a Dutchman on the father's side, a branch of the stock which Alva in vain tried to bend to his iron will, and in appearance, at all events, he suggested his descent from the countrymen of William the Silent. His Dutch solidity, however, was shot through with a lighter strain of blood, just as his Puritan fervour had come down to him through generations of men who professed the faith in which Cromwell and Bunyan and Wesley found their inspiration. In a sense, indeed, Spurgeon lived largely in the past. He cared nothing for new ideas, for modern refinements of faith and morals. His language, save for its characteristic turn of humour, and perhaps not even in that, differed little from that of some stout camp-preacher of Cromwellian days. His method of interpreting Scripture was largely theirs. His views of the future life, and its relations to the existence of to-day, were in no important sense distinct from those of the authors of the Westminster Confession. It has, indeed, been one of the wonders of the time that in the midst of our humanitarian, æsthetic, sensitive age, with its Universalist formulæ, its shrinking from logical extremes, its leaning to optimist idealism, one powerful, insistent, strenuous voice has resolutely preached the old doctrines in the old style, illumined by the light which genius gives, but set uncompromisingly to the note which found favour with the 'rude forefathers' who made English Puritanism. And the voice has been a solitary one. Spurgeon leaves no heirs. The attempt to found a kind of Sacred College, of which he was the head, failed. His 'young men' recall only the less desirable features of his ministry. Truly, the Last of the Puritans is gone from us." The organ of the fashionable world identified Spurgeon's life and work with South London more than the circumstances of the case properly allowed, as the great congregation was really drawn from all parts of the metropolis:—

"The public there were naturally and justly proud of him; and they lived near enough to him not only to know the sincerity of his life, but also for him to understand them and their wants, and for them to feel that he understood them as no other religious leader can be said to have done at the same time and in the same place. In that half of the metropolis, which has certainly not received the lion's share of those influences and institutions which at once humanise and spiritualise, the work of the Tabernacle and its eloquent pastor were sorely needed. How far that work can be and will be continued by the successors of the deceased preacher it is not easy to predict. The essentially subjective and emotional religion which offers such admirable opportunities to the eloquence of a Wesley, a Whitefield, or a Spurgeon, has the defects of its qualities. It necessarily loses on the lips of the comparatively commonplace preacher much of that compelling power which it gathers from the personal gifts of an exceptionally eloquent pulpit orator. One must not, however, for that, underrate the solid good which Mr. Spurgeon's preaching wrought in the souls of very many who heard him. The full depth of his influence will never be known; but at least it is

certain that it was very great. He has left South London spiritually richer than he found it, and yesterday's manifestation abundantly testifies to the high place he held in the affections of those for whom and among whom he laboured." In regard to Spurgeon having been a victim of overwork, this true note was struck:—

"And yet at this moment the reflection forces itself, whether Mr. Spurgeon did not limit his influence by too great a devotion to the pulpit. He might have lived longer and worked over wider areas had he preached less and organised more. He has died at fifty-eight. Wesley saw his eightieth year; and to-day the influence of the Methodist leader, a century after his death, works more effectively than ever. Great preacher that he was, he understood that to create machinery is better than to be oneself the sole machine. The founder of institutions survives the orator. The effective force of a Chrysostom is surpassed by a Loyola, and a General Booth may have proved wiser in his generation than the pastor of the Tabernacle. It is true that he did organise, and effectively. But he was too lavish of himself. He did prodigies with his individual bow and spear, but great leaders are better employed in creating armies and filling them with their spirit than by exhibiting wonders of individual, strength and prowess." The provincial press was, on the whole, as generous in the tribute it paid to Spurgeon's memory as that of the metropolis. A leading journal of the West of England said:—

"Mr. Spurgeon was the poor man's friend. These last two days have seen how much his teaching and his example have reached the hearts of the weary workers of London. When most of the well-to-do were still asleep, the workman snatched an hour from his toil for the sake of passing round, in the dawn of early morning, the coffin placed before the familiar pulpit of the great orator. Every class has been represented in that procession. Thousands upon thousands have visited the great Baptist temple, and there were many tears shed by those who walked mournfully down the aisles. Detraction is hushed. We have read no single ungenerous sentence, we have heard no unappreciative word about the great man gone. His teaching in some of its aspects may have been even repulsive to the majority of his countrymen. He did not appeal to the learned, and he offended the fastidious; but because he was a man in the highest sense of the term—an Englishman, honest, God-fearing, righteous, and a lover of good work, he will have to-day all true hearts mourning for the loss which the Christian churches in this country are feeling. Of him it may truly be said, 'His name liveth for evermore.'"

Looking into the future, a Northern daily journal remarked:—

"The question that must already have been asked by many, no doubt, is, Who will be sufficient to fill the place which it was confidently hoped until little more than a week ago Mr. Spurgeon would reoccupy? The great congregation which his preaching gathered Sunday after Sunday into the Metropolitan Tabernacle cannot long be held together by the mere power of organisation without the commanding influence of a directing head. The future of the Metropolitan Tabernacle is probably more uncertain than that of the many religious and philanthropic agencies which Mr. Spurgeon, by his wonderful gifts of organisation and magnetic power, had built up around it, or in some measure associated with it. It seems probable that Mr. Spurgeon has made no special provision for ensuring the continuance of his many-sided religious work. His principle was that each generation should have cast upon it the duty of providing for its own wants. 'Let my successor,' he is reported to have said some years ago, 'if I have one in the College, do as I have

done, and secure the funds which he needs for his own teaching.' That successor will not be easily found who will be able to take up all the varied engagements of the departed just where he had been obliged to put them aside. But what no single successor may be found to do a different organisation may succeed in doing, though not perhaps in Mr. Spurgeon's way, or with quite the same measure of success with which his enthusiastic efforts and unbounded faith were rewarded." The Scotch newspapers were quite as free in their criticisms as the English, but were quite as generous. Thus Spurgeon was contrasted with some other eminent preachers of his time:—

"Mr. Spurgeon's chief renown, however, was as a preacher; and his power and influence as a preacher have far outweighed all the minor defects of his somewhat narrow theology. His sermons were not marked by the culture, the subtlety of intellect, and the elevavation of thought of Liddon, Newman, or Stopford Brooke, or by the elegance of style and sonorous eloquence of Magee and other preachers of eloquence of the Church of England; but he was indisputably the first of Nonconformist preachers, and his sermons were characterised by a force and directness, a use of plain, blunt, homely Saxon diction that rendered them fully as powerful as, and perhaps more telling than, the elegant and refined utterances of the clerical orators just named."

Another Scotch daily paper said:—

"He held to his beliefs with intense ardour of conviction, and regarded it as his imperative mission to convey that conviction to others. He had a wide range of sympathies, immense force of character, a large endowment of robust common-sense, and a gift of healthy, genuine humour. These qualities the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle employed with his whole energy in the exercise of his function as a preacher, and they gave him to the last—albeit the theology he preached was regarded by many, even in his own denomination, as narrow and out of accord with the tendencies of modern thought—a hold on the popular attention such as was possessed by no other ecclesiastic of the time. He wrote, as he spoke, with a directness, a simplicity, and a command of racy Saxon English unsurpassed by any public man of this generation except, perhaps, John Bright; and while for more than thirty years he gathered round him every Sunday larger congregations than listened to any other London preacher, his written sermons, his lectures to his students, his 'John Ploughman's Talk,' and his 'Treasury of David' have had a world-wide circulation. Most of what he has written has been translated into all the principal European languages, and has been circulated in the United States even more freely than in this country. If the popular appreciation of a man's teachings is to be taken as a standard of his greatness, then Charles Spurgeon was one of the greatest men England has ever produced. Wherever Evangelical and Calvinistic Christianity has penetrated there Spurgeon's influence has long been felt and his name revered. The tidings of his death will be received with a sense of personal bereavement in innumerable places where his face was never seen and his voice never heard." The Unitarians, though Mr. Spurgeon was always their uncompromising opponent, were not behindhand with their tribute of praise. A few passages from one of their journals may be given as a sample of what was said by others:—

"...The leading statesmen and literati of our day, and members of both aristocratic and the Royal Family, now and then were among his hearers. All were more or less impressed with his sincerity, earnestness, and eloquence.

"While it is true that he could speak no language but his own English, he certainly was the master of the art of speaking it in a way which went straight to the heart of his hearers. His language had no fine literary polish, but his sentences appealed to all sections of society. The preacher's belief was that he had a message to deliver, and it was delivered with sincerity and power. He had a wonderful voice, full, sweet, and musical, that could whisper or thunder at his will. There was freedom, too, and fearlessness in his speaking, backed up by thrilling description and wit and anecdote. His preaching stood the test of time....

"We turn away from his"Calvinistic theories' to his Christian life, and here we find his solid kindness, his genuine loving character, in direct contrast with his narrow creed. There are not a few men of whose creed we may say it is similar to our own, and very dissimilar to that of Mr. Spurgeon's, but it would be a long drop from his noble, generous life to theirs. And there are popular preachers, men who have their thousands of followers, with a more liberal faith, but of very mean life—a gulf separates them. If as a Church we say, 'Character, not creed,' let us not forget this in our judgment of Mr. Spurgeon. Everywhere it is known he was a man not simply of independence of character, but of moral blamelessness of life. All who knew him knew him personally, loved him intensely There was no meanness, no littleness, but a large warm-hearted sympathy pervading his whole nature.... He bore all his sufferings with pious trust. He set the example of perfect resignation to the will of God. He did good in his own circle as opportunities offered themselves. His preaching and life have blessed the homes, no doubt, of tens of thousands, and now he has gone to his exceeding great reward. Honour and peace to his memory. We will gladly lay a wreath upon his grave."

Thus people of all creeds and of all political parties united to honour the memory of a man who lived a life of earnestness and self-sacrifice in building up the Church and advancing many philanthropic works.

Chapter 107: Conclusion

Chapter 107.

Conclusion

Through the Divine favour and the help and sympathy of many friends in various parts of the country, I have been enabled to bring this large work to a conclusion. Strictly speaking, it has fallen to my lot to give to English-speaking nations Spurgeon's biography fully written for the first time; for though there are many books about Spurgeon, I have not yet met with one which can be said to furnish even a meagre outline of his wonderful career. The limited space at the command of the writers prevents their giving anything beyond a very few salient facts connected with the preacher's life and work; and it may be truly said that the thousand and one incidents in his life have been unknown to the present generation, because no one has hitherto undertaken the formidable labour of searching the newspapers, magazines, and periodicals of the last forty years in which the materials for such a biography as this are to be found. Though sufficiently onerous, the task has proved thoroughly congenial. Truly to depict Spurgeon as he lived and worked in his early and later life, it seems necessary that one should have also passed through the period during which he lived in London. Some have thought that if at the outset he had only proved himself to be such a preacher as he was at the age of fifty, he would never have commanded that singular popularity which he did at the age of twenty. And yet, when the discourses of the one period are compared with those of the other, competent judges would probably say that the later ones were the best, that they show a growth in knowledge and judgment which was quite natural. At the same time, readers of to-day should not lose sight of the fact that the Spurgeon of forty years ago, when he appeared first in London, was as different from, the staid divine of the Metropolitan Tabernacle of a generation later as could well be. Those who are old enough to have heard the preacher in his youth came away from the services with impressions which time can never efface from the memory. It was something altogether new in their experience, something which it is difficult, if not impossible, to describe in words. To begin with, the pale, round-faced Essex youth was not an ordinary-looking youth at all; and his manners were so unconventional that it seemed that no one save himself could have invented them. Then his unrivalled bell-like voice, which seemed capable of reaching any number of people, was in itself not the least gift which made the preacher what he was. As regards the materials for Spurgeon's biography, it should be clearly understood that they are not only ample, but that they may be said to be public property, accessible to anyone who has leisure and industry to collect them. A man by himself in other respects, Spurgeon was in this matter also quite exceptional; he was not only a great public man, he lived one of the most public of lives, the things that he did and those that he said or wrote being duly registered for the biographer's future reference. That there may be no misapprehension on this point, I will give what Dr. W. C. Wilkinson, of New York, remarks on this subject:—

"In every human generation there is a certain small number of picked men concerning whom public interest, beginning early, continues long to be so general and so vivid that everything

proceeding from them, everything said about them, is sure to engage the attention of mankind. Of this select class of men, belonging to our generation, by eminence was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. It thus happens that, during many years, Mr. Spurgeon's biography has been, as it were, constantly written up to date in the current periodical literature of his time. At his death nothing, or almost nothing, new remained to be told respecting him. There had long been simply the day's, or the week's, or the month's addition to be made to the biographical bulletins that promptly advised an ever-curious public what was the last thing of note that had befallen the foremost favourite preacher of the present time. This, however, is fully true only for Mr. Spurgeon's equals or superiors in age. A whole generation has grown up since he began to be famous, and, to the members of this new community of minds, the story of his career will be as novel as it is certain to be interesting." This is a clear and succinct statement of the case; and the biography now in the reader's hands may be accepted as ample proof of what the American writer affirms. The materials for the story of Spurgeon's life have been gathered from an area which embraces both the Old and the New World. No sources of information have been neglected; while opponents, as well as admirers, have been allowed, when necessary, to bear their testimony. It is hoped that general admiration for the preacher has not hindered an impartial view being given of his work and character; for, like Dr. Johnson, Spurgeon is one of those who gain by being impartially drawn. To say that he had his faults is only to say that he was human; but when we have a full-length portrait of the preacher, the commanding attributes of the great man appear the more clearly in all their attractiveness. Anything approaching to what he called Boswellism he always heartily disliked; but he would probably have admitted that when the time came, his work and character could only be worthily depicted by one who had been closely associated with him. I cannot, for example, conceive of one who had not come in contact with Spurgeon and his work during the preacher's youth, succeeding in the task of describing things as they were. At that exciting period only one who was a contemporary with him, one who remembers going with the crowd to the Surrey Gardens, and who joined in debate with those who maintained, on the one hand, that Spurgeon was a charlatan, and, on the other hand, that he was the apostle of the age, can understand the unique surroundings of the man. The uncompromising abuse and the equally extravagant praise to which my friend was subjected could hardly be understood in their full significance by one who now only listens to their faint echo through the vista of a third of a century. As a biographer, therefore, I may claim to enjoy the advantage of having lived through the whole period of Spurgeon's ministry in London, although, as he was my senior, my late illustrious friend's memory may have gone somewhat farther back than my own. Through having been personally acquainted with him during considerably more than half that period, and retaining vivid impressions of the earlier years, I have been enabled to give personal recollections or reminiscences. He was quite aware of the extreme interest I felt in his life and work, and oftentimes have I received from himself anecdotes and particulars of his earlier days. He was never careful about correcting false stories or exaggerated accounts of his own doings; and at times, after a lapse of some years, he would even himself forget the exact details. In his time Mr. Spurgeon was engaged in several controversies, which will rank as historical disputes in the theological world. In giving the history of these care has been taken so to arrange the matter that the representatives of opposite sides are allowed to speak for themselves. This seemed to be absolutely necessary in such a case as that of the Baptismal Regeneration dispute of 1864, when the question was, not whether a Romish dogma was anti-Scriptural, but whether the words of the Prayer-book warranted such an

interpretation as Mr. Spurgeon's being put upon them. In other instances I have endeavoured to be impartial by allowing representatives of both sides to speak for themselves; and I may be allowed frankly to confess, that while I yield to none in my admiration of Spurgeon, I do not always agree with his opinions. I can imagine a biography being so written as to be virtually an apology for all its subject said or did; but my profound respect for the great man who for so long accorded me his friendship and confidence has prevented me from attempting such a task. Spurgeon himself would have been the first to deprecate such blind veneration; he had no other desire than to appear before the world as he really was—as he lived and wore himself out in the service of the Church. It may be added that there was no need for such a man to harbour any higher ambition. To tell the whole truth about Spurgeon may show that he was not perfect; but, on the whole, it is the way to pronounce the best encomium on the man now that he has gone. At times we may find ourselves thinking about "the Spurgeon of history," wondering what kind of an estimate posterity will form of his work and influence. We need hardly trouble ourselves about this, however, feeling assured that our great preacher will continue to stand out as one of the most commanding figures of the pulpit of the nineteenth century. Though he may be less read as time goes on, the popular interest in his strikingly eventful life must surely continue, of it does not actually increase. Hence, while not blind to the shortcomings of my book, I feel grateful that I have been enabled to complete the onerous, but still congenial task entrusted to me— The Life and Work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

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