

A full-length portrait of Charles H. Spurgeon, a bearded man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit and a white shirt with a dark bow tie. He is seated in an ornate, dark wooden chair with red upholstery. The background is dark and indistinct.

CHRISTIAN HEROES

*Charles H.*  
**SPURGEON**  
PRINCE OF PREACHERS

E. F. ADCOCK



# **Charles H. Spurgeon**

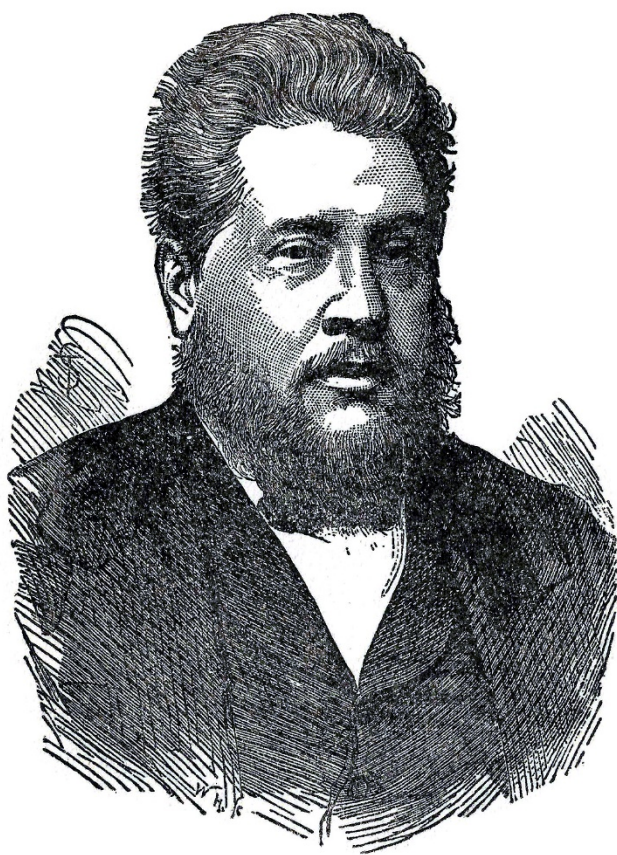
*Prince of Preachers*

**By**  
**E. F. Adcock**

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*To Young America  
with the hope that in the life of the  
Prince of Preachers  
they may realize the power and dignity  
of the Christian ministry*



*C. H. Spurgeon*

## Introduction

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a man of action. He was mighty in spirit and brilliant in intellect. His works have gone out into the whole world, and “he being dead yet speaketh” through them.

The author of this book opens the door and bids you welcome into the presence of this prince of preachers. A feast awaits you. May you be inspired to fight on for Jesus and be filled with a courage like to that of Spurgeon’s. You will appreciate the preacher’s humanness. He was one of the common people and yet he towered above them all.

The Publishers





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## **Chapter I**

### **Faith of His Fathers**

When in 1555, Emperor Charles V abdicated to his son Philip II the throne of Spain, he left to the young monarch the task of quelling the growth of Protestantism in the Netherlands. In no other country, save Germany only, had the doctrines of Luther been so cordially accepted. Charles himself had issued edict after edict against the Protestant leaders there and these failing to have the desired effect, he established the Inquisition. Many persons perished at the stake, and upon the scaffold, or were strangled or buried alive.

In respect to persecuting heretics, Philip was a worthy son and successor of this great monarch. No sooner was he established upon his father's throne than he began to prepare to stamp out Protestantism in the low countries. He declared that though a hundred thousand lives all his own should perish he would not hesitate in his work of ridding all his dominion of heresy.

It was in the year 1567 that Philip began in real earnest by sending to the Netherlands a veteran army under the leadership of the Duke of Alva. The army is described as being "one of the most perfect engines of war ever seen in any age" and the Duke as being "one of the most cruel, relentless, and infamous of all the human

bloodhounds that have been unleashed to bathe their remorseless jaws in the blood of the innocent.” History tells us that such a career of blood and crime as Alva now ran cannot be paralleled. He even procured an edict from the Inquisition sentencing all the people of the Netherlands to death except those who were especially exempted. At the time of his death in 1589 he made the wicked boast that he had sent at least eighteen thousand people to the executioner.

When the Duke began his reign of terror in the Netherlands thousands of people fled from the country to England, where the government was more tolerant of their new faith. Among these fugitives who escaped the wrath of the terrible Duke and his “Council of Blood” was a family by the name of Spurgeon. Two branches of this family are known to have settled in England, one in Essex and another in Norfolk, and throughout their family history they have been characterized by a close adherence to evangelical doctrine and truth.

The Dutch people were noted for their industry and thrift and when they came to England they brought their useful arts along. Some of England’s most important industries today owe their origin to these Dutch settlers. The Spurgeons were especially noted for their energy, business ability, and piety. Though not slothful in business, they believed in seeking first the things of God.

In England, however, they did not find an asylum from all persecution, for in the latter part of the seventeenth century, at the same time that John Bunyan was lying in Bedford jail, Job Spurgeon was suffering for righteousness’ sake in Essex. He had attended a Nonconformist meeting, and according to the Conventicle Act, which made it a crime for more than five dissenters from the Church of England to meet together at one

## CHARLES H. SPURGEON

place, he was subject to arrest and punishment. Six years later for a similar offense he was put in the Chelmsford jail, where he remained for fifteen years. During this time he suffered much from cold, for they allowed him no fire and he was obliged to sleep only on a straw pallet.

Such were the ancestors of the first of a family of seventeen children born to Mr. and Mrs. John Spurgeon, a son who was destined one day to be England's greatest preacher. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born June 19, 1834, in Kelvedon, a little village in the county of Essex. He was born of godly parents and his Grandfather and Grandmother Spurgeon were noted for their piety and efficient Christian service.

Rev. James Spurgeon, his grandfather, was a man beloved because of his integrity, ability, and kindness of heart. Wherever he went souls were saved as a result of his ministerial labors. Early in life he had joined the Independent Church. After a successful pastorate or two he at last was called to Stambourne Meeting House, where he remained fifty-four years. This church was unique in that it had only four pastors in two hundred years.

Through his life of piety and godliness and his readiness to communicate toward the welfare of others James Spurgeon won a place of deep affection in the hearts of his flock at Stambourne. His unselfishness and disinterestedness in worldly gain is aptly illustrated by an incident of his long pastorate at this place. After he had held the church property for twenty-one years he by chance found that all the trustees were dead and legally the property was his own. Some advised him to make a will and arrange to leave the property to his heirs. He was far from being wealthy and the needs of his family were great, but he would not be tempted. He immediately called a meeting and had the title to the property

conveyed to suitable trustees who would hold the property in the interests of the church.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was always justly proud of his ancestors and often praised God for their noble example. In speaking of Job Spurgeon, who was his great-grandfather's great-grandfather, he said, "I had far rather be descended from one who suffered for the faith than bear the blood of all the emperors within my veins." He affirmed that no earthly house would ever accommodate a sounder or more useful ministry than that of his grandfather, Rev. James Spurgeon.

Well might he be proud of such an ancestry and prize it as a rich legacy. Not that Mr. Spurgeon's ancestry were of a worldly aristocracy—theirs was an aristocracy of faith. Nothing could be greater amiss than to seek in his family a full explanation of his great power and attainments as a preacher of the gospel. He himself said: "The boast of pedigree is common but silly." In all candor we must render to all their dues. All honor then to those godly ancestors of this little English boy, who left him an example of integrity, uprightness, and faith in God that he should walk in their footsteps. All honor also to God, who alone could make of so humble a lad the great preacher he was destined to become.



## **Chapter II**

### **His Grandfather's Boy**

When Charles was ten months old his father moved the family to Colchester and a few months later, because of unfavorable circumstances at home, sent the little boy to live with his grandfather in the big manse at Stambourne. There he spent about six of the most important years of his early life under the influence of his grandfather and grandmother and Aunt Ann.

From his earliest recollections the old manse in Stambourne was of special interest to the young lad. It was large and imposing in external appearance. Evidently when it was first built it was well lighted and comfortable. But when Charles went there to live many of the rooms were dark and uncheery, owing to the fact that the windows had been walled up to avoid the taxes which the government placed upon windows. Over the youngest member of the household the perpetual darkness and gloom of these rooms cast a forbidding spell, and in his lively imagination he pictured hobgoblins, ghosts, spirits, and fairies as inhabiting those places.

A large hall ran through the house from the front door to the back yard and in this hall was a large, old-fashioned fireplace. There on the hearth in Grandfather's house the young lad lived an important chapter in his life. There he played with his toy wagon,

built his castles with blocks, and read what simple stories came into his possession. It was there he learned lessons from the fire that crackled and blazed and roared up the chimney, lighting and warming the great hallway and fitfully illuminating the large, old-fashioned painting of David fighting with Goliath, which hung just over the mantel. It was there he saw Grandfather and Grandmother night after night of the several years that he lived in Stambourne sit before the fire with the large open Bible on their laps, reveling in its riches, and there “Aunt Ann” exercised over her young protégé an unconscious influence for good by her kind thoughtfulness and pleasant ways.

Then there was the large sitting-room, which was used only on state occasions and which he regarded with much awe. In the dining-room were a table and chairs that were so old they were regarded as heirlooms in the family. Here also was the cupboard which the little lad, boy like, held in such regard for his stomach’s sake, for there neatly assorted were to be found tarts and cakes that would tempt the palate of even an older person. Sometimes Grandmother made cookies and cakes in the shape of an elephant or a bear, which she knew would tickle his childish fancy.

Venturing one day into one of those dark, forbidding chambers in an upper story of the old manse, Charles discovered a large heap of old, musty theological volumes. Rummaging here for a time, he came upon a volume of Pilgrim’s Progress and another containing a story of the martyrs. These he took great delight in reading and it is said that he sometimes read certain of the theological books that were so large and heavy that his grandparents were surprised that he was able to transfer them from the upper room to the hearth. This early reading greatly influenced his preaching in later life.

Contrary to what might commonly be expected, Rev. and Mrs. James Spurgeon never spoiled their little grandson. They were indulgent and yet careful to give proper training. Sometimes the little lad would be left in the room with his grandfather while the latter prepared his Sunday sermons. At such times he was given a magazine with which to amuse himself and Grandmother or Aunt Ann often warned him that he must be very quiet, else Grandfather would be unable to preach and consequently famishing souls would die for need of the gospel food. Then in the dimly lighted room with its oppressive silence the little fellow would quietly sit, fearing that to move only a little might displease Grandfather and God.

Sometimes while he was yet a small boy, Charles's grandfather would let him read the Scripture portion in family worship. One morning while reading in the seventeenth chapter of Revelation about the bottomless pit, he stopped suddenly and said, "Why, Grandpa, what can this mean?" The old gentleman attempted no explanation, but urged the boy to go on reading. The next morning Charles read the same passage and asked the same question concerning the bottomless pit. Because he got no satisfactory answer he continued to do this for a week. Then Grandfather asked him what he wanted to know. He said that he had seen baskets without bottoms and that when fruit was placed in them it would fall to the ground. But what puzzled him was to know what would become of the people who were cast into the bottomless pit when they had fallen out its lower end.

On Sundays he went to hear Grandfather preach in the Stambourne meeting-house, which was very close to Grandfather's manse. Sometimes he sat in the pulpit with the venerable old preacher, but usually in one of the large, square pews below. These

pews were very old-fashioned. They were lined with green baize and a curtain hung on a brass rod shut the occupants in so that they could see only the minister and could be seen only by him. In the pew directly below the pulpit was kept the communion table. Charles's uncle, Haddon Spurgeon, gave out the hymns from this pew and raised the block of wood which indicated to the singers in the gallery the meter of each hymn. Stables were built along the side of the meeting-house and here worshipers from a distance could shelter their horses and vehicle during the service. Beside the pulpit next to the stables were large folding doors which could be opened to admit a vehicle into the chapel in case an invalid was unable to alight. Those attendants who drove to church were in the habit of standing their long whips in the corner of their pews. A large sounding-board hung over the pulpit. Mr. Spurgeon, afterward recalling some of these scenes, said that the pulpit and sounding-board reminded him of his jack-in-the-box at home, and he often feared the large board would some time fall and tightly enclose his grandfather.

One Sunday morning, Grandmother Spurgeon, whom Charles—and everyone else, for that matter—dearly loved, did not attend services as was her habit. She remarked to the old minister that as she was not feeling able to go, she would stay at home and read her Bible while he preached the gospel in the meeting-house. When they left, Grandmother was sitting in the old armchair close to the fireplace with her Bible spread out on her lap and her spectacles adjusted for reading. When they returned they were not prepared for that which awaited them. Walking into the house, they found her still sitting in the armchair, but with her head bowed upon her breast, her spectacles lying across the Bible, and her finger pointing to the words “the hand of God hath touched me.” Grandmother's spirit had left the old manse. She had gone to her eternal home.

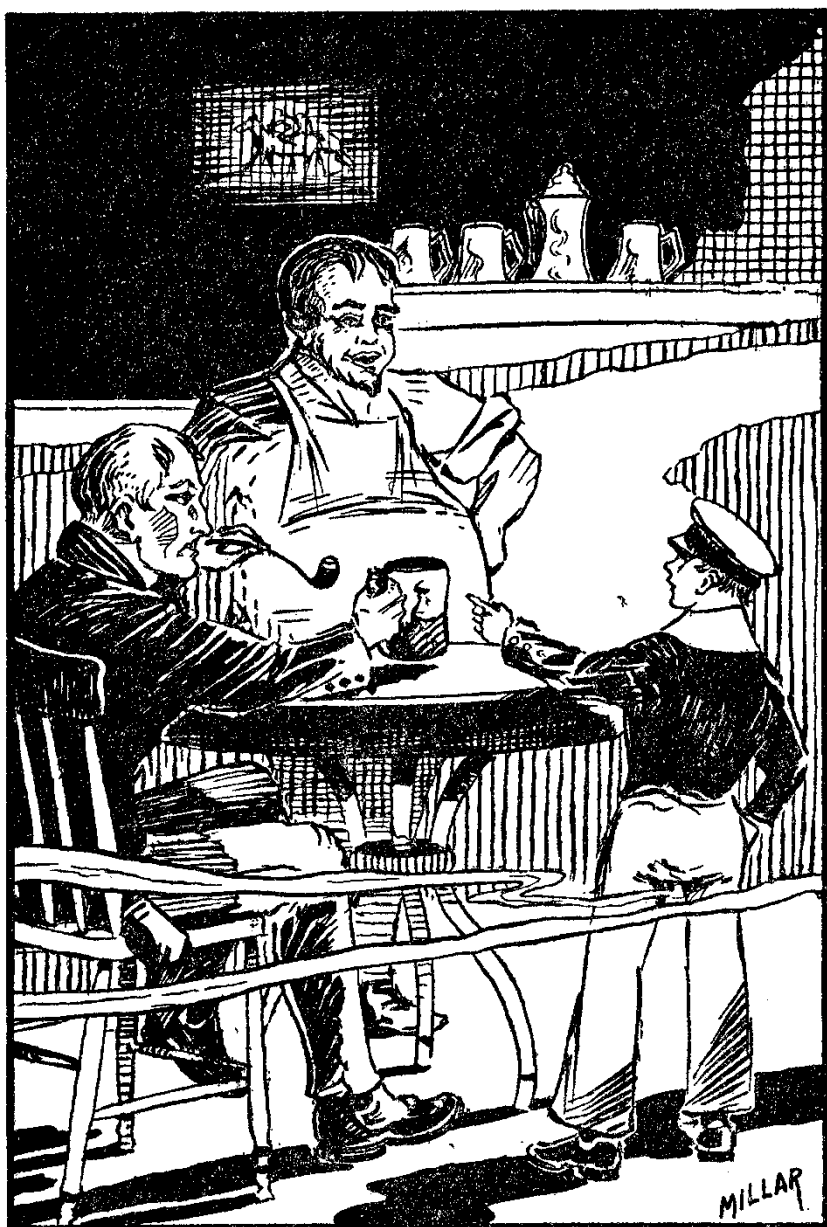
## **Chapter III**

### **Incidents of Boyhood**

While still at Stambourne, Charles was much affected by the grief of his grandfather over a man commonly known in the neighborhood as “old Roads.” This man had once been a devout Christian and a member of the little flock at Stambourne but he had grown cold and finally had gone deep in sin. One day when this backslidden man was the subject of conversation in the old minister’s home, little Charles spoke up and said, “I’ll kill old Roads, that I will!”

Not long afterward the lad went into an alehouse on an errand and found old Roads there drinking and carousing. He walked directly up to the man as he sat at a table with pipe and mug of beer and pointing the finger of shame at him exclaimed, “What doest thou here, Elijah!” He proceeded to rebuke the man for his ungodly conduct which was breaking his pastor’s heart, and then walked abruptly out the door and returned home. There he startled the old minister by declaring, I’ve killed old Roads and he’ll never grieve Grandpa anymore.”

When questioned, the lad assured his grandfather that he had done nothing wrong, but that he had only been working for the Lord. Not until old Roads himself came to the minister and in a



*"What doest thou here, Elijah!"*

shamefaced attitude recounted the affair at the public-house did the minister understand. Old Roads told how he was angry at first, but how the boy's words lashed his conscience until he had sought a solitary place and called upon God for pardon. From this time on old Roads was a changed man, and the pastor's grief was turned to joy and gladness. Thus Charles Haddon Spurgeon successfully entered upon that life of service that was to be so fruitful.

As this incident indicates, Charles was precociously religious as a child; and it is little wonder when one considers his early environment and religious training. Worship and Bible study were almost as natural to him as play. When he finally returned to his father's home he found there some younger brothers and sisters, whom he would gather together for meeting. He would pray and earnestly preach and would sing the hymns his grandfather had taught him.

He loved to steal away at times and be alone. At the church was an old horsing-block where the ladies who rode to church on horseback mounted or dismounted. In the fall the wind would pile the dry leaves under it and make an excellent nest for the lad to crawl into to be out of sight. Here he would sometimes hide and choose to remain in meditation when his playmates were calling and seeking all about for him. Another favorite retreat was an old grave-box in the graveyard near the church.

Yet, in many respects Charles was not unlike other boys of his age. Throughout his life he was often thankful for the years he had spent in Stambourne, for this being only a small country village, he had had an opportunity to enjoy God's great out-of-doors to the full. The fox hunts were always an occasion of great excitement to him. Once a year he was permitted to stand by the roadside and see the hounds and hunters pass. Sometimes as he grew older he joined

the other boys of the village in running after the hunters when they were in the chase.

So attached did he become to his boyhood home that it was no little disappointment to leave Stambourne and return to his paternal home. When he was leaving, Grandfather comforted him by reminding him that they would both look upon the same moon. Mr. Spurgeon said that for years he loved the moon because he felt that somehow his eyes and those of his grandfather met there.

For a time he was sent to school to a teacher by the name of Mrs. Cook. He won a reputation for diligence in his studies, but was not especially brilliant as a student. He learned slowly, but long retained what he really mastered. After he had attended Mrs. Cook's school his parents transferred him to a more advanced school kept by Mr. Henry Lewis, of Colchester.

While he was going to Mrs. Cook's school he contracted his first debt. His teacher had told him to bring a stick of slate pencil. He feared to disobey the teacher, but could not muster up courage to ask his parents for the price of the pencil. It was then he remembered having seen other children buy nuts and tops and balls and cakes in a little shop kept by a Mrs. Dearborn, and get trusted by the old lady. A happy thought! He would buy the pencil on credit and pay for it when some one gave him a penny or a silver sixpence. Young as he was he had been warned against the evils of going into debt and he felt rather uneasy, but mustered courage and went into the shop. In telling this experience Mr. Spurgeon said, "One farthing was the amount, and as I had never owed anything before, and my credit was good, the pencil was handed over by the kind dame, and *I was in debt.*"

How his father ever learned about this clever little piece of business Charles never knew, but the result of his father's finding



out is best described in Mr. Spurgeon's own words: "He gave me a very powerful lecture upon getting into debt, and how like it was to stealing, and upon the way in which people were ruined by it; and how a boy who would owe a farthing, might one day owe a hundred pounds, and get into prison, and bring his family to disgrace." After the lecture the young debtor was marched off to the shop crying bitterly and feeling very much ashamed. The farthing was paid and Mr. Spurgeon says, "The poor debtor was free, like a bird let out of a cage. How sweet it felt to be out of debt!"

Ever after that early experience Mr. Spurgeon hated debt "as Luther hated the Pope." He declared that if he owed a man a penny he would walk twenty miles in the depth of winter to pay him, rather than to feel weary under an obligation. He said he would be as comfortable with peas in his shoes or a hedgehog in his bed or a snake up his back as to have bills hanging over his head.

Needless to say he never spent any time in a debtor's prison.

## Chapter IV

### Rev. Knill's Prophecy

Grandfather James Spurgeon had a wide acquaintance among both Independent and Church of England ministers. Not infrequently some of these brother ministers had occasion to experience the warm hospitality of a day or two spent in the old manse in Stambourne. It so happened that on one such occasion the honored guest was Rev. Richard Knill, who had come to Stambourne to preach for the London Missionary Society on the next day.

It was one of those state occasions when the big sitting-room was opened up and young Charles was permitted to breathe its solemn and dignified atmosphere. But on this particular evening Charles quite forgot the usual awe of such occasions, for Mr. Knill was a kindly man of gentle and loving ways. His heart yearned for the souls of men and especially he sought to impart some influence that would be of lasting benefit to a young life. He took a great interest in Charles, listening to him read and commending him for his efforts. Before retiring he found occasion to exact from the young lad a promise to show him through the garden the next morning before breakfast. The importance of the task delighted the lad; then too, he held in much reverence the garden enclosure where Grandfather walked and meditated and talked with God.

Next morning only a slight tap on the door brought the lad quickly out of bed and into the garden, there to join his new friend. The minister captivated the boy's affection with his pleasant ways and interesting tales. But the older of the two friends did not do all the talking. Very wisely he drew out the young lad in conversation about Jesus and the pleasantness of serving him. Finally they came to the great yew-tree arbor, which was cut in the shape of a sugar-loaf. Once inside the arbor the old man knelt with his arms around the lad and prayed earnestly for his salvation. This was repeated each morning during Mr. Knill's stay in Stambourne. When at last his mission sermons had been delivered he prepared to go on to another appointment. But he lingered to pronounce a very remarkable prophecy. After calling the entire family together he drew Charles to his knee and said, "I do not know how it is, but I feel a solemn presentiment that this child will preach the gospel to thousands, and God will bless him to many souls. So sure am I of this that when my little man preaches in Rowland Hill's chapel, as he will do one day, I should like him to promise me that he will give out the hymn commencing,

“ ‘God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform.’ ”

Mr. Knill then went on his way, but the result of his prayers and life and this prophecy ever lingered in the consciousness of the young lad. Later on when he did go to London and preach to thousands he occupied the pulpit in Rowland Hill's chapel and gave out the hymn that the noble old man of God had requested. Mr. Spurgeon himself expressed the opinion that the words of Mr. Knill helped bring about their own fulfilment. He said that he believed those words, and that also he realized no unconverted person might dare to enter the ministry.

Mr. Knill might have considered his time too valuable to waste it on a simple, small village lad when he could preach to multitudes, but the wisdom of his course of action has been fully justified.

## **Chapter V**

### **Saved by Looking**

Thanks to the godly influence of his parents and grandparents and his early religious training, as Charles grew older he never went deep into sin. He remained a moral and highly respected lad, with strong religious tendencies. He held in great reverence sacred things and took no little interest in the forms of religion. He was very strict in observing the Sabbath, and dutifully attended religious services. When he was fifteen and in attendance at the Newmarket school, several of his friends went one afternoon to see the horse races. One of those who did go afterward wrote in his journal an account of the races and concluded with this sentence, "Mr. Spurgeon did not go, as he thought he should be doing wrong if he went." Yet at this time Charles had experienced no change of heart.

Conviction of wrong had first come to him early in life while he was yet in his father's home. Rev. John Spurgeon's duties frequently called him away from home and the training of the family fell largely to the mother. She would call the children around her and read to them from the Bible, then pray with them. She diligently sought to lead them to the Lord. One of these prayer seasons greatly impressed Charles, just a boy though he was. In her prayer on this occasion the mother pleaded thus: "Now, Lord, if

my children go on in their sins it will not be from ignorance that they perish, and my soul must bear a swift witness against them at the day of judgment if they lay not hold of Christ.” Just to think that his own mother would witness against him deeply impressed the young lad. But it was at a later period in life that real conviction of sins came upon him.

The deep experiences that preceded his conversion began when he listened to a powerful sermon that stirred his soul to the depths. A great burden of sin came over him, and he longed to be delivered. He decided that he would go back to the same place where the sense of conviction came upon him and learn how to become free from sin and bondage. When he went the second time, however, he was disappointed, for nothing that the preacher said seemed to help him out of the difficulty.

Thereupon his soul was plunged into such agonies that he wished he had never been born. Day and night, conviction of sin lashed him furiously. In describing this experience Mr. Spurgeon said, “I often wonder to this day how it was that my hand was kept from rending my own body in pieces through the awful agony which I felt when I discovered the greatness of my transgression.” Again he said, “It was my sad lot at that time to feel the greatness of my sin without a discovery of the greatness of God’s mercy.”

Sometimes in deep anguish he would give up praying because his prayers seemed altogether futile. At other times the burden of prayer would so lay hold upon him that he would moan and cry, “Oh, ah! God, be merciful to me a sinner!”

Then again, he would try to console himself with the thought that he had always been a good, moral boy, and that he was quite respectable after all. Disobedience, swearing, lying, carousing, Sabbath breaking, and like sins would not be charged against him.

Yet he could gain no permanent or satisfying relief. All his morality and goodness seemed as filthy rags.

Finally the lad tried good works. With what diligence did he strive to present before God and man a character above reproach! He determined to let nothing in the way of good works mar his chance of redemption. He once declared that if he had been told that he should bare his back and take fifty lashes of the scourge he would have said, "Here I am!" But no peace came to his soul.

Then it was that he was tempted to doubt. He came to the place where he was ready to turn his back on all his past religious teaching and disbelieve in God and the Bible. He found himself beset by a strong temptation to break forth in vile language such as he never remembered having heard before. This alarmed him, but the most dangerous temptation, that of unbelief, seemed to allure him with a great fascination. He said to Reason, "Be thou my captain," and to his brain, "Be thou my rudder." It was a mad voyage. As he himself expressed it, "I passed the old landmarks of my faith. I went to the very verge of the dreary realms of unbelief. I went to the very bottom of the sea of infidelity. As I hurried forward at an awful speed I began to doubt if there were a world. I doubted everything until at last the devil defeated himself by making me doubt my own existence." At length he woke up to his dangerous position and became convinced that God and Christ and heaven and hell were realities. But the terrible groanings of his spirit were yet unabated.

While passing through these deep waters the young school lad sought diligently someone who would point him to the way of salvation. He began making a round of the churches in the neighborhood hoping that some sermon to which he listened might be the voice of God, saying, "This is the way; walk ye in it." But

time after time he would leave the church to which he had gone more depressed than when he entered it. Most of the sermons were concerning God's judgments on the sinner—which distressed the lad all the more; or were for the edification of Christian people—something for which he felt no need at the time. What he wanted was to know how to have his sins forgiven.

These experiences taught Mr. Spurgeon a lesson which greatly influenced his preaching. He once declared, "I now think I am bound never to preach a sermon without preaching to sinners. I do think that a minister who can preach a sermon without addressing sinners, does not know how to preach."

One Sunday morning he started to church, still with the one desire passionately goading him on, but he was unable to reach the place he had intended because of a heavy snow storm which overtook him on the way. So he turned down an obscure street and walked on until quite unexpectedly he came to a small structure bearing the name "Artillery Street Primitive Methodist Chapel." He reluctantly entered, for he had been told that the Primitive Methodists sang so loudly that they made one's head ache.

He sat down and waited, but the minister did not come. At last a tall, thin-looking man whom Mr. Spurgeon says was a "shoe-maker or tailor or something of that sort" went into the pulpit to preach.

Mr. Spurgeon further says that he was not only unlearned but really stupid and that he stuck closely to his text because he had little else to say. The man took for his text, "Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth."

After a few brief comments, the preacher looked directly at the



stranger and pointing his finger toward him said, “Young man, you are in trouble. You will never get out of it unless you look to Christ.” Then he lifted his hands and shouted piercingly, “Look! look! look!”

Like a dart the truth went home to the eager heart of the listener. Just to think, he had been groaning and striving, and as he had expressed it, he was ready to do fifty things, but the word “look” put everything in a new light. How he looked and how the burden rolled away! His sins were forgiven and he was a new creature.

## **Chapter VI**

### **The First Sermon**

Once when Charles was only a very small boy his father found him standing in the hayrack of a stable preaching to his sisters, who were seated on some straw on the barn floor. His brother James was in the manger acting as clerk. Whether the father was only amused or whether he considered it as an indication of what the boy might someday become we are not told.

Immediately after his conversion Charles entered with great zeal into the work for the Master. At first he went about from house to house distributing tracts. Later he began to select tracts and mail them to certain individuals whom he hoped to interest in the things of God. As he grew bolder he would linger in his house-to-house visitation and talk to the people about the way of salvation. Then he began teaching in the Sunday-school. He considered no form of service too lowly nor did he hesitate to take advantage of the greater opportunities. He soon won a reputation as a story teller and was very successful in building up the attendance and interest of his class. His ability was recognized by the chief officer of the school, who often asked him to address the entire school in the opening or closing exercises.

At this time the zealous young man was usher, or under-teacher, in a school in Newmarket. While at this place, in a letter to his father he expressed a longing for the time to come when he could, like his father, preach the gospel to lost sinners. It was evident that God's hand was upon the boy, yet it is doubtful whether he then entertained any thought of soon becoming a preacher.

In 1850, Charles removed to Cambridge and became usher in the school of one who had formerly been his teacher in Colchester. In Cambridge he worshiped with a flourishing congregation of Baptists, which church he had joined soon after his conversion, though his own people were Congregationalists. Here he had many opportunities for Christian service, and was even urged to preach but was very reticent about undertaking to occupy a pulpit.

One Saturday afternoon an old bishop in the church requested that he go over to Teversham the next evening, explaining that a young man was to preach there who doubtless would be glad of company. Charles very readily consented.

Sunday came and with a young man a few years his senior Charles set off for Teversham, four miles distant. As they walked along the young teacher was meditating on what a pleasure it is to be able to assist in a gospel service. He could give out the hymns, lead in prayer, or assist with some other part of the service. Finally Charles remarked to his companion, "I trust God will bless your labors tonight."

"My labors?" cried the young man in astonishment. "I never preached in my life. I was asked to walk with you, and I sincerely hope God will bless you in your preaching."

It was now Charles's turn to remonstrate and explain that he had never preached. They continued to talk and as they neared the place it became evident to the younger of the two young pedestrians that he must take the service that night. It was then he remembered how skillfully the old bishop had framed his request and had taken him with guile.

With his inmost soul all in a tremble Charles went into the house to face his audience. His companion stoutly insisted that Charles must do the preaching and suggested that if he would give one of his Sunday-school addresses it would be very satisfactory. When the time came, though only a boy of sixteen summers, Charles rose and preached from the text, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious."

Perhaps it would have been slightly amusing to see the youth in his round jacket and broad, turndown white collar posing as a preacher, but if we had remained to listen we would have been surprised at the power of his discourse. Yet, with our most sanguine hopes we could not have seen in this rustic lad the preacher who would someday preach to thousands and in about forty years fill almost as many volumes with his sermons. After the service the young preacher was almost stampeded and the question on every one's lips was, "How old are you?" But he evaded a direct answer and left them to feast on their astonishment.

Soon the boy preacher was regularly filling appointments in and about Cambridge. In the autumn of 1851 he preached for the little congregation in Waterbeach, with the result that after a few months he was invited to remain there as pastor. He accepted and entered upon his first pastorate. He was very successful in this work and as a result of his labors the congregation in a few months' time increased from forty to one hundred. His sermons

were very practical and especially noted for their originality. Soon he became popular as a preacher and received many calls to preach special sermons in other places.

In one of his sermons at Waterbeach, Mr. Spurgeon said that if a thief got to heaven he would pick the angels' pockets. The mayor of Cambridge heard of the remark that had been made and some days later asked the preacher about it. Mr. Spurgeon explained that in his sermon he was saying that if an ungodly man could get into heaven his nature would still be unchanged, and had spoken of the thief picking the angels' pockets by way of illustration.

"But," replied the mayor, "do you not know that the angels do not have pockets?"

In some surprise Mr. Spurgeon replied that he had not known it, but was glad to be informed by one who did know. He promised to set the matter right as soon as he had opportunity.

The next Monday the minister met his mayor friend and said to him, "I set that matter right yesterday, sir."

"What matter?" asked the mayor.

"Why, about the angels' pockets," replied Mr. Spurgeon. "I told them that I had made a mistake the last time I preached—that I had met a man who had told me the angels had no pockets, so that I must correct what I had said, as I did not want anybody to go away with a false notion about heaven. I would, therefore say that, if a thief got among the angels without having his nature changed, he would steal the feathers out of their wings."

## Chapter VII

### Why Mr. Spurgeon Did Not Attend College

The father of the young Waterbeach pastor was never noted for his educational attainments, but he had an appreciation for learning. He was the father of seventeen children, and it is said he once remarked, "I have frequently worn a shabby coat when I might have possessed a good one, had I cared less for my children's education."

Charles's first school-teacher was a Mrs. Burleigh of Stambourne. It appears that he made little progress in her school. We have already had occasion to refer to some of his experiences in school after his return to his father's home in Colchester. By the time he was ten years old the lad had made goodly progress in writing, reading, arithmetic, and spelling. His course of study had also touched on Greek grammar, Latin grammar, and philosophy.

When in 1849 his father, at a great sacrifice, secured for him a place in Newmarket, Mr. Swindell, a noted instructor, took a great interest in him with a view toward preparing him for college. Here Charles worked diligently and persistently, fully appreciating the sacrifices his parents were making for his sake.

Soon after he began preaching in Waterbeach he was strongly advised by his father and others to attend college as a means of

further preparing himself for the work of the ministry. Though loath to give up his new work, to which he was greatly attached, he felt inclined to follow this advice, assured that learning is never an encumbrance. He believed that he might be useful without college training, but was willing to go to any pains to become as useful as possible.

Mr. Spurgeon afterward told how he was advised to enter Stepney, later known as Regent's Park College. He says that Dr. Angus, the tutor of the college, visited Cambridge, where Spurgeon then resided, and arrangements were made for him to meet the college man at the house of Mr. Macmillan, the publisher. On his way to the interview he did much praying, and entered the house at exactly the appointed time. A maid showed him into a room where he waited patiently for two hours. He felt abashed and strange and was slow to ring the bell and inquire the reason for the delay.

At last he did call the servant and discovered that Dr. Angus had waited also for some time in an adjoining room and had finally been obliged to leave in order to catch his train for London. The maid who had shown him in had failed to inform the family of his arrival, and consequently the interview was lost. Mr. Spurgeon says, "I was not a little disappointed at the moment; but have a thousand times since thanked the Lord very heartily for the strange providence which forced my steps into another and far better path."

Yet this reverse did not cause him to give up planning for college. He could make application by mail, he thought, and expected to do so immediately. That afternoon he was to preach in a neighboring village and on his way he passed through Midsummer Common. He was walking along in deep meditation

and just as he reached the center of the Common he was startled by what he says “seemed to me to be a loud voice, but which may have been a singular illusion.” He seemed very distinctly to hear the words, “Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not!”

The effect of this singular experience upon the young preacher was revolutionary. Then and there he definitely decided against going to college, convinced that the hand of God was leading him into another channel. He made up his mind to remain with his congregation and minister unto them the Word.

When his father heard of his decision he was sorely grieved, but neither Mr. Spurgeon nor the world ever regretted it. Even the Rev. John Spurgeon lived to acknowledge the wisdom of his son’s action.

Some have charged Mr. Spurgeon with being unlearned, but nothing could be more diverse from the truth. He was not college trained, but he had a college education. It might even truthfully be said, that he had a university education. He was one of the learned men of prominence in the last part of the nineteenth century. He was a Latin and Greek scholar of no mean merit, and was sufficiently conversant with Hebrew to consult the Old Testament in its original language. He understood French also. His sermons bear evidence to how well versed he was in history, classical literature, and science. Some of the English farmers used to say that he knew more of the science of agriculture than they themselves did.

Mr. Spurgeon is a notable example of what stability of character and discipline of mind can accomplish, even in a rustic country or village lad. Though his experience should not be taken as a criterion for all, it is proof that college training is not indispensable. Nothing the college gives is impossible to the





*He seemed very distinctly to hear the words, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not."*

industrious and honest young person, even though he or she cannot study in any institution of learning. Because of his great powers of observation, someone has ventured to assert that Mr. Spurgeon would have obtained a thorough and useful education if he had lived in a desert.

In giving up the idea of going to college, Charles Spurgeon did not have in mind to surrender all hope of receiving more than a common education. It is regrettable that so many young men have inferred from this experience of Mr. Spurgeon's that education when entering upon the work of the Christian ministry is rather a non-essential. They do not find any ground for such a conclusion in the life and work of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. To make up for his lack of college training Mr. Spurgeon had to apply himself most diligently and determinedly to a course of study. Every possible spare moment he devoted to this task.

Nor was his study haphazard. He pursued his course of study as systematically as he was diligent. The progress he made in so many branches of learning testifies to this. One who was once his tutor declared that he would readily have passed the examination that would have entitled him to the university degree. This is a wonderful testimony to the systematic effort and tireless energy of the man.

Let no person say flippantly that he will follow Mr. Spurgeon's example. Let him first analyze the situation. Has he a well-defined sense of appreciation for learning? Does he realize the comparative greatness of the task of self-education? Is he conscious of that mental control that will enable him to apply himself systematically to a course of study? Has he the energy and determination to gain an education through long extended and unremitting toil? If so, he may reasonably hope to be successful

without college training. But who is prepared to say that even when meeting these conditions he would not be justified in seeking scholastic training?

Mr. Spurgeon's experience is proof that college training is not always indispensable to success, but it does not prove—far from it—that college training does not in the vast majority of cases contribute greatly to success in any line. So, in regard to Mr. Spurgeon we may say it is doubtless well that he did not go to college, for it helped to bring out in him those qualities of industry and freedom from conventionalism and it gave God a chance to mold his life into profound greatness and usefulness in the work of the kingdom.

## Chapter VIII

### The “Bumpkin Preacher” In London

Mr. Spurgeon remained as pastor at Waterbeach only a short time, but it was one of the most important periods of his ministry. It was schooling for his larger ministry and helped make that ministry possible.

In his preaching at Waterbeach he especially sought for the salvation of souls. It mattered little to him if people did call him the “ragged headed boy” or the “boy preacher”—his first concern was the effect of his preaching in regard to salvation work. He knew the gospel he preached had saved him when it was preached by another, but would it save others when he preached it? After preaching several Sundays he asked one of the deacons if he had heard of any one finding the Lord. The deacon thought there must be some, but it was not until a Sunday or two later that he was able to inform the young pastor definitely of one who had been converted. When Mr. Spurgeon was told that a woman who lived several miles distant had been converted through his preaching, he declared that he must see his new convert at once. So the first thing on Monday morning he was driving down to see her, feeling, as he himself said, “like the boy who had earned his first guinea, or like a diver who had been down to the depths of the sea and brought up a rare pearl.” Years afterwards he declared, “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.”

He had not been long at Waterbeach when he was asked to deliver a short address at a Sunday-school convention in Cambridge. He spoke to the large audience with his usual straightforwardness and ability. He spoke briefly and then resumed his seat. Whereupon two ministers on the platform arose and made severe attacks upon the young preacher because of his youthfulness, including some very insulting personal remarks. When he could obtain the floor Mr. Spurgeon calmly replied to the charges in a dignified and gentlemanly manner. The bearing of the youth on this occasion and his ableness as a speaker won for him the admiration of a Mr. Gould, a deacon from Loughton, Essex, who was present at the time.

Not many days after this Mr. Gould, while in London, met an old friend, Mr. Thomas Olney, a deacon of the New Park Street Chapel, and spoke to him in highly complimentary terms of the young Waterbeach pastor. The New Park Street Chapel was without a minister at this time, and when a few weeks later the two deacons again met Mr. Gould again spoke of young Spurgeon and suggested that he might be secured to fill the vacancy. Thereupon Mr. Olney conferred with his fellow deacons with the result that a letter was sent to the Waterbeach minister inviting him to preach in the New Park Street Chapel. When the letter came to him Mr. Spurgeon at first could not believe it was intended for him, so unexpected was this turn of events. He finally answered the letter, accepting the invitation provided there had been no misunderstanding. He explained to them that he was but nineteen.

Another letter requesting him to come settled the matter definitely and on a dull December evening he made his advent into

London. He went directly to a boarding-house according to a previous arrangement, feeling very lonely and friendless. When he arrived at the boarding-house he found there a group of young men, by whom his coming had been eagerly anticipated. Here was a young preacher not yet nineteen years old who had come to preach in what had long been far from an obscure pulpit. New Park Street Chapel was built to accommodate twelve hundred people and though the congregation at this time scarcely exceeded three hundred it had formerly had a very prosperous existence and had enjoyed the ministry of some very noted preachers and theologians. Was this then the pulpit orator who was to preach in New Park Street Chapel?

The young men at the boarding-house could not help being amused at the rustic appearance of the young preacher. Very unsophisticated in manner the youth was. Also, he was dressed in clothes of a very homely style that indicated very plainly that he was from the country or village. He wore a huge black satin stock (broad, stiff band) round his neck, and had a blue handkerchief with white spots. The young men were too well bred to laugh at him, but they made rather gentle sport of him by relating to him great tales of the wonderful preachers of London. They recounted how these men held sway over vast audiences because of their masterful oratory which resulted from their deep learning and ability. This was the introduction of the "Bumpkin Preacher," as he was called by some in derision, to London.

After an almost sleepless night he proceeded to the Chapel to preach his first sermon in London. Considering the largeness of the place and the strangeness of the circumstances, it would not have been surprising if he had lacked his usual liberty, but he spoke with great freeness and with evident effect. His text was well chosen:

“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” (Jas. 1:17). It was a better sermon by far than had been delivered in that pulpit for a long time.

After the service closed some were disappointed, some were inclined to oppose, and some did oppose; but the majority were well pleased and desired to hear him again. Everywhere the people went as they dispersed to their homes they talked about the boy preacher, with the result that the evening audience was much larger than its recent normal size. The text of the second sermon was Rev. 14: 5: “They are without fault before the throne of God.” At the close of the service the people hesitated to go home. The two sermons had greatly revived the despondent hearts of the members and there was much discussion as to the young minister’s eligibility for the pastorate. Finally they called the deacons forth from the vestry and made them promise to endeavor to secure C. H. Spurgeon for their pastor.

Mr. Spurgeon afterward said this was for him a happy day in the pulpit. During the day he made many friends, and as he returned to the boarding-house he no longer felt alone. As he expresses it, he no longer looked upon Londoners as “flinty-hearted barbarians.” Regardless of the young men, of the grind of the cabs, and every other annoyance, he felt at ease and slept soundly.

## **Chapter IX**

### **Prosperity Through Persecution**

Mr. Spurgeon made three more visits to London to preach in the New Park Street Chapel pulpit. Before the last of these visits he received an invitation to occupy that pulpit for six months on probation. This was a great honor, for no other minister who had occupied the pulpit during the vacancy of the pastorate there had been invited to preach a second time. However, Mr. Spurgeon declined the six months' offer, because he thought it too hasty. In reply to the invitation he very humbly suggested that in case his youth and inexperience should disqualify him for the pastorate it would very likely be found out in less than six months' time and he did not wish the congregation to be disadvantaged by being obliged to retain him to the end of that period; he did not wish to be a hindrance if he could not be a help.

Finally, satisfactory arrangements were made and Charles Haddon Spurgeon started upon his probationary ministry in New Park Street Chapel. The deacons had told him that if he would preach in this pulpit for three Sundays not one of the twelve hundred seats would be vacant. The prediction, however, was inaccurate in that it foretold but half of the young preacher's success. Immediate results attended his ministry and not only were the seats filled, but the aisles were crowded and people were



packed into every nook and corner until the house would hold no more.

Thereupon the somewhat disheartened and discouraged congregation took new courage and saw brighter things ahead. What need of waiting longer when God had so unmistakably bestowed his blessing upon the minister's labors? Consequently, before the close of the probationary period Mr. Spurgeon was unanimously invited to the pastorate of the New Park Street Chapel, and before he was yet twenty he was installed as pastor in this great world metropolis of a congregation that had a long and notable history.

Yet the young pastor was not to find all flowers and pleasantness in London. He was not unfamiliar with hostile criticism, but almost immediately upon his accession to the New Park Street Chapel pulpit such a campaign of slander and abuse commenced as would have swamped one with weaker convictions. It is altogether conceivable that there should be considerable excitement and comment in the press when a young country lad not college trained had come to the metropolis and in scarcely more than a week or two had preached to audiences two or three times as large as those of any other preacher in London. But the extreme opposition was altogether unfitting. Some of the stories told by persons claiming to be eye-witnesses were decidedly false. For instance, one story that was given wide circulation was that once Mr. Spurgeon slid down the pulpit banister at the New Park Street Chapel to illustrate the backslider's course. The truth of the matter is that there was no pulpit banister there at the time this incident was supposed to have occurred.

Writers in both the religious and secular press carried the opposition forward with much spirit. Not only was the young

minister's preaching bitterly censured, but his person was also maligned. Some journalists were pleased to dwell much on his "ignorance" and others more mild, but not less opposed, hinted that he had never been converted and declared that the results of his work would not be lasting because founded upon sensationalism. Some referred derogatorily to him as the "boy preacher" and others spoke of him as the "nine days' wonder," predicting that his career would be as brief as that of a comet.

Cartoons more or less ingenuously devised were calculated to discredit the New Park Street minister. One caricature named "Brimstone and Treacle" was a grotesque representation of the young minister in the full ardor of his discourse and beside him a "very proper" preacher in full clerical costume with his written sermon on a velvet cushion. Another caricature named "Catch-'em-alive-O!" also showed him in the act of preaching, but wearing a headgear like that of the fly-paper seller. People of all classes, from lords and ladies to poor working men and women, were represented as having wings and sticking to the hat or buzzing around it in the act of being caught.

Nor was the opposition less stubborn than it was bitter. There were those who as heartily endorsed Mr. Spurgeon and his work as the critics ridiculed and slandered. Between these two parties or factions a heated controversy was kept up. But Mr. Spurgeon held aloof from the conflict almost entirely. He went about his business of preaching the gospel, often grieved, but not resenting. It was the wise course to follow. While his enemies slandered and reproached God blessed and his influence constantly grew. The opposition was but a great sounding-board which spread his fame and influence far and wide. The opposition but defeated its own purpose and enhanced his greatness.

The fact is, Mr. Spurgeon's entrance into London was almost like the throwing in of a bombshell. There was little vital religion in the churches at that time. Preaching had degenerated into the delivering of carefully prepared theological essays, without power and unction. The time was ripe for a greater emphasis on the weightier matters of sin and divine judgment. There was need for vigorous and spiritually powerful preaching such as that of Wesley and Whitefield. The upper classes were well satisfied with the established order of preaching, because it did not disturb them in their lives of indulgence or prick their conscience, but the lower and middle classes were beginning to grope for a higher spiritual life, a more real and satisfying personal religion. Little wonder then that the "boy preacher" created—though quite unintentionally—such a ferment of excitement and opposition.

London needed a message of vital religion and spiritual life. Spurgeon had the message. Therefore, in the providence of God he weathered all opposition and came through the storm shining all the more brightly in the Master's service.

## **Chapter X**

### **The Metropolitan Tabernacle**

Mr. Spurgeon had not preached many months in New Park Street Chapel when it became evident that something must be done to provide greater accommodation for the crowds. Every Sunday the building would be uncomfortably packed and hundreds turned away. The deacons were quite beside themselves to know what to do. The young pastor acutely sensed the great need and one morning while standing in the pulpit he boldly declared, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, and by faith this wall at the back shall come down too!”

The proposal was too much for the people and one deacon replied to it thus, “Let us never hear of that again.” But the burden of reaching souls with the gospel of Jesus Christ weighed heavily upon the preacher and he boldly stood for enlargement. Overflow meetings had been tried unsuccessfully and somehow those people must not be denied the gospel message. Finally he prevailed and plans for enlargement were made.

While New Park Street Chapel was being enlarged the congregation met in Exeter Hall. But upon their return to the chapel they found that with all its added room it would not long accommodate the crowds. Again it became necessary to turn great

crowds away from the evening services. Mr. Spurgeon said that to accommodate the vast crowd who sought to enter was like attempting “to put the sea into a teapot.” Soon it became necessary to return to Exeter Hall for the evening service, and this great auditorium was invariably filled to excess. People would crowd into the street an hour before the doors were opened and traffic had to be diverted into side streets. It is said that nine tenths of the congregation were men, because women were unable to endure the terrible jostling of the crowd.

Such eminent personages as the Lord Mayor of London and the Chief Commissioner of Police attended the services and greeted Mr. Spurgeon in the vestry. But the young minister did not cater to men of high estate. In a letter to a friend he spoke of the attention given by certain notable men, but declared that “better still some thieves, thimble-riggers, harlots, etc.,” had come and were in the church. Just as the opposition failed to abash or discourage, so success and fame did not unduly exalt him.

On Mr. Spurgeon’s twenty-first birthday he received a small gift and a letter saying that the sender wished to be the first contributor toward the erection of a new tabernacle. Mr. Spurgeon regarded this as the voice of God and from that time looked forward to the erection of such a building. He laid aside for the project from his own resources and, quietly talked it to intimate friends who in turn communicated their enthusiasm to others until practically all the congregation participated in his faith.

After services had been held in Exeter Hall for some time the proprietors intimated that they would be unable to let the hall continuously to one congregation. Fortunately the large music hall in Royal Surrey Gardens had just been completed and negotiations were made for the use of this building. Some were opposed, but the

force of circumstances almost drove them to it as a last measure. The music hall provided seating accommodation for ten thousand people, but the first night they held service there the building was packed, every inch of standing room being taken long before the service began.

But this first service in the Royal Surrey Gardens Music Hall proved to be a very sad affair. In the midst of the sermon some evil-disposed persons raised a great cry of "Fire! fire!" Evidently their purpose was to break up the meeting, but it was a deed of murderous perfidy. The great audience suddenly became fearfully excited and unmanageable. Mr. Spurgeon from the pulpit loudly called upon the people to be calm, but the great uproar and excitement of the multitude could not be controlled. In their own great haste or from the pressure of the crowd people were thrown from the galleries down the stone steps. Some were trampled underfoot. After the confusion was over seven dead bodies were removed and the injured to the number of twenty-eight were taken to the hospitals.

As soon as quietness was somewhat restored, Mr. Spurgeon attempted to go on with the service, but he found it impossible to allay the excitement. The effect of this sad event was very distressing on the young preacher. A nervous reaction brought on a fever from which he did not fully recover for several months.

Hostile critics made good use of this event to further their work of opposition. But both the minister and his people showed all courtesy and interest toward the friends and relatives of the victims of this disaster and the public confidence and esteem remained unbroken. Mr. Spurgeon could not but wonder at the strange providence that would permit such a thing to occur, but this was only another evidence to him that God moves in a mysterious

way his wonders to perform. There is no doubt but that this disaster hastened the erection of the already proposed tabernacle. There arose a demand for a safer place and a place devoted exclusively to religious purposes. Mr. Spurgeon later said, "That frightful calamity, the impression of which can never be erased from my mind, turned out, in the providence of God, to be one of the most wonderful means of turning public attention to special services, and I do not doubt that—fearful catastrophe though it was—it has been the mother of multitudes of blessings."

For three years services on Sunday morning were held in the music hall, but all this while the pastor and his people were working and praying for a new sanctuary adapted to their needs. Mr. Spurgeon himself began a personal canvass to raise funds, and traveled from city to city and village to village, preaching twice each day. Everywhere he went he took collections for the tabernacle, but of the amount raised he gave half to the local church where the money was given. Sometimes he received only a shilling (about twenty-four cents) and at other times larger amounts. Gradually the fund grew in number of pounds into the thousands. Assured that the project was beyond the experimental stage and would be carried through, persons of means came forward with large donations.

Aug. 16, 1859, was a day of much rejoicing, for it was on that day that the corner-stone of the new tabernacle was laid. The contract had been let and building work started before nearly all the proposed amount necessary for completing the building was subscribed, but the congregation felt they should press on in faith. There had been some difficulty in regard to choosing a suitable location, but a lot was finally purchased at Newington Butts. This was far from being an aristocratic neighborhood and was located

among factories and humble dwellings, but one who advocated this location declared that it made no difference in what part of London they placed the chapel for Mr. Spurgeon was sure to fill it to overflowing.

Just when construction work was beginning, Mr. Spurgeon called a meeting for prayer. A number of his friends and officers of the church went to the building site and there, kneeling among the piles of material, they offered up fervent prayer that none of the men engaged in the work might be killed or injured. This prayer was remarkably fulfilled, for it is asserted by good authorities that no one was hurt directly or indirectly while engaged on the building.

In December of 1859 the eminent preacher and his people left the Surrey Gardens Music Hall. A large sum was being paid for the use of the building for morning services, but the proprietors thought still further to increase their profits by opening the gardens for amusement on the Lord's day. "When this was done, Mr. Spurgeon and his congregation felt duty bound to withdraw from a place that was profaned by desecrating the Lord's day. They then for the third time occupied Exeter Hall, where services were regularly conducted until in March, 1861, when the new tabernacle was opened for services. During the sojourn in the music hall many souls had been won to the Lord and many of the congregation that moved into the tabernacle upon its completion owed their connection with the work to attendance at the services in that hall.

The church had set as their goal the complete payment for the tabernacle by the time it was finished. When the time of its completion was near at hand there was still an indebtedness of over four thousand pounds (nearly twenty thousand dollars) that must be raised in order that the building might be opened free of debt.



As was their custom they took the matter to the Lord in prayer and before the day for the opening service the amount needed had been oversubscribed.

The first service in the new Tabernacle was a prayer-meeting, held at seven o'clock in the morning, Monday, Mar. 18, 1861. The first sermon was preached Monday afternoon, March 25, from the text: "And daily, in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5: 42). This was a fitting introduction to the long line of preaching in that building that exalted the name of the Lord Jesus.

As constructed, the building was one hundred and forty-six feet in length, eighty-one feet in width, and sixty-two feet in height. There was seating accommodation for fifty-five hundred, and provision could have been made for an extra five hundred. Below was a lecture hall that would seat nearly a thousand, and a school room for a thousand children. There were separate classrooms, rooms for working-meetings, a secretary's office, three vestries, etc.

Such was the structure erected to accommodate the work of him who shortly before was but an uncouth country lad. But even in all its magnitude it was too small. Truly "God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform."

## Chapter XI

### **“God’s Best Earthly Gift”**

One of the members of the New Park Street Church at the time C. H. Spurgeon received his first invitation to preach in the chapel was a Mr. Thompson, a merchant in prosperous circumstances. One evening when he returned to his comfortable and somewhat luxurious home, he announced to the family that a young man from Essex was to preach the next Sunday in the New Park Street pulpit.

Susanna Thompson, a daughter, was quiet and sweet in disposition, and noted for her earnest devotion to Christian work and her silent deeds of charity. But like her father, at this time she had become somewhat discouraged and was growing a little cold in the spirit of her devotion. Thus it so happened that when the announcement concerning the new minister who was to preach the next Sunday was made by her father she paid little heed to it. And Sunday morning she could not be persuaded to attend church.

She decided to go to the evening service, but the reports that had come to her concerning the morning service were such that she was not prepossessed in the preacher’s favor. She afterward admitted that her ideas of the dignity and propriety of the ministry were not a little shocked by the reports of the morning worshipers. Nor was her estimate of the young minister changed much after

she had listened to his evening address delivered as it was with his natural eloquence and in his countrified manner.

We have already had a sufficient glance at Mr. Spurgeon on his arrival in London for the first time to realize that there was little about the rustic youth that would be very attractive in the eyes of a lady. Indeed it is very doubtful whether the young minister gave much thought to this matter of presenting a good appearance before the ladies, so occupied was he with his great task of filling the pulpit. So when he returned home the next day it seems that no romance had yet started, at least in the consciousness of either the young preacher or his somewhat critical auditor. It was no case of love on first sight.

And how could any but the most extravagant imagination picture a more improbable circumstance than that of the close union of these two souls in love and happy fellowship? Why, this young minister even though he had filled singularly well a great pulpit was but a country lad in speech and dress and manners. Uncouth, rather clumsy and awkward, and entirely unused to city life and culture was he. She was entirely opposite. Gentle, refined, and entirely well mannered was she.

Thus, when in anticipation of the second visit by Mr. Spurgeon to the New Park Street Chapel Miss Thompson joined heartily in a canvass to arouse interest in the services, she did it more from pride of her church than any other motive. To fill the house would be to make it more cheery and inviting to the stranger who was to fill the pulpit. In the words of Susanna herself as a friend remembers them: "It would be a shame to have a man come so far and find the church so poorly attended."

Later when Mr. Spurgeon was called to the pastorate there, Miss Thompson often went to hear him preach and not

infrequently met him at the house of Mr. Olney. Being at this time somewhat cold and indifferent to the things of God, she often had seasons of doubt, despondency, and darkness. Just how the young pastor's special attention was drawn to her spiritual need is not certain, but soon afterward Miss Thompson received an illustrated copy of *Pilgrim's Progress*, with this inscription in Mr. Spurgeon's own handwriting, "Miss Thompson, with desires for her progress in the blessed pilgrimage, from C. H. Spurgeon, April 20, 1854."

Even at this time it was very doubtful whether the young minister's intentions were other than to fill the place of a dutiful pastor to the young woman. But the friendship between them steadily grew until at last Mr. Spurgeon made known in quite characteristic fashion his love for the yet unsuspecting lady. It was while they were thrown together with a party of friends who were waiting for the beginning of the ceremonies celebrating the opening of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham. The young minister had been reading Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*, but he at last handed the book to Miss Thompson, who was sitting by his side, and asked her what she thought of the lines under the heading "Of Marriage." Then speaking in a low whisper, he asked, "Do you pray for him who is to be your husband?"

As the significance of these strange words flashed through her mind, Miss Thompson's heart beat fast and her cheeks flushed and she lost almost all interest in the program. Yet this was only a preparatory hint of what was to follow, for about two months later the young minister formally proposed and was accepted.

Like most other young brides-to-be, Miss Thompson indulged in many happy day-dreams of the future, but the romance of those days was not unbroken bliss. Often disappointment and seeming neglect were her lot. Yet it was all a schooling for her larger

usefulness in the life that she was to live in the future. Through it all their love grew stronger each day and they were drawn closer together.

It must be remembered that at this time the young pastor was traveling hundreds of miles and preaching a dozen or more times each week. There were many weeks when they did not see much of each other. Monday was usually the only day they could be together and that for only a few hours. Then so rushed was the minister with his many duties that he usually occupied part of that precious time in revising his previous day's sermon for the press. While he did this there was nothing for her to do but sit quiet and patiently wait.

But there were worse trials than this for the sensitive spirit of Miss Thompson. It often occurred that on Sundays when she met the young pastor in the vestry at New Park Street Chapel his whole being was so wrapped up in his sermon which he was soon to deliver that he would pass her without seeming to recognize her or would merely greet her with a formal handshake and "How are you?"

Perhaps the worst trial of this nature came when the young couple went together to a hall in Kenington, where Mr. Spurgeon was to preach. After they had reached the place and ascended the staircase crowded with people Mr. Spurgeon did something that was very unbecoming to a suitor of so fine a lady as Miss Thompson. So occupied was his mind with the sermon he had come to deliver that he quite forgot the lady with him and suddenly stepped aside into a kind of reception room leaving her to struggle alone in the great crowd. This was too much for her sense of justice and right and she returned home at once very indignant. When her mother learned about the affair she very calmly and

wisely soothed her spirits and then pointed out that as a minister of the gospel Mr. Spurgeon's first duty was service to God. She must never hinder him in this service, said the mother, by selfishly wishing to occupy first place in his heart.

In a short while Mr. Spurgeon came hurriedly to the Thompson home much excited and inquiring about the lady whom he had lost at the hall. Now restored to her usual sweet spirit, she recounted to him the experience she had had and he reassured her of his deep affection, but declared that in the path of duty he must always consider of first importance his service to God.

On Jan. 8, 1856, Mr. C. H. Spurgeon and Miss Susanna Thompson were wedded at the New Park Street Chapel. The service was very simple, but the Chapel was thronged with people. And it is estimated that at least two thousand people were unable to gain admittance. The short honeymoon of ten days was spent in Paris, and then Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Spurgeon returned to London, he to resume his work, which now made great demands on his time and energy, and she to her new office of making a home and assisting the great preacher.

For Mr. Spurgeon it was a most happy marriage. Mrs. Spurgeon proved to be a true helpmeet indeed. And the young pastor needed just that, for with all his ability and greatness he had shortcomings and faults. And Mr. Spurgeon found that nothing so helps to make a man successful as the love and counsel of a true wife.

It was always C. H. Spurgeon's wish that his wife act the part of a helpful critic. In his speech and mannerisms he was often rather crude and it was her kind and loving assistance that helped him most in overcoming the little inelegancies. Then, too, it will be remembered that the young minister's education was limited which

would have been more or less a hindrance to him had not the well-educated Mrs. Spurgeon so well filled up the lack. In fact Mrs. Spurgeon was quite as wonderful a woman as he was a man and in speaking of her later in life he said, "She has been to me God's best earthly gift, and not a little even of heavenly treasure has come to me by her means. She has often been as an angel of God unto me." And we do not doubt that the great divine hand brought these two together.

One of the books put out by Mr. Spurgeon was largely prepared by her. She read extensively and with very good taste and was a great help to her husband in his writing and sermon making. Here is part at least of the secret of Mr. Spurgeon's ability to do such a tremendous amount of work.

Once the great missionary-explorer, Dr. Livingstone, asked, "How do you manage to do two men's work in a single day?"

Mr. Spurgeon replied, "You have forgotten that there are two of us, and the one you see the least of, often does the most work."

Sometimes at the close of a hard Sunday's work the minister's spirits were greatly revived and refreshed by her stimulating presence. Often as he sat in the great easy chair she would sit at his feet and read to him, the subject of her reading depending on the mood in which he happened to be. If in the day's work there had been much hurry and excitement she would choose something that would soothe and rest him. At other times the portion read might be of a stimulating nature.

The story is told of how one Saturday evening the weary pastor found his sluggish mind would not develop a suitable exposition for the text he had chosen for his sermon the next day. Thereupon his wife wisely suggested that he retire for the night to

be awakened by her next morning in time to make the necessary preparation. He consented and slept peacefully for several hours. Almost at daybreak Mrs. Spurgeon was awakened by his talking in his sleep. As she listened closely she realized that what the minister was unconsciously saying was an orderly and distinct exposition of the text that had seemed so difficult. She decided that she must remember what he was saying, and praying God for help carefully repeated after him until she had well in mind what she had heard. Then she fell asleep.

Later she was awakened by her husband who was grieving because he had slept so late and would not now have time for preparation. He chided her for failing to awaken him, but great was his delight when she rehearsed for him the exposition that she had heard him utter in his sleep. That morning C. H. Spurgeon preached a powerful sermon based on the exposition thus gained of that text.



## **Chapter XII**

### **Mrs. Spurgeon's Book Fund**

During the early part of her married life Mrs. Spurgeon was very active in Christian and benevolent work, acting as a hearty associate in all the work in which her husband was engaged. Though robust and hearty in appearance, Mr. Spurgeon not infrequently was driven to his bed by illness, and on such occasions it was the thoughtful and affectionate wife who ministered to his needs. Yet matters did not always go on thus. As the latter half of their married life drew on, Mr. Spurgeon was to see her gradually relinquish first her public duties and then the care of her own home because of increasing infirmities. Instead of herself being the minister, she became the subject of Mr. Spurgeon's earnest prayers and most affectionate care. She was wholly an invalid for a number of years.

As day by day and week by week she sat in the big easy chair her quiet spirit grew restless in its imprisonment. Though never impatient nor complaining, she longed to be active again and able to share somehow in her husband's labors for the salvation of souls. In spite of the hopeless appearance of her case, she repeatedly found herself hoping for that better day of restored health and strength for service. But the days came and went and her condition did not materially improve. With this desire

constantly growing stronger, Mrs. Spurgeon gave herself up to much prayer and God was pleased to direct her in establishing the Book-Fund.

“The Fund became a fact in the most natural manner possible to all outward seeming; for, the casual pleasantries of a summer’s day suggested the distribution of books to poor ministers,” Mrs. Spurgeon once said. “But,” she continued, faith was the true rise and spring of this brook by the way to a higher source, and humbly dares to ascribe the origin of the Book-Fund to the kind hand of the loving Father himself.”

Then she went on to say: “An intense desire took possession of me, after reading my dear husband’s Lectures to His Students, to place a copy in the hands of every minister in England, and consulting with the dear author on the matter, he approved my wish, and we decided to devote a few pounds to the partial gratification of it. Before the distribution of the copies thus purchased was completed, friends heard of and appreciated the scheme, and sent gifts, some of one hundred, some of fifty volumes, some of money to help in the work, so that very quietly and silently, but most surely, as the months rolled on, it came to be a matter of established fact that a book-fund existed and prospered.”

Mrs. Spurgeon then tells how while sitting in her husband’s study she was looking at the four volumes of the Treasury of David when this question sprang to her lips: “Why could I not send these also to poor ministers? Only think what a boon they would be!” But this time Mr. Spurgeon did not agree when the proposal was made to him, for he feared the task would be too heavy and the responsibility too burdensome for her. Yet, Mrs. Spurgeon says the

Lord fostered her desire until it became so strong it could not be repressed.

In an introduction to a book containing a record of the Book-Fund, Mr. Spurgeon wrote: "I gratefully adore the goodness of our heavenly Father in directing my beloved wife to a work which has been to her fruitful in unutterable happiness. That it has cost her more pain than it would be fitting to reveal, is most true; but that it has brought her boundless joy is equally certain. Our gracious Lord ministered to his suffering child, in the most effectual manner, when he graciously led her to minister to the necessities of his service. By this means, he called her away from her personal grief, gave tone and concentration to her life, led her to continual dealings with himself, and raised her nearer the center of that region where other than earthly joys and sorrows reigned supreme. Let every believer accept this as the inference of experience, that for most human maladies the best relief and antidote will be found in self-sacrificing work for the Lord Jesus."

"Blessed be His name," said Mrs. Spurgeon, "I feel that it cannot be presumption to believe that this sacred charge was given me from the Lord himself, because the fact has been abundantly proved, both by my own weakness and the manifestation of his gracious strength.

"It is not the first time he has 'given power to the faint,' or chosen a 'thing of naught' to do him service, and I rejoice with exceeding joy over my work, because it is his from beginning to end; all the good, and the grace, and the glory are his, his wholly and only! He has reminded his stewards of a need which they are far too apt to overlook, and he has supplied for many of his ministers a necessity which they had scarcely the courage to mention. Preachers without books are as the Israelites when

required by Pharaoh to make bricks without straw; but hundreds of such poor oppressed workers are toiling on from year to year, without sympathy from any one. Some little help was needed for these servants of the Lord to give them 'a little reviving,' and that aid has come by an unlooked-for hand. It was unlikely that one who is neither bookworm nor theologian should be raised up to supply poor preachers with books; and yet so it has been, and the matter is from the Lord."

The object of the Book-Fund was to furnish "The bare bookshelves of poor pastors of every Christian denomination with standard works of theology by various authors." Mrs. Spurgeon said she could point to many faithful servants of the Lord who, toiling on in secret poverty for years had not even seen a new book, except in the shop windows, until a grant from the Book-Fund filled their hearts with joy and their lips with thanksgiving.

Many worthy ministers received but a pittance, hardly enough to provide the bare necessities of the family and to buy even what would seem necessary books was for them out of the question. One minister wrote to Mrs. Spurgeon thus, "Oh, for some books to help me in my pulpit preparation! I have to preach before the same people three, perhaps four times a week, and though the Lord has promised that my 'branch shall not wither,' it sometimes gets very dry." "I never dare," wrote another, "now to think of a new book. Two or three times I have begun to save a little money towards the purchase of a long-coveted work, but every time it has gone for something else; Johnny, and little Harry, and Walter, must have boots; or mother is ill; or the girls' frocks are getting shabby; and so the precious volumes are still unattainable."

In many wonderful ways money was provided for the fund. Gifts both large and small were received and turned to good

account. Sometimes a man of means would agree to supply certain books to all the needy ministers in a certain section of the country. Often when supporters of the various works for which Mr. Spurgeon was responsible were sending in their contributions, they would specify a certain amount to be used for the Book-Fund.

When writing for the *Sword and the Trowel*, a paper edited by C. H. Spurgeon, Mrs. Spurgeon often alluded to a little lemon-tree which grew in her room. In fact, she took the lemon-tree as a symbol of the growth of the Book-Fund. Once she spoke of it thus: "So frail at first, and delicate, that a drop of dew would have overwhelmed it, it nevertheless soon gained courage, the tender stem strengthened, one by one other and larger leaves unfolded themselves, and the little plant stood perfect and complete. It was a very little thing, but it gave great pleasure, and though some of the younger members of the household would occasionally ask, with just a suspicion of sarcasm in their tone, 'if there were any lemons yet?' we cherished our little plant even more lovingly . . . But this winter our heavenly Father has given us a better plant to care for. The little tree of the Book-Fund sprang from as small a beginning as the lemon plant itself, and we fondly hope it is as surely a creation of the Lord's hand."

One evening after a very dark and gloomy day Mrs. Spurgeon lay resting on her couch. It seemed that some of the darkness had penetrated her soul, and in sorrow of heart she asked, "Why does my Lord thus deal with his child? Why does he so often send sharp and bitter pain to visit me? Why does he permit lingering weakness to hinder the sweet service I long to render to his poor servants?" The answer to these fretful questions came quickly and in a very unexpected manner.



*"Letters came to her by hundreds thanking her for the books."*

Mrs. Spurgeon describes the scene thus: "For a while silence reigned in the little room, broken only by the crackling of the oak log burning on the hearth. Suddenly I heard a sweet soft sound, a little, clear, musical note, like the tender trill of a robin, beneath my window. 'What can that be?' I said to my companion, who was dozing in the firelight; 'surely no bird can be singing out there at this time of the year and night!' We listened, and again heard the faint plaintive notes, so sweet, so melodious, yet mysterious enough to provoke for a moment our undisguised wonder.' Presently my friend exclaimed, 'It comes from the log on the fire!'. . . The fire was letting loose the imprisoned music from the old oak's inmost heart! Perchance he had garnered up this song in the days when all went well with him, when birds twittered merrily on his branches, and the soft sunlight flecked his tender leaves with gold . . . Perhaps some of us are like this old oak log—cold, hard, and insensible; we should give forth no melodious sounds were it not for the fire, which kindles round us, and releases tender notes of trust in Him, and cheerful compliance with his will."

And while all who knew her heartily sympathized with her in her affliction, they thanked God for leading her into this service by which so many were richly benefited. Letters came to her by hundreds thanking her for the books and praying God's blessings upon her. Not only were these letters from people in England but included among her correspondents were people in France, Sweden, Nova Scotia, Nebraska, Cape of Good Hope, Spain, Sydney, Adelaide, Bengal, Jamaica, Barbados, and many other lands.

Many of the volumes distributed by means of the Book-Fund were the product of Mr. Spurgeon's labors, and thus in a very effectual way the invalid wife was enabled to be of special

## CHARLES H. SPURGEON

assistance to the great Tabernacle preacher in preaching the gospel to thousands.



## Chapter XIII

### Lovely Westwood

When Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon returned from their honeymoon to their first home in the New Kent Road, London, they found it necessary to settle down to simple living and be content with frugal fare. Because of very narrowed financial circumstances they were obliged to practice rigid economy and even to “pinch” in order to “make both ends meet.” They might have lived with much less financial difficulty but for the fact that from their slender resources they contributed freely to the support and education of a young man for the ministry. Mrs. Spurgeon said, “We never had enough left over to tie a bow and ends.”

In these straitened circumstances they learned blessed lessons of trust and God was given a chance to show his providential care. On one occasion a demand was made for the payment of a certain tax, but how to meet the payment the young pastor and his wife knew not except God provide. So the matter was earnestly put before the Lord, and we are told that the swiftness with which the answer came was almost startling. Early the next morning they received a letter containing twenty pounds (nearly one hundred dollars) from whom they knew not, but their need was supplied. Such experiences after this were not uncommon, but “perhaps this first blessed deliverance,” says Mrs. Spurgeon, was the foundation-

stone of my husband's strong and mighty faith, for I do not remember ever afterwards seeing him painfully anxious concerning supplies for any of his great works; he depended wholly on the Lord, his trust was perfect and he lacked nothing."

When the minister and his good wife moved into a home in Nightingale Lane they had no idea of owning it for themselves. The house had been for sale for some time, but when the owners offered it to Mr. Spurgeon on very easy terms he declined to consider buying. But the deacons very decidedly assured their pastor that it would be a sin not to provide for his own. They declared that He that provideth not for his own, and especially for them of his own household, has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Their persistence prevailed and he bought the residence.

By this time his income had increased considerably and by careful management he was soon able to pay off all indebtedness on the place. Mr. Spurgeon always had a great abhorrence for debt ever since his boyhood experience with purchasing the slate pencil while attending Mrs. Cook's school. He once said, "To keep debt, dirt, and the devil out of my cottage has been my greatest wish ever since I set up housekeeping; and although the latter has sometimes gotten in by the door or window, for the old serpent will wriggle through the smallest crack, yet, thanks to a good wife, hard work, honesty, and scrubbing-brushes, the other two have not crossed the threshold."

Here in their cottage in Nightingale Lane the Spurgeons were very happy and the place became greatly endeared to them because of its almost sacred associations. But at last, in 1880, a growing fear that the locality was not a healthy one led the minister to consider a new location. During the years spent in the Nightingale

Lane house the property had greatly increased in value so that when there came a favorable opportunity to buy a more suitable home and grounds at Westwood he was able to sell at a high price. Thus the necessary transactions were carried through and they took up residence at the lovely new home called Westwood, a circumstance which Mr. Spurgeon always ascribed to the leadings of God.

Westwood was situated on Beulah Hill, Sydenham, one of London's fairest suburbs. As one writer said, many a millionaire might well have envied Mr. Spurgeon this home. He had a large and handsome mansion, situated in a spacious park. Although it was within a few minutes' ride of London's crowded streets it was "as rural and as secluded as though in the heart of a wilderness." The expanse of lawn was always well kept and was adorned with beautiful shrubbery. A small lake near the house permitted the gratification of Mr. Spurgeon's fondness for goldfish as pets. There was always an abundance of bees humming about the garden. These were also special friends of the great preacher.

In the garden, flowers were grown in great abundance and variety, principally for distribution among the sick and poor of the city. In the arbors were pleasant seats, but Mr. Spurgeon liked the sunny spots best.

Of special interest inside the great house was the preacher's library. On the shelves were several volumes of tracts, pamphlets, and newspaper clippings concerning Mr. Spurgeon or his work, some hostile and some highly appreciative. Here were also arrayed the many volumes of his own writings and sermons.

Here at Westwood, Mrs. Spurgeon continued her work with the Book-Fund with renewed energy. Her vivid descriptions of life in Westwood are especially pleasing. The smallest circumstance

arrests her attention and teaches her a beautiful lesson. Roaming in the pasture, she frightens from the nest a little skylark. The tiny nest is on the ground and unprotected amid many dangers, yet the little bird can sweetly sing, a wonderful lesson of faith and trust. Or a small syringa bush struggles many years to surmount the surrounding foliage, and finally breaks forth above all the enthralling foliage into excessive beauty and luxuriance. And this is its lesson: "I think I hear a whisper from each little twig and spray, 'Learn from us to be brave and patient, think no waiting too wearisome to win a blessing, no toil too great to obtain a triumph.' " Or standing with her husband at her window reading the clouds, she sees a sea-gull on the wing and it suggests to her the soon returning of her boy, who, on account of physical frailty, has spent some time in the Australian colonies where the climate is more bracing.

Mrs. Spurgeon was the mother of twin boys, both of whom grew up in the fear of God and became successful ministers of the gospel, thus fulfilling the highest aspiration of the fond parents. Before they had finished school and had taken pastorates of their own they sometimes filled the Tabernacle pulpit when illness absented the pastor from discharging his duty.

Thousands of letters came to Westwood, for Mr. Spurgeon's correspondence became immense. Here the students from the Pastor's College, of which Mr. Spurgeon was president, might sometimes enjoy a pleasant day when classes were dismissed. Here in the quiet of an arbor or in the library Mr. Spurgeon met the officers of the several institutions with which he was connected in conference over important business matters.

Here also the great preacher entertained many visitors; not all of these visitors were really desirable, but he had an apt way of

successfully meeting even these. Once an eccentric person called to set Mr. Spurgeon right on a point of doctrine. Failing to make any impression by his arguments, he arose to go and declared, "Then I will shake off the dust of my feet against you." "Please don't do that," said Mr. Spurgeon, "you might make the carpet dirty; you will find a scraper and a mat at the front door."

Some of their visitors were even dangerous. Once an escaped lunatic came into the pastor's vestry at the Tabernacle and declared, "I have come to cut your throat." "Have you?" asked Mr. Spurgeon, "I would not do that if I were you; see what a mess it would make on the carpet." The man admitted he had never thought of that and quieted down so he could be led from the room. Another madman, who was admitted to the house, carried a large club and declared he had come "to kill Mr. Spurgeon." C. H. Spurgeon had no means of self-defense, but he kept his presence of mind. "I have a brother by that name who lives down the street," he calmly replied and pointed the direction. He knew that as soon as the man started off he would have a chance to summon help and have the madman taken. But the man was not to be diverted thus, and became more threatening. Thereupon the minister drew himself up threateningly and demanded, "Give me that stick." The man was cowed and he meekly surrendered his weapon.

## **Chapter XIV**

### **God Answered Him**

One day Mr. Spurgeon attended a business men's prayer-meeting which was held at twelve o'clock every day. In the meeting a man arose who was not personally acquainted with the minister and said that he believed if Mr. Spurgeon would pray for the conversion of a brother in Scotland the conversion might be accomplished that very day. Thereupon Mr. Spurgeon quickly arose and said, "I accept that challenge, let us call on God." That afternoon the man in Scotland felt much disturbed and after business hours when he returned home he told his family that he believed he had wasted his life, but that he did not know what to do to reform. But, he said he believed he would write to Mr. Spurgeon. He was acquainted with the great London preacher only through what he had read in the papers about him, but he did write a long letter inquiring diligently the way of salvation.

Mr. Spurgeon was constantly having similar experiences. Perhaps his greatest fame came as a result of his ability as a preacher, but he was a prince on his knees as well as in the pulpit. He maintained a clean line of communication with heaven and who will say that this is not even the secret of his great pulpit power? His congregation all loved him as their spiritual leader, but

especially endeared was he to many of them because of the prevailing prayers he offered in their behalf.

His trust in God was simple as a child's. He tells us that he once suffered severe pain and had little sleep all night. In the morning he sat up as best he could and cried to the Lord for deliverance. He says he pleaded his sonship and God's fatherhood and told the Lord, "If it were my child that suffered so, I would not let him suffer any longer if I could help him." He believed his prayer would be answered. "I shall never forget my success in my appeal," he says. In a few minutes he dropped back upon his pillow, the pain subsided, and he slept peacefully.

On his journeys he always prayed for protection and in some cases his deliverance from grave danger seemed entirely miraculous. Sometimes at the close of a day of bustle and hurry he would rush to the chapel to lead the evening meeting. His body would be weary and his mind troubled with a rush of conflicting thoughts. But then he would kneel in prayer and get such a refreshing from heaven that he would arise renewed in mind and fresh in body as if he had taken rest.

In the very beginning of his ministry in London there were some very remarkable answers to prayer in the way of physical healing. One evening at the Tabernacle a man arose and said, "Mr. Spurgeon prayed with me this morning. I have been divinely healed." He had been in bed sick with a fever and that very day the physicians had pronounced his case very critical. Another man who for years had limped into the services because afflicted with partial paralysis appeared one Sunday and walked decidedly and firmly down the aisle to a front seat. He had been healed when Mr. Spurgeon prayed for him.

One man was afflicted with rheumatism so severely that for years he was confined to the house. He insisted that Mr. Spurgeon come and pray for him, but the great preacher admitted that he had no faith for the man's healing. Yet the request was persistent and Mr. Spurgeon went and prayed. He promised to return the next day, and when he did so the man met him at the door praising God and declaring that the healing was being done. In a few weeks the man was sufficiently restored to resume his business and for years afterward he was a faithful attendant at the Tabernacle.

Not all for whom Mr. Spurgeon prayed were healed. On the contrary, when he prayed for some instead of getting better they became immediately worse and died. These cases he did not allow to discourage him, however, for in so many cases God answered marvelously that there was no mistaking the miraculous power of God.

Mr. Spurgeon had almost thrust upon him the matter of providing a much-needed orphanage. And the way means were provided for that purpose in answer to his prayers and the prayers of his congregation is marvelous. After the orphanage was built sometimes the money gave out and provisions ran low. On such occasions Mr. Spurgeon would pray and God would always provide. One night the minister was praying for the Lord to send gifts to supply the needs of the orphanage. At the same time a man was walking the foggy streets of London and was suddenly impressed to visit the Tabernacle preacher and make a donation to his church work. He had never met Mr. Spurgeon nor read any of his sermons, but so strong was the impression that he went to the door that very night, insisted on seeing Mr. Spurgeon, and gave a large sum of money. He refused to give his name, but later he sent



another large sum, declaring that the other donation was the best investment of his life.

Thus it was that Mr. Spurgeon was able to promote so many enterprises successfully. Besides his connection with the orphanage he was president of the Pastors' College, a school for the training of ministers, and chief sponsor of an old ladies' home.

We have seen how Mr. Spurgeon and the deacons prayed at the beginning of the construction of the Tabernacle, and consequently no one was injured upon the building. Later when a large business house was to be erected he was requested by the owners to offer the same kind of prayer for the protection of their workmen. He did and on all that great building project not one was injured.

Perhaps one of the most remarkable cases on record is that of the conversion of a man in Australia. One day some strangers approached Mr. Spurgeon soon after they had moved into London and told him of this man, a son and husband, absent in Australia. They had not written to the one in Australia anything about Mr. Spurgeon and the man afterward declared he did not believe he had ever before heard the great preacher's name mentioned. But on the day Mr. Spurgeon prayed this man was at work upon a building in Melbourne. He stopped while carrying a timber from one part of the building to another and declared he was unable to go farther, for he had suddenly become deeply impressed with a sense of his responsibility to God and his own lost condition. He was never a regular churchgoer and had not been inside a church for a religious service during his stay in Australia. He was not a criminal or even an immoral man, but his deep sense of sinfulness caused tears to come to his eyes and his hands to tremble. He notified his superintendent that he must return to his boarding-house. Once



*"He stopped while carrying a timber from one part of the building to another."*

there he fell on his knees and prayed for forgiveness and received assurance of his acceptance with God. Before he went to bed that night he wrote home to his people in London telling about his wonderful conviction and conversion.

Similar instances could be multiplied greatly, so many times did Mr. Spurgeon turn his wonderful faith in God to good account in behalf of others. For himself, Mr. Spurgeon said that he never worried about anything beyond the time when he could have opportunity to turn to God in prayer. Let this be the one great tribute to our hero, that he was a mighty man in prayer.

## Chapter XV

### Mighty with Tongue and with Pen

Mr. Spurgeon was a true Christian orator. At the time of his greatest success he was unique as a preacher, for never had any one before him wielded so wide and so mighty an influence in his own day by means of pulpit and press as did this pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle. And that is the final test of oratory—its effects.

Even the most ardent admirers of the great divine admit that he was often rude and utterly unschooled in any kind of scholastic oratory. Yet when he spoke hardened sinners hung their heads in shame or bowed in repentance, hearts were filled with joy or with fear, the eyes of many filled with tears, and many were provoked to labors of love and sacrifice. One author has well said: "He was a well-directed thunderbolt, whose course to the spectators seemed zigzag and erratic, yet who always cleft the rock at the selected mark. Judging by the results, he was one of the greatest orators that ever lived, not exceeded by Luther, Wesley, or Webster."

Mr. Spurgeon never adopted any mechanical methods and he did nothing merely for effect. What he did he did naturally; it was always C. H. Spurgeon speaking or acting. His natural vehemence was often the occasion for severe criticism, and the startling and

rapid success which he attained won for him much opposition and persecution. In the public press representations of him ranged all the way from a fly-trap to Satan himself. His sermons were misquoted and some statements circulated widely and purported to be his own were glaringly false or inaccurate.

Yet this persecution hurt him little and helped him much, and many people came the first time through curiosity alone, but continued to attend his services because of the power and attractiveness of his preaching. Many came to scoff or criticize, but went away ardent admirers. It is the testimony of history that nothing builds up a church like persecution. And as we have already seen, this congregation in London was built up rapidly from the time that the rustic boy preacher became their pastor.

Mr. Spurgeon was always a most diligent student. He had a store of knowledge that might well be the envy of any college or university man. That knowledge was of the practical kind, and he knew how to apply it in such a way as to give force and clearness to his preaching. It was his common method to reason from the known to the unknown. He made his sermons attractive and forceful by the use of apt illustrations which were drawn mostly from the common walks of life. He lived among men and sympathized with them. Moreover, he studied them. From the homely and every-day experiences of farmers, clerks, shopmen, and officials he drew many of his illustrations. He was a close student of nature and literally could find "books in running brooks, and sermons in stones."

Nature bestowed upon Mr. Spurgeon a wonderful voice, one that could not be improved. It was capable of enormous volume and it has been reported from reputable sources that as many as twelve thousand people heard him at one time in the open air. In

his preaching sometimes his voice would rise to a trumpet blast and then in the next few sentences fall till it would be as the cooing of a dove. He was not a musician, but his voice was capable of much musical expression.

There was no uncertain note in Mr. Spurgeon's sermons. He was strong in his convictions and preached only what he believed and did not shun to preach doctrine. Sometimes the bold stand he took on certain doctrinal issues brought him into controversy. But he believed it to be a solemn duty to preach that which he believed to be truth even at the risk of his own popularity.

At one time he felt definitely led to preach on a certain doctrinal theme that was then much in dispute. It was at a time when his sermons were just finding a place in the public press. If he preached that sermon there was much chance that it would not be well received, and some friends whose judgment he respected advised him not to do it. But he felt that 'woe is me if I preach not,' and he did preach the sermon with the consequence that it was well received by the congregation. Moreover it was accepted for publication and had a greater sale than any of his sermons that had previously been printed.

He was not a sensational preacher as that term is commonly understood. His theme was always the simple gospel message and was calculated to point men to God. He did not hesitate to speak of himself, but never to draw personal attention. When in the pulpit he gave himself up fully to the delivery of his message and used whatever was at hand. He declared that when in the field if he could not get a sword he would use a fence-rail.

He could adjust himself to every class and condition. It is said that he once preached to an audience composed entirely of street-peddlers and won their highest favor. In England there are a

number of distinctly different dialects, but in his travels Mr. Spurgeon could adjust his speech to every dialect so well that his hearers could not distinguish between it and their own speech. Thus every locality he visited claimed him as their own.

A man's gifts make room for him, and so Mr. Spurgeon led a busy life preaching and looking after the several institutions for which he was especially responsible. How he ever found time to write is almost a marvel. Nevertheless, he early commenced a literary work that made his name as an author rival that as a preacher. He began by writing a series of what was known as the Waterbeach Tracts, and soon afterward contributed to a Baptist paper an article setting forth the conversation he had had with a certain clergyman on the subject of baptism while he was in school. After going to London he wrote some expository articles and then several of his sermons were printed. These sermons were found to be in demand and arrangements were made to print one of his sermons each week. As a beginner in the literary field Mr. Spurgeon received as little encouragement as when he began to preach. Some strongly advised that he give up writing because it was very unlikely that he would gain any success in that field. It was never easy for him to write, as is evident from his own statement. Concerning the writing of a certain book he said, "Never was a book written amid more incessant toil. Only the fragments of time could be allotted to it, and intense mental and bodily exertions have often rendered me incapable of turning even those fragments to advantage. Writing, to me, is the work of a slave. It is a delight, a joy, a rapture to talk out my thoughts in words that flash upon the mind at the instant when they are required; but it is poor drudgery to sit still and groan for thoughts and words without succeeding in obtaining them. Well may a man's books be called his 'works,' for if every man's mind were

constituted as mine is it would be work indeed to produce a quarto volume.”

In writing as in preaching he had a wonderful command of language. His style was plain, simple, yet interesting and forceful. Some of his writings were couched in homely language, such as his *John Ploughman's Talk*, which book has become a classic. Concerning this work Dr. James Stalker said, “It is a collection of wit and wisdom that is certain of immortality among the popular classics of England.” Mr. Spurgeon declared that these writings were “for plowmen and common people.” He discarded “refined taste and dainty words” for “strong proverbial expressions and homely phrases.” He sought to teach lessons on morality, thrift, and industry in a rustic style that would appeal to the more lowly classes.

A companion book was *John Ploughman's Pictures*. Concerning this work Mr. Spurgeon said: “There is no particular virtue in being seriously unreadable. A pickle-jar has these words upon it, ‘If you like our pickles try our sauce,’ and so I would add, ‘If you like *John Ploughman's Talk*, try his pictures.’ ” The titles of some of these homely gems are, “If the cap fits, wear it;” “Burn a candle at both ends, and it will soon be gone;” “Hunchback sees not his own hump, but he sees his neighbors,” etc., each with an interesting cartoon illustrating the theme.

Mr. Spurgeon also published a paper known as *The Sword and the Trowel*, which had a wide circulation and contributed much to the success of the various enterprises in which the Editor was engaged. The incident of the building of the walls of Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah, when “every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon,” suggested the title. The paper was published monthly and under the



direct supervision of Mr. Spurgeon himself. In fact, he himself wrote a large part of the matter it contained. It was noted for its vitality and brightness and was once referred to in the House of Lords as a “lively newspaper.”

To name and give even a brief description of each of his printed works would be too long and tedious for our present purpose, but suffice it to say that many of these works were translated into various languages and circulated in every part of the world. These works have been classified as Expository, Homiletical, Illustrative, Devotional, For Students, Historical, Popular, and Extracts. His largest work is the Treasury of David, on which he worked twenty years.

An interesting story that is told helps to show Mr. Spurgeon’s popularity as an author. A minister when in Scotland got lost in a certain glen. The people there knew nothing about Lord Beaconsfield or Mr. Gladstone, but immediately recognized the name of Spurgeon. As there was no “kirk” in the glen they would meet together and one of the number would read a sermon by Mr. Spurgeon. One old man said he “wad shoost gang on his twa honds and knees a’ the way tae Glesca, tae get a sicht o’ him.”

Surely Mr. Spurgeon was a man of great natural powers, but much of his marvelous success in these varied fields must be attributed to a higher source, which again reminds of Rev. Knill’s prophecy and the fact that “God works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform.”

## **Chapter XVI**

### **Mr. Spurgeon at Mentone**

The great Tabernacle preacher was not unused to severe bodily suffering. He inherited a tendency to the gout which for many years caused him great inconvenience and seasons of intense pain and, with a complication of other diseases, finally brought on his death. For about twenty years he paid an annual visit to the south of France. Though he visited many places, he liked Mentone best and spent most of his brief holiday period there.

His place of sojourn was for several years the Hotel Beau Rivage. Mr. Spurgeon liked this place because it was quiet and homely and because he held in high regard the host and hostess. The rest and change and the mild climate were always beneficial, but there was still another reason why Mr. Spurgeon liked Mentone; it gave him the privilege of meeting many others who were like-minded and enjoying their fellowship in the things of God. On one occasion he met here George Muller, of Bristol; J. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission; and John Bost, president of the asylum for imbeciles, epileptics, etc., at La Force.

Yet, these periods of absence from his regular post of duty were never spent in idleness. It was his custom to conduct family

devotion for the guests at the hotel and others who were specially desirous of attending. Each Sunday afternoon a communion service was held in his private sitting-room. Then too at the various other places he visited he was often asked to conduct services. Once he stopped for a day in Nice and the captain of an American warship invited him to preach on board his vessel. Mr. Spurgeon said that he did not remember that he ever enjoyed preaching more than he did on that occasion.

Besides the preaching which he did, he commonly used these vacations from his regular post of duty as an opportunity to do some writing which he had planned. Much of his writing was done at times when he was convalescing. Also his correspondence was enormous and he insisted on taking care of it himself as much as his strength would permit. He could not be induced to remain idle.

Usually his wife was unable to accompany him on these trips to the mainland. There were letters to write to her and letters to different spiritual leaders in the congregation. He often wrote a letter to the congregation urging them on to greater faithfulness in Christian service.

Mr. Spurgeon's own illness and suffering never made him unmindful of others. He was always ready to pray for the erring one, comfort the distressed, and minister to the needs of those about him. Once in the garden of the hotel where he was staying he came upon a man who was playing a piano-organ. Seeing that the unfortunate man was getting little recognition, the preacher volunteered to turn the handle of the instrument for him. Immediately people gathered at the doors and windows and began tossing down coins. Others came and offered their services at the handle of the instrument. Coins continued to pour in until finally the man went away feeling very rich.

The sufferer thus very characteristically described to a friend the sensation of his illness, "If you put your hand into a vice, and let a man press as hard as he can, that is rheumatism; if he can be got to press a little harder, that is gout." In the latter part of 1890, only about a year before his death, Mr. Spurgeon suffered an especially severe attack and the complaint spread into his right arm. For a time he was unable to write. When somewhat recovered he wrote to a friend in characteristic fashion: "I am recovering. I can hold the pen, as you see. My hand was puffed up, and, in consequence, like all puffed-up things, useless."

It was feared by many that the great works that had been built up under the leadership and management of Mr. Spurgeon would all collapse if he should suddenly be removed. Some who were critical and unfriendly made stock of this argument in their work of opposition, but the minister took every precaution to put every department of the work on a sound basis. Even when he was away at Mentone the work went on without interruption. Of course these were only temporary absences, but it was a preparation for the time when the great leader was to change his abode permanently for one of rest and regard.

At the time of his death the Pastor's College was at the peak of its usefulness, but it continued right on under the supervision of capable officers and instructors who had been associated with Mr. Spurgeon before his death. Also at the time of his death eighteen missions were maintained in connection with his work, besides a number of missionary societies, flower missions, aid societies, etc.

As early as 1868, Rev. James A. Spurgeon was called to be his brother's associate in the pastorate and he filled that place to the great satisfaction of the pastor and the congregation. At the time of the death of Charles H. Spurgeon the congregation numbered

5,334, the largest independent church in the world at that time. Then, too, the pastor's two sons, Charles and Thomas, were very successful preachers of the gospel and were a joy to the illustrious father in his declining days. He knew they could be counted on for efficient service in carrying on the work that had been started.

The orphanage had grown to large proportions and at the time of his death contained five hundred boys and girls. It was maintained at a cost of about fifty thousand dollars a year, but here again preparation had been made by calling in capable overseers and creating a fund for its maintenance.

Not that this man of such varied and extensive labors would be unmissed. It was evident that no one could take his place. The world has provided but one Paul, but one Luther, but one John Wesley. Just so there was but one C. H. Spurgeon. Mr. Spurgeon was sensible enough to recognize the important place he occupied, but he said, "There is none so important to the Lord's work that the Lord could not replace him by another more efficient." Yet realizing the importance of his position, he sought to put his "house in order," for as early as 1883 he seemed to have some premonition that his days were numbered. In that year his mother died and he remarked to some friends, "I feel that I will follow her soon. I will set my house in order."

## **Chapter XVII**

### **The Passing of a Prophet**

Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached his last sermon in the Tabernacle pulpit on Sunday morning, June 7, 1891. He had not preached there regularly for months. In November of the preceding year he had gone to Mentone, where he was detained by severe illness until February. Upon his return home he tried to renew his work at his accustomed pace, but his strength had not returned. The powerful sermon he preached upon his return revived the hopes of the congregation that he might be with them yet many years. He spoke with unusual power and ability at the Pastor's College conference in April, but the strain brought on a reaction that left him in a low, nervous condition. Consequently, he was able to preach but twice in the Tabernacle from that time until he preached his last sermon there, on the day before mentioned.

The text for this sermon was 1 Sam. 30: 21-23, and the last words he uttered in the Metropolitan Tabernacle seemed a fitting climax to his labors there: "If you wear the livery of Christ you will find him so meek and lowly of heart that you will find rest unto your souls. He is the most magnanimous of captains. There never was his like among the choicest of princes. He is always to be found in the thickest part of the battle; when the wind blows cold he always takes the bleak side of the hill. The heaviest end of

the cross lies ever on his shoulders. If he bids us carry a burden he carries it also. If there is anything that is gracious, generous, kind, and tender, yea, lavish, superabundant in love, you always find it in him. His service is life, peace, joy. Oh, that you would enter on it at once! God help you to enlist under the banner of Jesus!"

It was that very week that his illness took an alarming turn. His close friends, and even the physicians, looked gravely into the future. At the Tabernacle every morning, noon, and night the congregation met to pray earnestly for the recovery of their beloved pastor. Public prayers were offered in thousands of churches all over the land. Innumerable telegrams, letters, and resolutions expressing sympathy were received at Westwood. Many came to the residence to inquire about the patient's condition. The Prince of Wales, Mr. Gladstone, many of the nobility, the primate, and many bishops, ministers of every denomination, tradesmen, and the common people all showed an interest in the stricken man.

By autumn he had somewhat recovered, but it was evident that he must winter in France. Accordingly, on October 26 he started for Mentone. On this occasion he was accompanied by his wife, his secretary, and Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Spurgeon. Just before starting he dictated a letter to a friend in America, saying, "I am laid aside, perhaps forever; this world may have no more use for me."

At Mentone he spent most of his time in the open air. Though in this very weakened condition he continued his literary work. The last service he conducted was in his own private rooms on Jan. 17, 1892. Three days later he was forced to his bed, and never again rose. A Miss Thorne and Mrs. Spurgeon alternately cared for him, giving him constant attention day and night, and the doctor was almost constantly in attendance. There were some hopes that

he would still recover, but he told his secretary, "My work is done."

His last public act was to have his secretary telegraph to the deacons pledging a hundred pounds (nearly five hundred dollars) from him and Mrs. Spurgeon for general Tabernacle expenses and greeting all their friends. At about eleven o'clock on Sunday night, Jan. 31, 1892, he passed away in the presence of his wife and a few friends at the Hotel Beau Rivage, Mentone, France.

A memorial service was held in the Scotch Presbyterian Church and then the remains were removed to England. The casket was placed in the Tabernacle just below the pulpit made famous by the great preacher. The Tabernacle was then thrown open for a day and about sixty thousand persons of all classes viewed the remains. Several services were conducted on Wednesday, the day following. Eminent personages such as Dr. Alexander Maclaren, Canon Fleming, Dr. Monroe Gibson, Rev. F. B. Meyer, etc., spoke in these services. Ira D. Sankey sang, "Sleep on, beloved, sleep and take thy rest," and "Only remembered by what I have done." On Thursday the remains were taken to the Norwood Cemetery for burial. As the procession advanced hundreds of thousands of people stood along the drive, the men with bared heads and the women weeping and sobbing. All business houses were closed, flags hung at half-mast, and the bells of the churches were tolled. A simple service was conducted at the cemetery.

The entire ceremony had been simple yet it would have done honor to a king. A simple monument was erected on which were inscribed these words:



CHARLES H. SPURGEON

Here lies the body of  
CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON  
Waiting for the Appearing of His  
Lord and Savior  
Jesus Christ





