

LIFE STORY OF C. H. SPURGEON

by James T. Allen

THE MAN
AND
HIS WONDERFUL MESSAGE;
BEING THE LIFE STORY OF
CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

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CHAPTER 1

SOWING THE SEED

“Sow in the morn thy seed,
 At eve hold not thy hand,
 To doubt and fear give thou no heed,
 Broadcast it o’er the land;
 And duly shall appear,
 In verdure, beauty, strength,
 The tender blade, the stalk, the ear,
 And the full corn at length.”

We do not measure great men by their specific opinions on this or that question, or by their adherence to this or that dogma. We rather estimate them by their volume of moral and spiritualizing power, by the essential qualities of their manhood, by the leavening influences for righteousness that emanate from their own lives. Does true greatness consist in the accident of birth? Verily, no. This is a matter over which we have no control, and which brings with it only power and responsibility. Greatness is not hereditary. Hence we find the sons of some of our greatest men have only been “shadows of a mighty name.”

“What can ennoble fools and cowards?
 Not all the blood of all the Howard’s.
 Honor and shame from no condition rise;
 Act well thy part, there all the honor lies.”

It was such a greatness that was so strikingly manifested and beautifully set forth in the busy life-work of him who forms the subject of this brief sketch.

No man can occupy a prominent position for forty years, with the full blaze of public scrutiny directed on him and his work, and yet stand the

test, and approve himself “a workman that needeth not to be ashamed;” a man of mighty power and religious influence over his fellows, without being in its highest sense, and Divinest meaning, endowed with the elements of true greatness. Such a man has passed from our midst in the person of the beloved and revered Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and no matter what our individual opinions may be, we all instinctively recognize that a great man has departed this life — a prince has fallen in Israel.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born in the old-fashioned village of Kelvedon, in Essex, on the 19th of June, 1834, and it is somewhat remarkable that throughout his whole life he always displayed a strong partiality for the county of his birth. To mingle with those he knew in his boyhood, and now and again to re-visit the scenes of his early days, was indeed to him a pleasure and delight. The Spurgeons come of an old Puritan stock, and they were a race of sturdy nonconformists. It is said that the founders of the family in Norfolk and Essex came from the Low Countries to escape the persecution of the bloodthirsty Duke of Alva, in the sixteenth century. There was certainly no lack of moral stamina, or of unflinching courage for “conscience’ sake” in these lowly refugees from the Netherlands, who came to settle in our eastern counties. Thus we hear of one sturdy ancestor, Job Spurgeon, who, in the reign of Charles II., lay in Chelmsford gaol for fifteen weeks, rather than be a traitor to his convictions. It is somewhat remarkable that this family were all Paedo-Baptists, until the subject of our sketch, and his brother James, declared for believers’ baptism by immersion.

Stambourne had a singular attraction for Mr. Spurgeon and this is certainly no cause for wonder, when we remember it was there, under the training and tuition of that godly Puritan grandfather, that the formation of his character was laid, and the seed sown, which was in after years to bring forth such an abundant harvest. His parents were blessed with seventeen olive branches to adorn their home; and with but scant means for their support, it was doubtless a great relief to them for their first-born to make, in a large measure, his grandfather’s parsonage his home.

HOUSE AT KELVEDON WHERE MR. SPURGEON WAS BORN

The grandfather of Mr. Spurgeon was a man of sparkling wit, in whom local tradition afterwards discerned the original of "John Ploughman." We are not surprised at this conjecture when we read the following description of the deceased minister: — "The Rev. James Spurgeon. is still well remembered by many persons of our acquaintance as an elderly gentleman who dressed after the manner of the old-fashioned school, and who was of spare habit and rather short in stature. Retaining till the last a predilection for the old school of Calvinistic theologians, this veteran also at times could deal in that species of wit which is supposed to be characteristic of a Puritan ancestry." He was a Puritan all over, as was instanced in the rare spiritual force of his preaching. He accepted the pastorate of the Independent Church at Stambourne in 1810, and for more than half a century ministered to these simple village folk in holy things. And here it was that Charles was taken to live with his grandfather, as soon as he was old enough to leave home. There he spent a very happy childhood. He would spend hours in his grandfather's study in reading. He tells us how in those early days the thirst for knowledge made itself already felt. "It was in that dear old study," he says, "that I first made acquaintance with 'Foxye's Martyrs,' 'Bunyan's Pilgrim,' and, further on, with the great masters of Scriptural theology, with whom no moderns are worthy to be named in the same day. Even the old editions of their works, with their margins and old-fashioned notes, are precious to me. It made my eyes water a short time ago to see a number of these old books in the new manse. I wonder whether some other boy will love them, and live to revive that grand old divinity, which will yet be to England her balm and benison?"

We get a glimpse of a happy combination of good will existing in this old Essex village between the Squire, the Parson, and the Dissenting Minister. The Squire attended the church in the morning and the Independent chapel in the afternoon, and then the trio, which Charles often made a quartette, would adjourn to the kindly Squire's and fraternize over "the cup which cheers but not inebriates." One striking instance of the kindly feeling existing between the vicar and his parishioner, James Spurgeon, must be mentioned. Once having a fine joint of beef on the vicarage table, the worthy vicar cut it in halves and sent his man with it to the Independent

parsonage while it was yet hot. Happy days! Happy people! Surely examples like these are worthy of imitation by our nineteenth century squires and parsons.

The tact and resolution displayed by Charles even in his youthful days are remarkable. Let the following instance suffice: — One of the members of his grandfathers church was in the habit of frequenting the public house, greatly to the grief of his pastor. Charles saw what trouble the man's conduct caused, and startled the parsonage by exclaiming, "I'll kill old Rhodes, that I will!" "Hush! hush! my dear," said the grandfather; "you must not talk so; it's very wrong you know; and you'll get taken up by the police if you do anything wrong" "Oh, but I shall not do anything bad; but I'll kill him though! that I will." Soon afterwards the boy came home saying, "I've killed old Rhodes; he'll never grieve my dear grandpa any more" Nothing more could be learned from the boy, but soon Rhodes himself appeared on the scene. "I am very sorry, indeed," he said, "my dear pastor, to have caused you such grief and trouble. It was very wrong I know, but I always loved you, and wouldn't have done it, if I'd only thought." He had been sitting in the public house having his pipe and glass of beer, when the boy stepped in, and pointing with his finger said, "What doest thou here, Elijah! sitting with the ungodly, and a member of a Church, and breaking your pastor's heart. I'm ashamed of you! I wouldn't break my pastor's heart, I'm sure." The child walked away, but conscience was aroused, and the man was saved. He sought God's forgiveness and vowed that he would never grieve his minister any more.

Nearly forty years ago the Rev. Richard Knill was a visitor to the Stambourne parsonage, and a strong attachment sprang up between the well-known missionary and the pastor's grandson. Surely none can say it was mere guess work that led this man of God to express his belief that the boy would grow up to preach to crowds of immense magnitude. These two, like Eli and Samuel, had sweet intercourse. In the early morning they met to speak of a Savior's love; the elder prayed for the younger, making the garden arbor their sanctuary. When they parted, sixpence was given to Charles on condition that he learnt Cowper's hymn, "God moves in a mysterious way," etc., and a further stipulation was made, that should he ever preach in Rowland Hill's pulpit, that hymn was to be used. Knill's prophecy was fulfilled. The boy became a preacher to thousands. He lived

to occupy the Surrey pulpit, and, needless to add, Cowper's hymn was sung. Here again we see the seed sown; "the bread cast upon the waters is found after many days."

Not only at the Stambourne parsonage, but in the old homestead, was there seed sown that was to bring forth precious fruit in due season. John Spurgeon, the father of Charles, was for several years pastor of the Independent Church at Cranbrook, Kent. Both Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon made great sacrifices to give a good education to their children, and both parents were equally solicitous respecting the spiritual welfare of their offspring. The parents of the popular preacher well maintained the prestige of their family. The mother, who died not very long since, was a devoted Christian woman. She would gather her children around her to pray for them individually, and was accustomed to be especially fervent in asking heaven's blessing on behalf of her eldest boy. The Rev. John Spurgeon, who is still living, contributes the following touching testimony: — "I had been from home a great deal, trying to build up weak congregations, and felt that I was neglecting the religious training of my own children while I toiled for the good of others. I returned home with these feelings. I opened the door, and was surprised to find none of my children about the hall. Going quietly up the stairs, I heard my wife's voice. She was engaged in prayer with the children. I heard her pray for them one by one by name. She came to Charles and especially prayed for him. I felt and said, Lord, I will go on with Thy work; the children will be cared for."

Mrs. Spurgeon's solicitude about her oldest boy was deep and earnest. One day she said to him, "Ah, Charley! I have often prayed that you might be saved, but never that you should become a Baptist." To that Charles replied, "God has answered your prayers, mother, with His usual bounty, and given you more than you asked."

The moral and religious development in young Spurgeon was undoubtedly due to a very great extent to the careful and prayerful training of his devoted mother. Herself a daughter of eminently pious parents, she inherited traits of character, and possessed religious instincts which could not but have a great influence on the minds, character, and dispositions of her children. Few mothers have succeeded so well in their difficult task.

The spiritual prosperity of her children was dearer to her heart than their intellectual progress. Eternity alone will reveal to how large an extent the prayers offered by that pious mother in the little home sanctuary have been answered.

CHAPTER 2

DAWNING OF THE LIGHT

At the age of seven years, Charles Spurgeon was sent to school at Colchester, where his parents were then living. There he acquired some knowledge of Latin, Greek, and French, and always headed the list at every examination. His vacations were passed in the manse at Stambourne, his time being principally spent in studying the religious books and the Puritan writings which adorned his grandfather's library. But Spurgeon was a born genius, and in a very few years had far outridden the intelligence of his would be teachers.

Perhaps lack of riches was the best thing that could surround a youth with such a spirit, from the very fact that it most likely compelled him to call into action latent powers, which otherwise might have lain dormant in his mind.

Whilst making such rapid progress in his school life, the home teaching was not neglected, and there is no doubt this had an important bearing upon his future. Every day some Scripture lesson would be instilled into his memory, and some Scriptural truth implanted upon his mind. Thus we can understand how, even from the cradle, he was enlightened with spiritual teaching, which would be of invaluable benefit to him in after years.

At the age of fourteen Charles had to leave his home in Colchester; and having spent part of 1848 in an agricultural college at Maidstone he, in 1849, became a teacher at Newmarket, in a school kept by a Mr. Swindell. It was doubtless during his sojourn at New-market that a circumstance transpired, which was to revolutionize the whole tenor of his life. We suppose he would be paying a visit to Colchester, for it was in this town that the remarkable event took place. We refer to his conversion, which could not be better given than in his own words. He says: — “The secret of my distress was this: I did not know the Gospel. For five years I had

been in the most fearful distress of mind. I was in a Christian land; I had Christian parents; but I did not fully understand the freeness and simplicity of the Gospel." Spurgeon's state of mind at this time was pitiable in the extreme. Tortured by doubts, surrounded by fears, beset by unbelief, he might well say, "Who will deliver me from the fear of death?" Evidently one task had been accomplished. One lesson had been learned. He had learned to know himself. How marvelously strange! Quick and apt to learn in other matters, he had yet to learn the nature and operation of simple, childlike faith. But he was not far from the kingdom. God would not leave such a soul long in darkness. The deliverance came from a very unexpected source. Not from the lips of the learned or the eloquent was the message delivered that was to give freedom to this sin-bound soul. No; but from a very poor man; one of the humblest disciples, and the weakest of instruments, was the chosen of God to bring words of peace to that tempest-tossed soul. How true it is,

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

"God sent the snowstorm," says Spurgeon, "when I was going to a meeting room. When I could go no further, I came to a little chapel, containing a dozen or fifteen people." The preacher announced his text, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." After preaching for ten minutes, says Spurgeon, "he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. He then said, 'Young man, you look very miserable!' Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made on my personal appearance from the pulpit before. However, it was a good blow struck. He continued, 'And you will always be miserable — miserable in life and miserable in death — if you do not obey my text. But if you obey now, this moment you will be saved.'

"Then he shouted, 'Young man, look to Jesus Christ; look now.' He made me start in my seat, but I did look to Jesus Christ there and then. The cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that moment and sang with the most enthusiastic of them of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to Him. O that somebody had told me that before.

Trust Christ and you shall be saved. It was, no doubt, wisely ordered, and I must ever say —

“E’er since by faith I saw the stream
 Thy wounds supplied for me,
 Redeeming love has been my theme,
 And shall for ever be.”

And yet, the manifestations of Divine grace on this never-to-be-forgotten day in the life of C. H. Spurgeon, were not yet complete. No, truly there was more to follow. From glory unto glory were dim leadings of his soul on that memorable Sabbath. In the morning, at the humble Primitive Methodist chapel, he found salvation to the joy of his soul. He possessed the assurance that was realized by a knowledge that there is “life in a look at the Crucified One.” But the joy was not yet complete. The experience of full liberty and perfect freedom had yet to be known to be enjoyed. Says Spurgeon, “In the text, ‘Look, look, look,’ I found salvation in the morning. In the text, ‘Accepted in the Beloved,’ preached at the Baptist church in the evening, I found peace and freedom.” Yes,

‘Tis done. the mighty deed is done,
 And from the Father’s glorious throne,
 The silver trumpet now proclaims,
 In sweet, melodious. heavenly strains,
 A pardon free,
 Through Christ the Savior’s bleeding veins.”

Thus it was that the soul of him was set at liberty who was in his turn to tell the unsearchable riches of Christ, not only by his silver tongue, but by the wielding of his pen, to hundreds of thousands of his fellow-men, a vast multitude of whom are already the crown of his rejoicing.

Oh! blessed change! glorious realization! unspeakable joy! Now, Lord, the change is wrought; the work is accomplished; the burden removed; the scales have fallen from the eyes; the emancipation from the bondage of the law has taken place. This is the assurance of salvation. This is the joy that springs from faith. This is the pardon enjoyed, and the peace obtained through believing. Go forth thou chosen of the Lord, baptized with this mighty faith, enriched with the indwelling of the Holy Ghost! And

thousands obeying the call of your great Master's voice shall yet rise up to call you blessed.

It was just prior to his conversion that he was tempted to embrace skepticism. Speaking at Exeter Hall in 1855, he thus refers to that sad period of doubt and mistrust: — “There was an evil hour when once I slipped the anchor of my faith. I cut the cable of my belief; I no longer moored myself by the coasts of revelation; I allowed my vessel to drift before the wind! I said to reason, ‘Be thou my captain;’ I said to my own brain, ‘Be thou my rudder!’ And I started on my voyage. Thank God, it is all over now! It was one hurried sailing over the tempestuous ocean of free thought.”

How many as they read these words will devoutly re-echo the “Thank God” that in this time of conflict he was so miraculously and wondrously delivered from the snare of the tempter.

We have referred at greater length than our space warrants to this interesting conversion and early experience with the “powers of darkness,” simply because to our mind they are the most important epochs in this wonderful life. Had not the matchless grace of God been thus displayed in the delivery of His David from the Goliath of skepticism, this brief sketch would never have been penned. We feel sure that, could he speak, he would wish that the story of his conversion should be placed in the forefront, setting forth as it does the wonderful grace and amazing love of the Christ he loved so ardently and served so faithfully.

We cannot close this chapter without a word of explanation. A great deal of conjecture is displayed as to who was the actual preacher on that particular Sunday morning. Some writers assert that it was Robert Eaglan. One writer says, “It was no more Mr. Eaglan than Mr. Eaglan is Mr. Spurgeon.” We have been at some considerable pains to ascertain the right version of this matter. From what we can gather, whoever the preacher was his name has never been disclosed, at least not publicly. After all this is only a small detail, and of little moment perhaps. Of one thing we feel confident we may be assured, that ere this the father and his spiritual child have met and exchanged their greetings on that “blood be-sprinkled shore.” Even now, whilst we are penning these words, they are engaged in “looking” upon that face that was “scarred more than any man's;” and in

unison singing the “song of Moses and the Lamb.” “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name be all the glory.”

CHAPTER 3

COMMENCING THE FIGHT

After a short stay at Newmarket, in 1851, Spurgeon removed to Cambridge to take the office of usher in an important school, under the principalship of a Mr. Leeding. From the testimony of one who lived under the same roof we gather that at this time he was of a very playful disposition, ready for almost any fun and mischief, willing to perpetrate the most outrageous jokes. Though of somewhat indifferent health, yet with a ponderous voice, his merry shouts and hearty laugh were constantly heard to ring through the house. But beneath the seemingly rough exterior, there was a sterling, deep, thoughtful interior. His life was as a diamond of incalculable worth, in its rough and unfinished state; yet one which, when polished and refined, was to occupy a prince's place in the hearts of the sons of Britain's worthiest subjects; and also to win the admiration of the world's greatest statesmen. It was in the early spring of this year that Mr. Spurgeon was baptized by immersion in the Triune name, according to the sacred command. Singularly enough it was on the birthday of his beloved mother that this Christian ordinance was administered. Not in some quiet, sheltered nook, away from scrutiny and observation; not secretly for fear of man was this solemn rite administered. No. In the river dividing two counties, C. H. Spurgeon publicly confessed his "profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," by being buried with Him in baptism. Two hours devoted to deep heart-searching, quiet prayer, holy meditation, was a fitting prelude to that which was to follow. For more than forty years a consistent, useful and blameless life testified to his sincerity and wholeheartedness in the Master's cause, and for whose service he thus proclaimed his discipleship.

It was at Cambridge that his faith seemed to have first been evidenced by his works. The spiritual nature was evidently stirred within him; and having received the "Truth as it is in Jesus," the natural desire was created to impart that "Truth" to others. The first time Spurgeon was called upon

to testify as to his newly found faith was brought about in a very unexpected manner, at least to the then untried, unfledged, inexperienced youth. He was invited one Sunday evening by a gentleman to accompany him to a village preaching station some three miles from Cambridge. Whilst on their journey the question arose as to who was to officiate at the service; after much debate the lot fell upon Spurgeon. Thus it was in a small cottage (in the village of Teversham), with a pulpit in one corner of the room, the late renowned pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, then a lad of sixteen, spoke out of the fullness of his heart of the preciousness of Jesus. "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious," was the text. There was no breaking down or destitution of ideas in this first sermon. "To our own delight," says Spurgeon, referring to this memorable incident, "we did not stop short in the middle of the sermon, and at last the desired haven was in view. We made a finish and took up the hymn book, but, to our astonishment, an aged voice cried out, 'Bless your dear heart, how old are you?' Our very solemn reply was, 'You must wait till the service is over before making such inquiries. Let us now sing.'" Having once entered upon this solemn duty, and finding acceptance with the people, the youthful preacher laid himself out for one service every evening, after attending to his duties in school during the day. The writer of this sketch, in speaking to a Baptist minister of Wisbech the other day respecting the great loss they had sustained, was agreeably surprised to hear him remark, "I know that little cottage at Teversham well; for it was there. in that little room, that I, like my revered predecessor, preached my first sermon."

In a very short time the youth of sixteen summers was continually occupying the pulpits of the surrounding villages, and so highly were his services appreciated that his visits generally had to be repeated again and again; and there was a unanimity of opinion that he had "an old head upon young shoulders?" His reputation spread amazingly, and in a short time he was engaged in week-night services in the pulpits of Cambridge, the first pulpit he occupied in that town being that of the father of the Baptist minister just referred to.

Another feature of his work came to the front at this period. Temperance principles were not so popular then as now, and temperance advocates could boast of few really godly lay helpers (much less clerical), so they were devoutly thankful for any raw recruits. It was rumored that Spurgeon

had joined their ranks. The addition of this young orator to their number was an important accession, and almost immediately he was announced to address a meeting on temperance. He did so with the greatest eloquence, and from his manner one would have concluded he had been an upholder of total abstinence all his days. At the close of the meeting a gentleman said,

“And, pray, how long have you been a temperance man, Mr. Spurgeon?”

The answer was given with the greatest sang froid and coolness imaginable,

“About three weeks, sir.”

The villagers of the various rural districts around Cambridge were soon to lose the ministrations of Spurgeon. and be deprived of the privilege of listening to the “boy preacher” of the Fens. The Baptists of Water-beach gave him a call to be the pastor of their church, promising he should not be overburdened with an exorbitant stipend. Spurgeon, after much prayer and meditation, accepted the call, and went to minister to the people in an old square building, although many of its attendants looked upon it as sacred as the Ark of the Covenant. The position held by Spurgeon was indeed a marvelous one. Picture to your mind the scene in its varied aspects. Here is a youth of seventeen called to be the spiritual instructor to many old enough to be his grandfather. Verily, the hand of the Lord was in all this. Some there were who boasted they were SOUND in the faith, the elect, according to the foreknowledge of God. Others there were, scrawed with a kind of Calvinism that was enough to make the ghost of Calvin appear among them and reprove them for their narrow-minded bigotry. Some writers have thought that these good souls must have had an important influence on the mind of the young minister; hence this would in some measure account for the very strong Calvinistic tone which pervaded his early sermons, although we should think even his narrowness would not be strong enough for these followers of good John Calvin. Now and again, by a nod of disapproval, or a mournful shake of the head, they would show their non-acceptance of the truth as the preacher presented a full and free gospel for a needy and empty sinner. Be that as it may, for some two years Spurgeon ministered successfully to this village church. Members were added to the church, and their preaching place could not contain the numbers that flocked to hear him. The enormous stipend of forty pounds per annum, with a number of old-fashioned country deacons, and members

who demanded three sermons every week, each of which sermons would occupy an hour at the very least, and must have the full weight of sixteen ounces to the pound, were not very tempting elements in a man's work to induce him to make a very long sojourn; and yet for a considerable period Spurgeon labored harmoniously and contentedly with this people.

It is quite a mistake to suppose that at this time the preacher, young as he was, was hidden in a corner or unknown to fame. The fact is, he was fast becoming one of the most popular preachers in the county. His services were in great requisition and constant request. Well does the writer remember Spurgeon preaching at Somersham at this period. It was at that time he wore the much talked of short jacket and turned-down collar. During the services he was the guest of the eccentric miller of Houghton, the late W. Porto Brown. Mr. Brown was a good, kind, charitable man; but his eccentricities made him less popular than he would otherwise have been. Speaking of his stay at the old man's house, Mr. Spurgeon quaintly remarks, "In our youth we preached at Houghton, and had the felicitous misery of being the good miller's guest." On Mr. Spurgeon making his appearance in the pulpit at Somersham, the old man was much surprised at his youthful appearance, and did not hesitate at the close of the service to tell him, "that his preaching was very well for an apprentice boy." Notwithstanding, this veteran descendant of a Quaker ancestry and the rapidly developing protege of the Stambourne Puritan formed a friendship that continued till the decease of the honest and outspoken miller.

The time was now drawing near that proved the youthful pastor of Waterbeach was destined to occupy a larger sphere, and to cover a large surface with his influence. The talents hidden in his mind were to extend their domain of exercise; the light which was irradiating a mere handful of people was to shine into the understandings of myriads, and the man who was an astonishment to these humble villagers was to excite the wonderment of the world's greatest intelligences. Yes, sovereign and subjects, rich and poor, wise and unwise, statesmen and senators, peers and peeresses, poet and preacher, philanthropist and philosopher, were yet to sit at his feet and learn of him, listen to his unapproachable eloquence, and acknowledge his unmistakable power.

The two years at Waterbeach must have been an exceedingly happy time, for in the heyday of youth work was indeed to him a pleasure, whilst the results of that work was helpful and stimulating in after years. Often were these early days of his ministry referred to by him who has left us all too soon, as seasons of mighty power, and “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.” By his ministry there a great reformation had been effected in the lives of the people. Not only had many joined the church, but the Sabbath was kept a holy day — drunkards became sober, the profligate abandoned his sinful life, backsliders were restored, and great power accompanied the ministry of the word. What was the true secret of the successes of this youthful pastor? He not only believed in but he preached as though he believed in the Bible as God’s book, containing God’s revealed will to man. He also was a firm believer in the work and office of the Holy Ghost, in the personal indwelling of that Holy Ghost. True it was, he lived and preached with a deep personal sense that God lived in him, and through Him in him, and by Him his ministry (as a true soldier of Jesus Christ) was begun, continued, and finally finished, with the sure and certain hope of “the recompense of reward.” As a leading dignitary of the Church of England aptly puts it, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon made the people feel that the Bible was a book never to be suspected, not to be apologized for, but a book to be believed and trusted, and received as the very Word of God.” Here, then, is the secret of the successes of that long and laborious life made manifest. From his childlike faith and whole hearted belief in Israel’s God should spring forth a power that should be felt by his consecrated ministry and life. Here was born that love, begotten by Jesus Christ, that should carry with it an influence that should be felt in the hearts of multitudes long after he had ceased to labor and to work. Here shone forth a sympathy, lighted by the indwelling of the Spirit of “the Prince of Peace,” that shed its luster round about his pathway, “shining more and more unto the perfect day.” Surely from the new-made grave in the quiet God’s-acre at Norwood there comes a voice to every reader of this sketch, “Be not weary in well doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not.”

CHAPTER 4

STILL FIGHTING

The year 1853 was an eventful one to Mr. Spurgeon. One Sabbath morning he had walked from Cambridge to Waterbeach to officiate at his beloved meeting-house. On this especial morning the pastor was all aglow with his brisk walk, and quite ready for his pulpit exercises. Sitting down in the “table pew,” a letter was placed in his hands bearing the London post-mark. Referring to this incident twenty-five years afterwards, Spurgeon remarks, “It was an unusual missive, and was opened with some curiosity. It contained an invitation to preach at New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, the pulpit of which had been formerly occupied by Dr. Rippon; the very Dr. Rippon whose hymn book was then before me, and out of which I was to choose my hymns for the service.” The shadow of the good Dr. Rippon seemed to hover over Park Street Chapel, and led the subject of our sketch to view it with a considerable amount of awe. He passed the epistle over to the deacon, remarking that “it must have been sent to him in mistake, and was no doubt intended for a namesake of his resident in Norfolk.” The deacon quietly replied he feared it was no mistake. The fact being, he had expected some of the large adjacent churches would rob them of their shepherd; never dreaming his fame as a preacher had already reached the ears of Metropolitan Baptists. But it was time to begin the service, so the letter was laid on one side to be answered the next day. The correspondence which ensued resulted in the “boy preacher” receiving an invitation to supply the New Park Street Chapel.

Spurgeon’s first impressions of the great city, like those of many others, were far from favorable. That was indeed a trying Saturday night for the youthful preacher. One of the deacons directed him to his apartments, where he met with other young clergymen. We are not surprised that they wondered at the audacity of this young countryman in coming to preach to the City folks. Evidently his dress was not the ideal of what a cleric’s should be. Like Eliab of old, so did these brethren in the ministry wonder

at this young David's pride and haughtiness of heart in presuming to foist himself upon their notice as a teacher of the London people. Verily, they were indeed Job comforters to this stripling stranger. Ah, they knew not of the sling and stone of prayer and faith hidden in the secret of that young heart. Little thought they that in that youth they saw one whose name, in the days to come, was to be a household one in that great city. His first night in London was an anxious and troubled one. In the morning he wended his way through the streets to Park Street Chapel dreading to meet the worthy dignitaries of that important edifice. The ordeal was indeed a trying one, but depending upon the arm of Jeshurun's God, the "boy preacher.... came, saw, and conquered." The morning service was only sparsely attended, but at night, his fame having spread, a true London audience had to be faced; the lions he so much dreaded had to be and were confronted; and henceforth Spurgeon cared as little about facing a company of Londoners as he did meeting a few simple folks in a country village. The tremor of the early morn had for ever vanished; the "fear of than which bringeth a snare," had been removed; and when he returned that evening to his lonely lodgings, he did so a stronger and a braver man for the ordeal through which he had passed.

It is needless to say the outspoken utterance of the boy-preacher created a profound impression; and these first services were highly appreciated. The second Sabbath services were even more strikingly successful (for the fame of this youthful expositor had spread abroad), and when the four probationary Sundays were over, Spurgeon went back to Cambridge confident of the fact that he had moved his hearers; whether that should lead Park Street Church to move him remained to be seen. It was soon manifest that even the youth of nineteen sunliners was to become a successor to the renowned Dr. Rippon, and other celebrated preachers who had been his forerunners in that pastorate. The attendance at Park Street Chapel had so much improved, and so greatly had God honored the work of His youthful servant. that the prayer meetings were attended by larger numbers than had formerly been seem at the public preaching services. Who shall say what a mighty influence on the great preacher's life was exercised by the prayer meetings held in those early days in Park Street. On 28th April, 1854, Mr. Spurgeon accepted the pastorate of Park Street Chapel.

Within twelve months Park Street Chapel had to be enlarged. It was admitted on all hands that an original genius had appeared in the English pulpit, and such crowds flocked to hear him that not even standing room could be obtained. So dense were the crowds that the atmosphere of Park Street Chapel was compared by the preacher to “the Black Hole of Calcutta.” So crowded was the sanctuary on Sabbath nights that Spurgeon exclaimed, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, and by faith this wall at the back shall come down too.” An aged and prudent deacon, at the close of the service, in somewhat denouncing terms said to him, “Let us never hear of that again, sir;” upon which the great preacher promptly replied, “You will hear no more about it when it is done, therefore the sooner you set about doing it the better;” and they did set about it early in 1855, the congregation meeting meanwhile in Exeter Hall.

No man, and that man a preacher of the Gospel, was more vilified and traduced than was Mr. Spurgeon at this time. Every man has to pay his price in some shape or form for popularity. Mr. Spurgeon was no exception. The treatment he received will ever be a standing disgrace to us as a people. We boast of our civilization in this nineteenth century, but the common hangman was treated with more respect than was rendered by a large portion of the nineteenth century Babylonians to the sacred office held by Mr. Spurgeon. Who at this time would have dared to prophesy that this was the man who, in a few years, should command the respect of Royalty itself, and be favored with the friendship of the most gifted leaders of the Church? Oh! the vacillation of the world in which we live; it is wonderful; it is marvelous indeed! Today it greets the man with the most opprobrious shouts, and the coarsest jeers; tomorrow, it sings its hosannas of praise and eulogy to him.

The advent of Mr. Spurgeon to the metropolis was the occasion of sundry remarks of onlookers, which were neither charitable, Christianlike, or Christly, many affirming that the flush of success would be but a nine-days wonder; wiseacres prophesied various calamities; and even some of his own ministerial brethren thought — was the thought father to the wish? — the presumptuous boy would ere long have a most humiliating fall. But all these prophets prophesied falsely! Comments, of anything but a flattering nature, appeared in various journals. Caricatures entitled “Brimstone and Treacle,” “Catch ‘em alive O,” etc., adorned the

publisher's windows. Then arose a host of critics, votaries of the pencil and the pen, some of whom were friendly, some were neutral, others (and they a great multitude) were bitterly antagonistic. The most villainous stories were circulated; the most cruel falsehoods were invented; nevertheless, the work of God prospered, the multitude increased, and numbers were added to the Church.

Beside this outside persecution, there were other matters that were pressing heavily upon the mind of this youthful and devoted pastor. His experience at that time was a peculiar one; and he tells it in that characteristic way that no other could do. A paragraph from his "Treasury of David," on Psalm 91, most graphically describes this trying period. "When I had scarcely been in London twelve months, the neighborhood in which I labored was visited by Asiatic cholera, and my congregation suffered from its inroads. Family after family summoned me to the bedside of the smitten, and almost every day I was called to visit the grave. I gave myself up with youthful ardor to the visitation of the sick, and was sent for from all corners of the district by persons of all ranks and religions. I became weary in body and sick at heart. My friends seemed falling one by one, and I felt or fancied that I was sickening like those around me. A little more work and weeping would have laid me low among the rest. I felt my burden was heavier than I could bear, and I was ready to sink under it. As God would have it, I was returning mournfully home from a funeral, when my curiosity led me to read a paper which was wafered up in a shoemaker's window in the Dover road. It did not look like a trade announcement, nor was it, for it bore in a good bold handwriting those words: 'Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.' The effect upon my heart was immediate. Faith appropriated the passage as her own. I felt secure, refreshed, girt with immortality. I went on with my visitation of the dying in a calm and peaceful spirit; I felt no fear of evil, and I suffered no harm. The Providence which moved the tradesman to place these verses in his window I gratefully acknowledge, and in the remembrance of its marvelous power, I adore the Lord my God."

One more instance of "the trial of his faith" which befell this mighty man of God, must be given ere we pass on to a brighter picture.

New Park Street Chapel, when enlarged, soon became far too small for the crowds which came to hear Spurgeon; and the deacons took the largest available building in London — the Royal Surrey Gardens Music Hall; and in October, 1856, he began his ministry there, and continued it till the Metropolitan Tabernacle was opened. What is so well known as the Surrey Gardens accident cost Mr. Spurgeon a serious illness, in fact. it is questioned by some whether he ever fully recovered the shock which it gave to his whole system. The following is an extract taken from the church book describing this terrible catastrophe: —

“Lord’s day, October 19th, 1856. — On the evening of this day, in accordance with the resolution passed at the church meeting, held October 6th, the church and congregation assembled to hear our pastor in the Music Hall of the Royal Surrey Gardens. A very large number of persons (about 7,000) assembled on that occasion, and the service was commenced in the usual way by singing, reading the Scriptures, and prayer. Just, however, after our pastor had commenced his prayer, a disturbance was caused (it is supposed by some evil persons acting in concert), and the whole congregation was seized with a sudden panic. In the stampede that ensued. seven persons were killed outright, and twenty-eight others seriously injured. This lamentable occurrence produced very serious effects on the nervous system of our pastor. He was entirely prostrated for some days, and compelled to abandon his preaching engagements. Through the great mercy of our Heavenly Father, he was, however, restored, so as to be able to officiate in his own chapel, on Sunday, October 31st, and gradually recovered his wonted health and vigor. The Lord’s name be praised.”

The pain and grief endured at this time by Mr. Spurgeon were greatly increased by the inconsiderate and virulent attacks, and cruel misrepresentations of the press. By one London daily paper, a type of many others, the broken-hearted preacher was described as a ‘ranting charlatan!’ who uttered vile blasphemies, and hurled damnation at the heads of his sinful hearers. It is well known that these calumnies have been long since lived down, and the very newspapers, which twenty-five years ago thus sought to bring him and his work into obloquy and disrepute, are today the upholders of his character, the adherents of his institutions, and

the staunchest of his friends. Verily, "Thou wilt make even the wrath of man to praise Thee, and the remainder of his wrath wilt Thou restrain?"

During the period in which Mr. Spurgeon was preaching in the Surrey Music Hall, large numbers of the aristocracy attended his ministry, amongst whom were the Lord Chief-Justice Campbell, the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs of London, Earl Russell, Lord Alfred Paget, Lord Panmure, Earl Gray, Earl Shaftesbury, Miss Florence Nightingale, Lady Rothschild, Dr. Livingstone, and many other persons of learning and distinction. It was during that interim that Mr. Spurgeon paid one of his visits to Holland, was privileged to preach before the Dutch Court, and had a lengthened interview with the Queen of that country.

On Tuesday, 16th August, 1859, the first stone of the Metropolitan Tabernacle was laid by Sir Morton Peto. The proceedings opened with the singing of the hymn, "Before Jehovah's awful throne." After prayer, a history of the church was read by Mr. W. B. Carr. In the evening a tea meeting was held in Rea's Repository, at which more than 2,000 persons were present. The Lord Mayor, a Colchester man, presided at the evening meeting, and some racy speeches were made. One by Judge Payne contains the following play on Mr. Spurgeon's initials: — "C. H. S. means a 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 a chapel-heating skill; he is a care-hushing soother; he is a Christ-honoring soldier; and he is a Christ honored servant."

Truly we may say that now the sun was beginning shine through the clouds, which had so long hung around Mr. Spurgeon. He had fought a fierce battle. There are few men that would not have succumbed to a tithe of the difficulties which had surrounded him. These early years of his ministry had been times of persecution, suffering, and discouragement, but their lessons had been well heeded. Rich, ripe, and varied experience had been treasured up during these years of trial. How much he had had to encourage him in his work of faith and labor of love! When he first preached in London he had 200 hearers, now they numbered 1,178 members. During that period he had received into fellowship by baptism no less than 3,569 persons. None can deny he was a great and successful

preacher. None more so. It is not too much to say that even at this time he was the “prince of preachers,” towering high above his fellows. There was only one Spurgeon, and he stood alone in all he said or did. None could imitate or copy him successfully. He possessed one of the most vivid imaginations. He was a real man. To him sin was real; Christ was real; heaven was real; pardon was real. It was this reality that he carried with him into every detail of his life that made him speak “as a dying man to dying men.” He owed not his success or his influence to the chance of circumstances, to his wit and raciness, to his wonderful and striking command of language; no, to none of these things but to his firm and tenacious grasp of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That the reader may form some idea of Spurgeon’s widely-spread popularity, we give the following instances as a fitting close to this chapter On 7th October, 1857, the day set apart for national humiliation on account of the troubles in India, Spurgeon preached to 24,000 people in the Crystal Palace, when the munificent sum of 686 pounds was collected for the national fund. Some two or three days prior to this great meeting, Mr. Spurgeon went down to the palace to make some special arrangements, and to test the acoustic properties of the vast building Asking a friend that accompanied him to take his stand at the farthest extremity of the building, Mr. Spurgeon mounted the platform, and uttered the words, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,” every word of which was heard distinctly by his friend. Soon after they left the building and returned home. About twenty — seven years afterwards Mr. Spurgeon was asked to visit a dying man who particularly wished to see him. He at once complied. On entering the sick chamber, the sufferer asked Mr. Spurgeon whether he remembered his visit with his friend to the Crystal Palace. “Perfectly well,” answered Mr. Spurgeon. “Well, sir,” said the man, “on that day I was working just underneath where you stood. I was an unsaved man, living a sinful, wicked life. When I heard you give utterance that day to the words, ‘Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,’ the Holy Spirit applied those words to my heart, and very soon after I found peace through believing. I thought I could not die till I had told you how God had used you as His instrument in my conversion.”

The joy and pleasure that this death bed testimony gave the great preacher can be better imagined than described.

CHAPTER 5

IN THE THICK OF THE BATTLE

The first service held at the New Tabernacle was on Monday morning, 15th March, 1861, more than a thousand persons being present. Mr. Spurgeon presided, and the time was profitably spent by this vast number of people in praise and prayer. The first sermon was preached on the following Monday to a crowded audience by the pastor, from Acts 5:42, "And daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ," the sermon being but the forecast of what was to be the essence of the preacher's ministry. After a month's opening services, the Church commenced its regular work, in this cathedral of non-conformity, free of debt. The total cost of this building was 31,332 pounds 4 shillings and 10 pence, nearly half of which was raised by the pastor's unaided efforts, by preaching special sermons in every part of Great Britain.

To hear Mr. Spurgeon preach, especially in his own commodious Tabernacle, was to feel his marvelous power, even though it was difficult to understand and explain it. He owed little to things purely adventitious for his success. The service at the Tabernacle was utterly devoid of such accessories of worship as good music and imposing ritual, and yet Sabbath after Sabbath that great congregation of 6,000 souls assembled for more than thirty years. Without undue exaggeration, we can affirm that his record as a preacher is absolutely without parallel in the history of the world, for in addition to the crowds that waited upon his ministry, his sermons have been printed, translated into other languages, and widely circulated in many lands. It is no doubt as a preacher that Spurgeon is best known, and it is to his unrivaled power in the pulpit that he owes his renown. None better than himself was aware that the methods he adopted represented a departure from the prevailing fashion, to which the majority of people still adhered as the only standard of propriety. "We have most certainly departed from the usual mode of preaching," he remarked, "but do not feel bound to offer even half a word of apology for so doing, since

we believe ourselves free to use any manner of speech which is calculated to impress the truth upon our hearers.”

That Mr. Spurgeon was thoroughly conscientious in his pulpit ministrations was evidenced by the remarkable sermon he preached on “Baptismal Regeneration.” Wherever he saw sin he rebuked it, or a wrong he condemned it. This sermon raised a storm of reproach against the champion of the truth. Having delivered his soul upon this vital question, he was perfectly regardless as to consequences. No less than two hundred thousand copies of this sermon was sold.

A large volume might be made up of the various special services which Mr. Spurgeon from time to time was engaged in. During the renovation of the Tabernacle in 1867, he preached in the Agricultural Hall, when it is computed that not less than 20,000 persons for five consecutive Sundays assembled to hear the greatest preacher of his time. Speaking of the literature issued from this busy pen, the Christian World says, “Including the weekly sermon, and his many articles in the Sword and Trowel, Mr. Spurgeon’s printed works have probably been more voluminous than the productions of any modern author. The weekly sermon, beginning with the first week of 1855, has completed 36 yearly volumes. The average circulation has been maintained at 25,000 weekly. The monthly magazine has also completed 26 yearly volumes. Of the ‘Treasury of David,’ in seven volumes, something like 130,000 volumes have been sold. Of ‘Lectures to my Students,’ and ‘Commenting and Commentaries,’ between sixty and seventy thousand volumes have been disposed of. Then ‘John Ploughman’s Talk’ and ‘Pictures’ together show a circulation of half a million volumes. The other works are very numerous, all being more or less popular.” What a wonderful testimony do these statistics furnish of the indomitable will and heroic perseverance of the famous preacher. In these lines are given us the work of any six ordinary men, and yet, in addition to all this and very much more beside, he was to the front in every good word and work. Assuredly such a career has been altogether unselfish; there was much of self-denying in his life, but no self-seeking. Where shall we find any other teacher whose printed sermons would be read week after week, and year after year, by tens and hundreds of thousands. not only over England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, but in the backwoods of Canada, on the prairies of America, and in the remotest

corners of the civilized world? And echo answers, Where? A Herculean task like this has no parallel. Not only did he preach to his church of over five thousand members, but by these published sermons he has been preaching week by week, for these thirty years past, to a larger audience than could be gathered even in that spacious Tabernacle. Where his voice was never heard, where his face was never seen, in languages which he could not speak, his sermons were read; and, doubtless, he has met many in heaven whose conversion, unknown to him, has been brought about instrumentally by his words, and who, with many more, are “his joy and his crown of rejoicing.”

One of the foremost enterprises of which Mr. Spurgeon was the founder, and in which he displayed a great interest, is the Pastors' College, which was commenced in 1856. Like many other great institutions, it had a small beginning. At the first one young man was placed under the tutorial care of the Rev. G. Rogers, of Camberwell; this one was soon increased to forty, who were all maintained from Mr. Spurgeon's private purse — but the numbers multiplied so rapidly that this source of income was soon found insufficient to meet the necessary expenditure. The weekly offerings system was next adopted, but even this failed to meet the demand. At one time Mr. Spurgeon's college purse had only one pound remaining to its credit. What was to be done? Mr. Spurgeon solved the difficulty with his usual promptness by declaring his intention of disposing of his horse and carriage sooner than his beloved college should suffer. But there was no need for this willing sacrifice. At this critical juncture a lady sent a cheque for 200 pound, which was followed in a few days by another gift of 100 pound from the same source. And so, the work has grown; it has never lacked for supporters. In July, 1875, Mr. Spurgeon received 5,000 pound for this deserving institution, as a legacy from the late Mr. Mathews. This is only one example of the many ways in which God has answered prayer and rewarded the faith of His servant in this important work. About 845 have gone forth from this college into the world to preach “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” We cannot refrain from saying that, under God, the college owes much of its success to the earnest and devoted labors of the Rev. G. Rogers, its first tutor, and in whose home the students were originally located.

In the year 1866 Mr. Spurgeon published the following remarks in the October number of the *Sword and Trowel*: — “A sister in Christ has requested me to take care of 20,000 pound, which she desires to consecrate to the Lord’s service by putting it in trust for the maintenance of orphan boys, with a special view to their godly education, in the hope that by Divine grace they may. be converted and become ministers and missionaries in future years. Being weighed down with care, we shall hesitate in this business, but dare not do other than follow the intimation of the Divine hand.”

The donor of this munificent gift was the widow of a clergyman, and an entire stranger to Mr. Spurgeon. Her letter, in which the generous offer was made, fairly took him by surprise, and he was somewhat doubtful of its genuineness. It seemed too good to be true. A friend suggested he should call upon the lady. An interview was arranged. The abode of the donor not giving any evidence of wealth, Mr. Spurgeon said he had called respecting the two hundred pounds she wished to place at his disposal. “Dear me,” replied the lady, “did I write two hundred? I meant twenty thousand.” Assuring her that she had actually named in her letter the latter sum, Mr. Spurgeon accounted for the discrepancy by saying, “Concluding that there might be a nought or two too many, I thought I would avoid offense by being on the right side and saying two hundred pounds.” Thus the Boys’ Orphanage was started. One of the most pleasing features of the orphanages is, that they are entirely unsectarian. An orphanage has also been provided for girls. The cost of maintaining these orphanages is about 12,000 a year.

In reference to the Pastors’ College, there are two names associated with it that we feel we must mention, showing as it does that if only these two men had through its training and tuition been raised to the high and honorable position they now occupy, as successful pastors of successful churches, its work has not been in vain.

The Rev. W. Cuff, the energetic pastor of the Shoreditch Tabernacle, says, “Pray let me bear a personal testimony to my beloved friend, Mr. Spurgeon. Today I feel poor, and sad, and lonely, because he has gone. I owe to him, under God, all I am, all I have done, or shall do in the days that remain. He took me from obscurity into his college when I could

scarcely read or write. With marvelous love and untiring patience he nurtured my early faith in Christ and love to men. He touched all the sources of my being, and developed all my character. Whatever I am he made me, and I rejoice to say so.... I claim to know him, for I was with him much in the years gone by, and I say without reserve that he was the most unselfish, generous soul I ever knew. I speak of him as I found him, in all the changing circumstances of all the years, in change in doctrine, in forms of worship, and of controversy. He was always the same definite, kind, firm, generous man..... Never did I appeal to him in vain, and his help was ever given in such a manner as to make one feel it was a delight to him to help all who were in distress. I have abundant proof of this in his letters which I have preserved. The last he wrote me I value beyond gold, and it must be amongst the very last he wrote, for it was written at Mentone only a few days before his fatal illness, and bears date 9th Jan., 1892..... My heart aches and I weep as I write over a loss that can never be replaced in a life of struggle and hard work for God and the good of men.”

The Rev. Archibald G. Brown (whose work in the east of London is only second to that of Mr. Spurgeon in the south), the pastor of the East London Tabernacle, said, “He remembered, in much trembling, going to the Metropolitan Tabernacle to ask Mr. Spurgeon if he would allow him to enter his college, and he seemed to hear again the very sentence the pastor uttered as they entered the vestry, ‘Oh, Brown, I have been looking for you.’ They would not wonder how he revered Mr. Spurgeon’s memory, if they knew all he had been to him in trouble. Some sixteen years ago, when broken with a sore grief, he went over to the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and how surprised he was to find that Mr. Spurgeon had taken the trouble to prepare a sermon on purpose for him. After the sermon Mr. Spurgeon came down to him, and with a grip of the hand, said, ‘I have said all I could for you, poor fellow.’ God was an awful reality to Spurgeon..... He lived before God; he acted before God; he spoke before God, and it was not left for the pulpit. He had never known himself spend half-an-hour with Mr. Spurgeon, and how many had he spent, without being brought into the very presence of the Lord Himself.... God satisfied him. The Elijah of the nineteenth century had the characteristic of his forerunner, that of being one who consciously stood before God. Again Jesus was so absolutely and so manifestly his heart’s Lord — wonderfully

so..... He never knew a man who had the tear so near the surface for his Lord as Mr. Spurgeon.... It was wonderful how he lingered at Calvary, — how he would go on talking about the Lord's unknown agony, the big tears running down his cheeks as he spoke.”

These instances might be multiplied, but space forbids. They need no comment. They teach their own lesson. We regret we can only mention “The Colportage Association;” “The County Mission;” “The Evangelical Society;” “The Alms' Houses;” “The Tract Society,” and a multitude of other good works, all formed directly or indirectly by Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

CHAPTER 6

SCARRED AND WOUNDED

We now come to one of the most painful episodes in the life of the great preacher. It was no light trial that he passed through; it was no puny conflict that he engaged in when fighting the great battle for right and truth, in that which is now so well known as the “Down Grade Controversy” He could do no other than what he did. For the firm unflinching stand he took he has earned the eternal gratitude of Evangelical Christendom. No watchman, according to the best of his ability, ever sounded an alarm in Zion, concerning the growing evils of the time when it was more needed. No uncertain sound concerning departures from the faith came from his voice. And was there not a cause for this? Verily there was. When we find the Atonement scouted; the Inspiration of the Bible denied; the Holy Spirit degraded into an influence; the punishment of sin turned into fiction, and the resurrection into a myth; surely it was time that someone should show himself jealous for the honor of the Lord of Hosts! Nobly did he champion the orthodox faith; righteously did he contend for that faith once delivered to the saints!

Writing only a few months since, Mr. Spurgeon said: — “We live in perilous times; we are passing through a most eventful period; the Christian world is convulsed; there is a mighty upheaval of the old foundations of faith; a great over-hauling of old teaching. The Bible is made to speak today in an unknown tongue. Gospel teachings, the proclamation of which made men fear to sin and dread the thought of eternity, are being shelved Calvary is being robbed of its glory, sin of its horror, and the power of the Gospel weakened. There is no use in mincing matters; there are thousands of us in all denominations who believe that many ministers have seriously departed from the truths of the Gospel, and a sad decline of spiritual life is manifest in our churches.... The case is mournful. Certain ministers are making infidels. Avowed atheists are not a tenth as dangerous as those preachers who scatter doubt and stab at faith. A plain man told us the other day that two ministers had derided him, because he thought we

should pray for rain.... Have these advanced thinkers filled their own chapels? Have they, after all, prospered through discarding the old methods? The places which the old Gospel filled, the new nonsense has emptied and will keep empty.”

Mr. Spurgeon never appeared more truly grand than when he was willing to fling up and sacrifice all for the truth; willing to forfeit a thousand friendships and suffer the loss of the help of thousands in his work. Mr. Archibald Brown says, “That Mr. Spurgeon did speak strongly none could deny. But he lived in his utterances, he lived in the truths he proclaimed, he lived in the witness he had born, and the battle must go on. The champion had fallen, he had gone to his rest, but the fight continued. The truth was not less precious because dear Spurgeon was dead. He never had a shadow of a doubt of the step he took. Most distinctly let it be understood, that he never for a moment regretted the step that he was led of God to take for the Honor of Gods Truth. The last time I saw him he said, ‘If I had not come out when I did, I should have come out half-a-dozen times since.’ If he had not come out when he did, he would have come out today. He maintained the perfectly verbal inspiration of the Bible from beginning to end, and that the Bible does not simply contain the Word of God, but that it is the Word of God.”

He was scarred and wounded in this terrible conflict, but nobly did he fight. He has gone to his well- earned rest and reward. The sword he so well wielded has fallen from that hand for ever. Now he wears the victor’s crown, now he sings the conqueror’s song. He was a martyr for Truth’s sake. He has now received the martyr’s prize.

Speaking at the memorial service in the Tabernacle, his private secretary, Mr. Harrald, said, “Within that olive casket lies all the remains of a martyr for Truth’s sake. That great controversy killed him. ‘Even though an almost fatal illness was part of the cost,’ he said himself in the Sword and Trowel, and now we may leave out the almost.”

CHAPTER 7

WESTWOOD

This little sketch of the great preacher's life and work would not be complete without a glimpse of the home circle and its surroundings. Mr. Spurgeon was married in 1856 to Miss Susannah Thompson, daughter of Mr. Robert Thompson, of Falcon Square, London. Twin boys, Charles and Thomas Spurgeon are the only additions to their family. They were born in Nightingale Lane, Balham, near London, on 20th September, 1857. They were both educated at Camden House School, Brighton. There they acquitted themselves honorably in the scholastic department, and succeeded in obtaining some handsome prizes.

The conversion of Charles took place under the following circumstances: — He was out riding, accompanied by a Christian friend, when their conversation turned into a religious channel. Rain came on, and they sought shelter under a tree. Dismounting, they both knelt down upon the grass, while his friend offered up a prayer. It was during this short season of communion that the sunshine of truth broke in upon his young heart. In 1879 he received a call from the congregation at South Street, Greenwich. The call was after prayerful deliberation accepted, and he entered upon his first pastorate there at the age of twenty-three. The building, which was almost empty, is now filled with nearly a thousand hearers, and the church rejoices in many tokens of spiritual prosperity.

Mr. Thomas Spurgeon, after being for some years pastor of the Auckland Tabernacle, New Zealand, is now following the work of an evangelist, his labors being abundantly blessed.

A bond of filial love and affection bound the hearts of these two sons to their revered and sainted father. In him they ever found a ready counselor, a willing helper, a trusted friend, one to whom they could ever turn for advice or consolation. What really was the hallowed relationship that

existed between this spiritual Goliath and his offspring is best told in the words of Charles Spurgeon himself. He writes, "There is only one other who can write the words, 'My father,' after the illustrious name of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. And such a father! Blessed be his dear memory! Never had any son a kinder, wiser, happier, holier, or more generous sire, than it pleased God to grant me; and now that he has gone there are no words powerful enough in my vocabulary to describe the irreparable loss. Most gratefully do I endorse the many true and kind things that have been said in reference to him; but all has not been uttered of his worth, and never can be for many a day to come. I feel that even the fullest poetic license may be granted to those who would fain do him honor, either by tongue or pen, and none would be charged with exaggeration. Do I seem to over-estimate this beloved one? Well, forgive me. I am his son; and as I have ever loved him with a deep affection, now that he is 'waiting on the other side,' I feel to love him more. He was what he was 'by the grace of God,' and I do but magnify the Master in speaking well of the servant. All glory be to God for such a life! and we take the crown of our esteem and lay it at Jesus' feet."

What a noble testimony from such a loving heart to departed worth and goodness! Well may such a one exclaim in this hour of sadness and of grief, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof" May the spirit of the departed Elijah rest in a mighty measure upon his Elishas.

One word, and one word only, in reference to her who had been the close companion of his life, the choice "helpmate" in his toils, and the sharer of his sufferings Precious and beloved as a mother, too intensely dear and affectionate as a wife, for words to adequately express, she is left for a little while — the loving and the loved wife — until the summons comes, when she shall meet her beloved in that land "where congregations ne'er break up, and Sabbaths have no end." For several years Mrs. Spurgeon, although herself a great invalid, has in the kindness of her generous heart distributed 130,000 volumes among poor ministers of all denominations. How it has cheered our hearts to know that in this hour of her widowhood, she has been remembered by all classes, from the Heir-Apparent and his Consort to the peasant in his cot.

Mr. Spurgeon's home life was ideal. No one could be an hour under his roof without perceiving the fragrance of domestic affection that pervaded the home. 'To his invalid wife he always spoke with a mingled gaiety and affection that was very touching. Her life was given up by an eminent physician many years since, but God has spared her to be her husband's chief aid in graceful, incessant, and increasing work at his side for the poor servants of Christ.

None enjoyed an outing at Westwood more than the hardly-worked students. It was indeed a cheerful break in the monotony of their lives. Westwood and its master, ay, and mistress too, had a charm for them that words cannot very well express. How they enjoyed walking round that exquisite garden, or gathering a lesson from the feathered songsters or the busy bees, or making the acquaintance of "Snowdrop" and "Daphne" and Mrs. Spurgeon's other orphanage cows. Oh, what a delight and freedom there was in it all to be sure! And then how champed they were with the simple, unpretending talk of the beloved host of "Beulah." How he sowed at will pearls of wit and wisdom, proverb and epigram in handful, yet always ready to listen to others, and prompt to acknowledge with hearty appreciation any good thing they might utter. None enjoyed more than he his beautiful garden and grounds, and he manifested an equal pleasure in exhibiting these beauties of nature to others. Mr. Spurgeon once said, in answer to an overdrawn description in the public press of his house and gardens, "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 social intercourse on account of the limited time at my disposal. I have neither tithe 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."

And now, the earthly "Beulah" is exchanged for the heavenly one where

"Everlasting spring abides
And never withering flowers."

Mr. Spurgeon has died comparatively a poor man though he enjoyed ample opportunities of making money. Indeed, the sums which he has given away at different times would have been a fortune to most men. "I never expected," he once remarked, "anything but food and raiment; and

when my income was forty-five pounds a-year, I was heartily content. It is much the same with me now. When I have a spare five pounds, the college or orphanage or something else requires it, and away it goes.” This is not a matter of surprise when we know that the six thousand pounds which he received as a “silver wedding” testimonial, and the jubilee testimonial, on his completing his fiftieth year, of nearly five thousand pounds, was every penny of it given to the various institutions connected with the Tabernacle.

And now we come to the close of this great man’s life, not because we could not say more, but simply for want of space to contain records of his greatness. Surely we may say, he who is united with Christ rises into an immortality of greatness. The majesty of the enthroned Mediator overshadows the Church, which is His bride He hath made us kings with God. He distributes crowns. He will reward every man, according as his work shall be.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon has been described, and rightly so, as the Elijah of the nineteenth century. He was a mighty leader in evangelical Israel. He had but one sermon, yet it was always new. Truly in his highest, noblest, and truest sense he was great. His special gifts are possessed by none, his unwearied devotion all may emulate. By his death we have been deprived of a courageous, faithful disciple, a man of striking power and strong personality. He was Christ’s gift, a precious gift to the Church of the nineteenth century. He has gone to his well earned rest, but he has left behind him a precious legacy of hope, trust, faith, and courage.

“To thousands of aching hearts, now his is still for ever;
 To thousands of throbbing brains, now his is no longer busy;
 To thousands of toiling hands, now his have ceased their labor;
 To thousands of weary feet, now his have finished their journey.”

“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 labors; and their works do follow them.”

This honor have all His saints. Wherever the Spirit of God subdues the will of the flesh, and arms the heart to self-denying tenderness, there is greatness that awaits its coronation by the Lord of Life and Glory; a

greatness which will last when the things of time and sense are passed away for ever.

CHAPTER 8

LAYING THE WARRIOR TO REST

As was fitting and right, they brought him home to sleep his last sleep. They have laid him amongst the comrades who fought by his side, and fell only a little time before him. Never since the days of the immortal Wesley has there been such lamentation over a prince falling in Israel. For several days prior to that memorable Sunday, the whole nation had watched with fear and anxiety by that sick bed at Mentone. Anxiously was every telegram scanned and every message analyzed. Hope and fear alternately predominated. With some that “hope deferred which maketh the heart sick,” had taken possession. Whilst we anxiously waited, with every fiber of our beings strung to their utmost tension, a mighty host supplicated Him, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, that if agreeable to His will this precious life might be spared. But it was not to be. His will is always the right will. He who doeth all things well took the beloved pastor of thousands to one of His many mansions. Ere the close of Sunday, 31st January, 1892, “the laborer’s work was o’er; his eyes had seen the King in His beauty,” and the land of promise was his inheritance. At last the message reached our shores, and a chord of sympathy vibrated in every heart as they heard or read its import. Although sorrowful to some, yet there was a joy and hope declared that none could gainsay. It was touchingly beautiful in its simplicity. “Our beloved pastor entered heaven at 11:15 on Sunday night.”

In response to a universally expressed wish, if for no other reason, it was decided to lay all that was mortal of the great chieftain in English soil. Those three days’ services in the Tabernacle will never be forgotten by those who were present. Well might his able co-adjutor, Dr. Pierson, say he doubted if any one since Paul’s day had entered heaven to find so many people gathered there saved by his ministry as Mr. Spurgeon. ‘The vast crowds who again and again filled the Tabernacle were permeated with one common sorrow. They all sighed

“For the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still.”

They all “wept, most of all that they should see his face no more”

In the multitude of tributes offered to the memory of the great preacher at those monster gatherings, we can only notice one. Mr. Harrald, in the course of his pathetic address, said, “The beloved pastor had a last word for them, by a most remarkable over-ruling of the providence of God, in the sermon which he appointed for this very week, and which Mrs. Spurgeon had entitled, ‘His own funeral sermon.’ The text was, remarkable to say, ‘Having served his generation by the will of God he fell on sleep.’ The last message sent by the deceased pastor to his beloved church was, ‘Self and wife’s hearty thank-offering, 100 pound for Tabernacle general expenses fund; love to all friends.’ This was the last greeting this side eternity.”

In Mr. Spurgeon’s desk was found by his secretary the following verse. It was in his own handwriting, which was as clear as any he ever penned, and was as follows: —

“No cross, no crown; no loss, no gain;
They, too, must suffer who would reign.
He best can part with life without a sigh,
Whose daily living is to daily die.
Youth pleads for age, age pleads for rest,
Who pleads for heaven will plead the best.”

It was a wonderful and never-to-be forgotten sight that passed through London streets on Thursday, 11th February, 1892. Nothing was seen for miles but bared heads, closed blinds, and universal signs of grief and sorrow. It was indeed a memorable scene. What a lesson that Bible decked coffin preached to its tens of thousands as it passed through their midst! All classes, all creeds, all parties joined in the voice of mourning. The orphan children sang their last hymn to their beloved father as they bore him out of their sight for ever. But their little hymn of praise elicited no song of recognition now from him they had learnt to love so well. No, he is already singing the new song with that multitude which no man can number. Weep on, ye orphan ones, no wonder sobs choke your utterance

and you can sing no more. The father's dead, yea, well we know it; but don't forget, ye desolate ones, your Heavenly Father lives and "He careth for you." Oh how loudly does "he, being dead yet speak" to this sorrowing multitude. Who will hear that message, and receive his Christ and live? Then verily, he shall not have died in vain!

Whether on the Tuesday, when more than 60,000 wended their way through the Tabernacle, silently and sadly, to view that olive-wood coffin, with its paints waving o'er it, or the next day when so many of England's greatest divines (Church of England and Nonconformist alike) paid their last tribute of respect to one whom all recognized as a leader, deep and effective must have been the sermons all this preached; long and lasting we trust the impressions trade; but the real effect of which eternity alone will reveal.

With hearts bowed with a great grief, with tender and loving hands, is that precious burden born to its last resting-place. Eight students (specially chosen for that last sad duty) from that college of which he had so long been the head and chief, deposit with reverent hands and stricken hearts that prized casket in its last resting-place. They weep. Well they may. Behold how they loved him! Their master is taken from their head today. They shall see his face no more. It is their last act of service; their last tribute of affection to him who had been so much to them. Alas! how much they have lost as yet they know not! Yet they sorrow not as those without hope. Their beloved one only sleeps, he shall rise again.

One scene more. Charles, the beloved and loving son, has a double, nay, a treble portion of duty and affection to discharge in this last trying hour. Does he not represent the other son (equally beloved) in the distant Antipodes, and her who has been so much to them all; now keeping her lonely vigil at Mentone? God help him! God bless and sustain her! May the father and husband's God put round about them each the "everlasting arms," is the prayer of many in that vast assembly. Next comes the brother (J. A. Spurgeon), dearly beloved, who has labored so arduously and zealously in the battlefield. With the sleeping warrior at his feet, he can scarce control his feelings as he bids that loved one farewell.

One by one the mourners draw near to take their last look into that open grave, and speak the last good-bye. Nothing is heard save the sobs of that

vast throng. Strong men weep as little children as the first notes of the hymn he loved so well rises upon the air. But hush! this must not be now. We will weep later on. It was his hymn. So for a season the tears are held in check and most of that massive gathering join in singing,

“Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more.”

A few words spoken by the dear friend of the departed, the Rev. A. G. Brown, a prayer by Dr. Pierson, and the benediction by the Lord Bishop of Rochester, brings this simple service to a close. So it was that Charles Haddon Spurgeon was laid to rest until “the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, and we shall be changed.” May the reader and writer meet him in the better land!

I know of no more fitting words to close this short biography of this great man (whose life-work we have tried to depict in these pages) than this splendid but true eulogy spoken by the Rev. A. G. Brown at the grave side: —

“Loving president, prince of preachers, brother beloved, faithful servant, dear Spurgeon, we bid thee not ‘Farewell,’ but only for a little while ‘Goodnight.’ Thou shall rise soon, ‘at the first dawn of the Resurrection day of the redeemed; but yet it is not ours to bid ‘Farewell,’ but thine. It is we who linger in the darkness. Thou art in God’s own light. Then with thee will we greet the morning of a day that knows no end. for ‘there is no night there.’ Straight has been the furrow thou hast ploughed. No looking back has barred thy course. Champion of God, that battle, long and nobly fought, is over. A palm branch has taken the place of the Sword and Trowel. No longer does the helmet press thy brow; the victor’s wreath from the great Commander has already proved thy full reward. Here for a little while shall rest thy precious dust, then shall thy well-beloved come and His voice shall cause thee to spring up from thy couch. Until then we will praise God for thee, and by the blood of the everlasting covenant, yet hope and expect to praise God with Thee.”

APPENDIX

It must not be supposed that the writer of the foregoing sketch had forgotten or overlooked the rich vein of humor which flowed through many of the sayings of the great preacher, as from an inexhaustible mine. Assuredly such is not the case. We were anxious in the limited space at our disposal to confine ourselves to the more serious aspects of his life and work, thinking perhaps that a small appendix, recounting one or two instances of the humorous side of Spurgeon's life, would be more acceptable to the reader, and more congenial to our own feelings. We were extremely wistful that the incidents which we have recorded in this brief memoir should be of such a character that they might lead the reader to glorify the Christ whom he so much adored. Hence our reason for appending this addition.

One has only to glance at that marvelous production, "John Ploughman's Talk," to see what a fund of humor Mr. Spurgeon possessed. In all respects he was a wonderful man. In head, heart, energy, and spirit he presented a most wonderful and striking combination. His intellectual qualities, for instance, were of the highest order and supremest kind. He seemed to live many lives. To listen to his talk on books, one would think that he had done nothing but read in the library all his life; to mark his publications, one would fancy he could have done naught but write; to look at the works he administered, it would seem as an administrator he had enough to occupy all his life; while to preach the sermons that never grew stale, and were always fresh, what a demand that must have made upon him! There were few men who were such men of business. Truly, in the combination of manifold gifts of intellect and heart, of manhood and saintliness, in the passion of practical aims, in the utter absence of cant and insincerity, and in the nobleness of his character, his life, and his consecration, he was unique. He hated cant as though he were a disciple of Carlyle, and he battled for sincerity as though he had been trained by Wordsworth.

An occasional hearer and great admirer of Spurgeon, who had made his fortune by being mixed up in some very shady business transactions, was extremely anxious that Mr. Spurgeon should name a villa that he had erected wherein to spend the remainder of his days. For some time Mr. S. warded off the continual appeals made to him by his wealthy hearer. But the man was not to be repulsed. At last, being wearied by his importunity, Mr. Spurgeon said, "What shall you name your villa? Why, if I was you, I should name it "Dun Robbin" ("Done Robbing"). Needless to add, Mr. S. was not troubled with another visit from this importunate gentleman.

Mr. Spurgeon was an adept at reading character at first interviews. A young man of the masher type applied for admission as student to the Pastor's College. After a long conversation, the great preacher brought the interview to a close by quaintly remarking, "My advice to you, my friend, is that you had better tarry at Jericho till your beard grows."

In giving these few extracts showing the humorous side of the great preacher's character, we may say that we have some sympathy with the old clergyman, who at one time took it upon him to rebuke Mr. Spurgeon for his habit of occasionally using jocular remarks while preaching. He replied by saying, "You may be right, dear brother, but you would perhaps have more sympathy for me if you knew how many I keep back."

It has been maintained by many that Mr. Spurgeon's scholarship was neither scanty nor limited, in proof of which, Mr. Williams, a friend of the late preacher, gives us the following interesting reminiscence. "'Give me a text, Williams, and I will preach you a sermon,' said Spurgeon on one occasion when we were sitting alone in a lovely glen in Scotland. 'One star differeth from another star in glory,' said I. At once he began by describing the glory of certain special stars of separate constellations, giving in each case the name and their position in the heavens, until I listened and wondered, and wished I could only write it down. But the finish up! Never have I heard him do anything more sublime, even when preaching to gathered thousands."

One instance of his large heartedness and intense sympathy: — Last year, when staying at Mentone, a poor organ-grinder played in front of the hotel where he was staying. After playing several tunes, the owner of the organ took round his hat for contributions, but met with very scanty support.

Spurgeon noticing this went down at once, and began to turn the handle of the organ most vigorously. Of course the company flocked to the windows to witness such a novel sight. Spurgeon continued playing, and the man made the collection, with a most beneficial result.

This was the outcome of a great large heart on fire with the love of God and with love to his fellowmen. Mr. Manton Smith graphically describes his first meeting with the great preachers and with this we must close our appendix. Mr. Smith says: —

“The first time I opened my lips for God before him (Spurgeon) was in the Tabernacle, some twenty years ago. I was invited by Mrs. Bartlett to be one of the speakers at the annual tea meeting of her young women’s class. I never dreamt that Spurgeon was coming to the meeting, as chairman, at which I was to speak, but so it was. When I saw him enter the room my courage failed me, my address left me, and I felt completely undone... In a friendly, brotherly way he tried to cheer me for the task that lay before me. He said, ‘You are one of Mrs. Bartlett’s curates, so I am informed. We won’t trouble you to put on the surplice, but you must speak after me.’..... How I stood I cannot tell, for the trembling of my legs under that ordeal I shall never forget. I commenced by saying, ‘Dear sir, I am a bad speaker and a worse writer, and all I know is, like the Primitive Methodist preacher, the ABC gospel.’ To my surprise Spurgeon rapped his stick on the floor, knocked his soft hat on the table, and laughed with such a hearty ring, it became quite contagious, and then said, ‘Bravo, go on, brother; that’s just the sort of gospel I like; tell us about it.’ I did my best, and told them I thought A stood for a text that we should all learn first, for it was the very beginning of the gospel for every sinner — ‘All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.’ My second head was B, which stood for “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ My lastly was C, which stood to represent the words, ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ I quite expected at the close of my speech he would be disgusted and ashamed of me, but to my utter astonishment, when I turned round, I saw the big tears rolling down Mr. Spurgeon’s cheeks, and he shook my hand

so warmly, and said, ‘God bless you, my young brother; you have got your degree already. Stick to that kind of talk, and you will be a real A. B. C., which I consider stands for

ABLE-BODIED CHRISTIAN.’”