

CHAPTER CVI.

The Last Three Months at Mentone ;—and Afterwards.

“And there was given unto them a short time before they went forward.”

“Upon this sunny shore
A little space for rest. The care and sorrow,
Sad memory's haunting pain that would not cease,
Are left behind. It is not yet to-morrow.
To-day there falls the dear surprise of peace ;
The sky and sea, their broad wings round us sweeping,
Close out the world, and hold us in their keeping.
A little space for rest. Ah! though soon o'er,
How precious is it on the sunny shore !

“Upon this sunny shore
A little space for love, while those, our dearest,
Yet linger with us ere they take their flight
To that far world which now doth seem the nearest,
So deep and pure this sky's down-bending light.
Slow, one by one, the golden hours are given,
A respite ere the earthly ties are riven.
When left alone, how, 'mid our tears, we store
Each breath of their last days upon this shore !

“Upon this sunny shore
A little space to wait : the life-bowl broken,
The silver cord unloosed, the mortal name
We bore upon this earth by God's voice spoken,
While at the sound all earthly praise or blame,
Our joys and griefs, alike with gentle sweetness
Fade in the dawn of the next world's completeness.
The hour is Thine, dear Lord ; we ask no more,
But wait Thy summons on the sunny shore.”—*Author unknown.*



It was a tender token of the Lord's lovingkindness that husband and wife were, for once, permitted to travel together to Mentone, and to spend there three months of perfect happiness before the sorrowful separation which had been so long dreaded, but which came at last almost without warning. Mr. Spurgeon's oft-expressed longing,—“Oh, that my dear wifey could see all the beauties and glories of this land of sunshine and flowers !”—was at length realized ; and he had the joy of pointing out to her the many scenes with which he had been familiar for years, but which became doubly precious to him under such delightful circumstances. The rooms in the Hôtel Beau Rivage, which he and his friends had occupied year by year, soon began to give evidence of a lady's presence in them. A very special adornment was commenced for the large sitting-room which

had become a peculiarly hallowed spot to all the members of the Pastor's Mentone circle because of the morning gatherings there for the reading of the Word and prayer, and the still more sacred Sabbath afternoon meetings around the table of the Lord.



THE SITTING-ROOM AT MENTONE (SECOND VIEW).

At the top of the accompanying illustration, and also of the one given on page 364, several texts of Scripture can be read. They form part of the series of passages which Mrs. Spurgeon worked upon perforated cards as a grateful memorial of God's goodness in taking them both safely to the sunny South after all their painful experiences in England during the preceding summer and autumn. In the above view of the sitting-room, the partly-drawn curtains reveal the extra space where many worshippers and communicants assembled when the first room was filled with the earlier comers. Mr. Spurgeon's weakness prevented him from resuming those much-prized services, during his last sojourn "on the sunny shore," except on the memorable occasions hereafter mentioned; but he lost

no time in beginning such literary work as he felt able to accomplish. He spent many hours in the "cosy corner" here represented, and was not willing

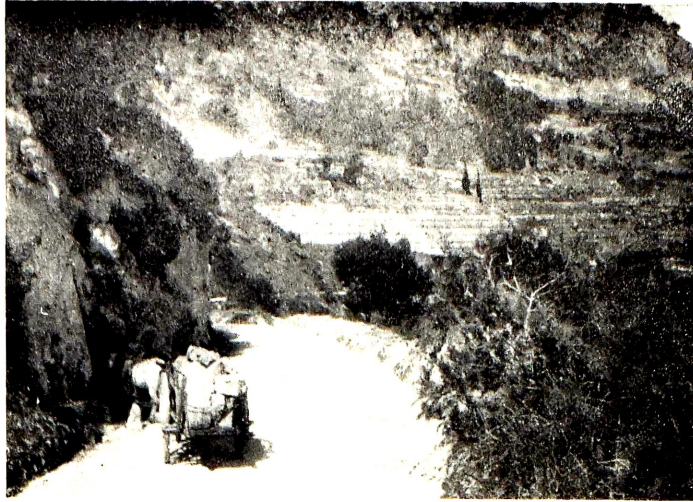


MR. SPURGEON'S "COSY CORNER" AT MENTONE.

to admit that he was doing too much for an invalid. He wrote many post cards and letters while sitting at that table, but his chief employment was the continuation of his *Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew*, to which reference has been made in Chapter CII. Some articles for *The Sword and the Trowel*, with "Notes" and reviews of books, also came from his busy pen; but he expressly said that he only occupied the editorial chair while he wrote the Preface to the magazine volume for 1891. The important work of sermon-revision was also left almost entirely in the hands of those upon whom it had devolved during his long illness, the only exceptions being the two notable discourses, "Gratitude for Deliverance from the Grave," and "A Stanza of Deliverance," intended for reading on the first and last Lord's-days in January, 1892.

The December number of *The Sword and the Trowel* opened with an article by Mr. Spurgeon under the suggestive title, "? ? ?" In his usual graphic fashion,

as they started on their return journey to Mentone is depicted in the following illustration.



VIEW FROM THE FOUNTAIN ON THE TURBIE ROAD.

The events of those memorable months were described in detail in *The Sword and the Trowel* and the memorial volume, *From the Pulpit to the Palm Branch*, but the principal incidents can only be briefly outlined here. On the New Year's Eve and the following morning, Mr. Spurgeon gave, to a privileged circle of friends, the two charming addresses, which he afterwards revised for publication in the magazine, under the title, "Breaking the Long Silence."

He also conducted two short services in his sitting-room, on January 10 and 17, when he was persuaded not to attempt to give a new address, and rather reluctantly consented to read portions of his early sermon on Psalm lxxiii. 28, and his Exposition of Matthew xv. 21—28. On the second Sabbath evening,—January 17, 1892,—before offering the closing prayer at the final service in which he took part on earth, he gave out the last hymn he was ever to announce to a company of worshippers here below. If he could have foreseen what was to happen only a fortnight later, he could hardly have chosen a more appropriate farewell than the poem founded on some words of the sainted Samuel Rutherford,—

"The sands of time are sinking,
The dawn of Heaven breaks,
The summer morn I've sighed for,—
The fair, sweet morn awakes.
Dark, dark hath been the midnight,
But dayspring is at hand,
And 'glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land.'"

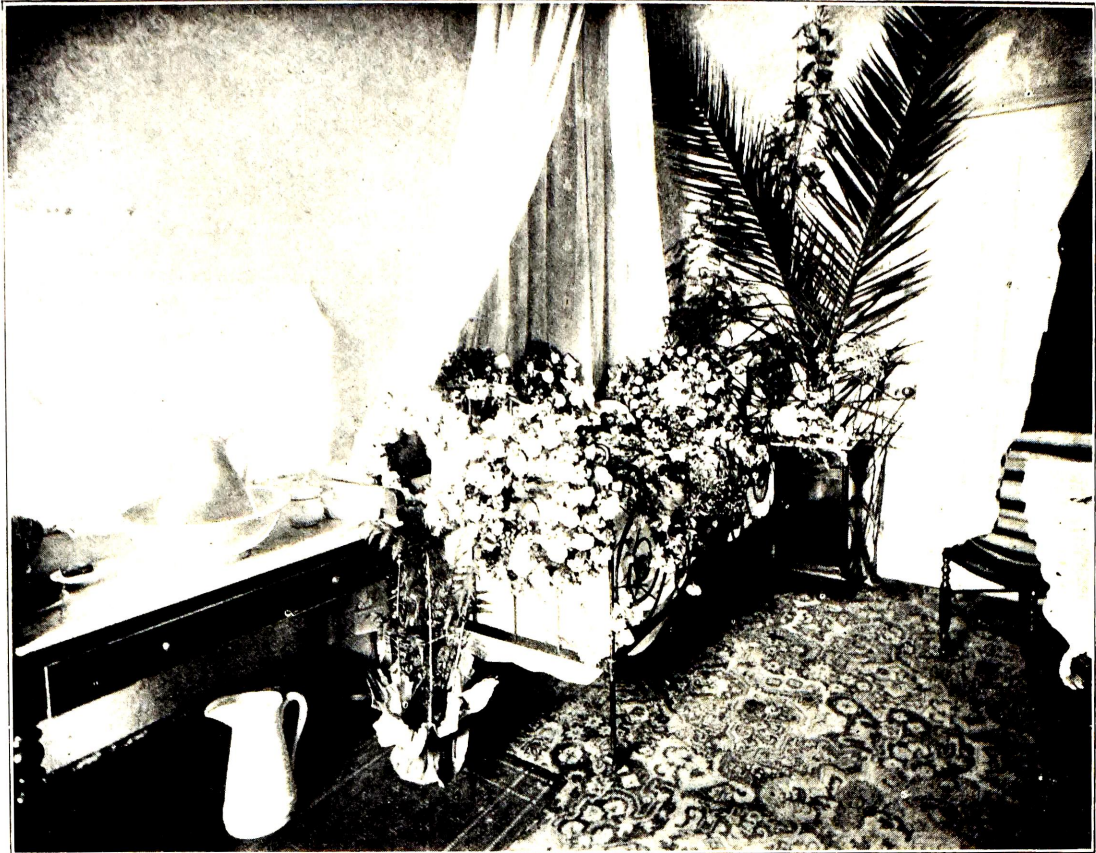
On the two following days, the wind was very rough, so Mr. Spurgeon went only for short drives; but on Wednesday morning, he was able to go as far as the little village of Monti. In the afternoon, signs of gout appeared in his right hand; later in the day, other serious symptoms were manifest, and he had to retire to the bed from which he never again rose. Dr. FitzHenry, a faithful friend as well as the Pastor's skilful medical adviser, had been in attendance upon him from the time of his arrival at Mentone; he did all that was possible to relieve his pain, and prolong his precious life. Miss Thorne undertook the onerous duties of night nurse in addition to almost continuous help to Mrs. Spurgeon during the day; Mr. Allison, Mr. Harrald, and Pastor G. Samuel rendered all the aid in their power; but it was soon evident that a great crisis was approaching, though there were intervals of improvement which gave ground for slight hope. Towards the end of the week, the Pastor said to his secretary, "My work is done," and spoke of some matters in a way that indicated his own conviction that he was not going to recover.

Tuesday, January 26, was the day on which thankofferings were brought to the Tabernacle, in grateful acknowledgment of the Pastor's partial restoration. By that time, he had become so much worse that he was for a long while only partly conscious; but he had not forgotten the special character of the day, and he sent a telegram which, under the circumstances, was peculiarly significant:—*"Self and wife, £100, hearty thankoffering towards Tabernacle General Expenses. Love to all friends."* That was his last generous act, and his last message; for, shortly afterwards, he became totally unconscious, and remained so until five minutes past eleven on the Sabbath night,—January 31, 1892,—when, like his namesake, Mr. Valiant-for-truth, "he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side." The five who "accompanied him to the riverside" were Mrs. Spurgeon, Miss Thorne, Mr. Harrald, Mr. Allison, and Mr. Samuel. When all was over, Mr. H. offered prayer, and Mrs. Spurgeon thanked the Lord for the precious treasure so long lent to her, and sought, at the throne of grace, strength and guidance for all the future. The answer to part of her supplication came at once, for she was able to send to "Son Tom" at the Antipodes the brief but comforting message, "Father in Heaven. Mother resigned."

In the meantime, the news was being flashed all over the world, and in every quarter of the globe many felt a sense of personal loss as they read or heard it. The telegraph wires at Mentone were speedily blocked with the multitudes of messages to Mrs. Spurgeon,—the Prince and Princess of Wales being among the first to "desire to express their deep sympathy with her in her great sorrow."

The local regulations necessitated the removal of the precious body, from the

hotel to the cemetery, within twenty-four hours, and then the bedroom was left as it appears in the accompanying illustration. Mentone being the home of the



MR. SPURGEON'S BEDROOM AT MENTONE, AFTER HIS REMOVAL.

flowers, many beautiful wreaths were sent by friends ; but Mrs. Spurgeon intimated her preference for palm branches as the most suitable emblems of her dear husband's victorious entrance into "the presence of the King." At the head and foot of the olive casket, were plates bearing the following inscription :—

In ever-loving memory of
CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON,
Born at Kelvedon, June 19, 1834 ;
Fell asleep in Jesus at Mentone, January 31, 1892.

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

In the early years of his visits to Wotton, in Surrey, the Pastor had always said that he should like to be buried in the churchyard of that village. Later, he

expressed the wish to lie in the centre of the Stockwell Orphanage grounds, for he thought that many would come to look at his grave, and then help the orphans in whom he took so deep an interest; but when the Electric Railway caused such a disturbance to the Institution, he abandoned that idea. At one time, he said he would like to be buried at Mentone; but, after he had attended the funeral of a friend there, he gave up that notion. Last of all, it was mentioned that he had pointed to a site in Norwood cemetery,—in a far less conspicuous position than the one ultimately chosen,—and asked that it might be reserved for him; so that, in death, as in life, he might be surrounded by his church-officers and members, many hundreds of whom are buried there. The Tabernacle deacons sent an urgent request to Mrs. Spurgeon, asking that this might be the arrangement, and generously offering to defray all expenses, and the matter was so settled. Before proceeding to the railway station, a touching memorial service was held in the Scotch Church, at the opening of which Mr. Spurgeon had preached a year before. At the station, a photograph of the *cortège* was taken, and it is reproduced here.



THE FUNERAL CORTEGE AT MENTONE RAILWAY STATION.

The memorial and funeral services at the Tabernacle, from February 7 to 11, were probably attended by not less than a hundred thousand people. A full account of the proceedings appears in the volume, *From the Pulpit to the Palm Branch*, but many volumes would be required to describe the different gatherings held simultaneously, or on the following Sabbath, all over the world. Mrs. Spurgeon's request that friends, who wished to send wreaths, would instead give the amount they would have cost to the Institutions founded by her dear husband, was very generally complied with, though there were a few choice floral offerings of love. Most of the palm branches, which surrounded the olive casket, were cut from the very trees in the garden of the Hotel Beau Rivage, of which the Pastor wrote in the letter which appears on page 344.



THE OLIVE CASKET UNDER THE PALM BRANCHES IN THE TABERNACLE.

The Bible on the top of the casket was the one Mr. Spurgeon had so long used in the Tabernacle. It was opened at Isaiah xlv. 22 : "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth ;"—the text which, on January 6, 1850, had been

blessed to his conversion. The volume remained in that position all the way from Newington to Norwood,—as the sword of the warrior accompanies him to the grave. Never had the South of London witnessed such a procession as, that day, slowly moved from the Tabernacle to the cemetery; and never had such crowds assembled along that route. More than eighteen years before, the Pastor had given a description of the scene; but probably even he had no conception of the throng that would gather to do honour to his memory. At the close of his sermon, on Lord's-day evening, December 27, 1874, he said:—"In a little while, there will be a concourse of persons in the streets. Methinks I hear someone enquiring, 'What are all these people waiting for?' 'Do you not know? He is to be buried to-day.' 'And who is that?' 'It is Spurgeon.' 'What! the man that preached at the Tabernacle?' 'Yes; he is to be buried to-day.' That will happen very soon; and when you see my coffin carried to the silent grave, I should like every one of you, whether converted or not, to be constrained to say, 'He did earnestly urge us, in plain and simple language, not to put off the consideration of eternal things. He did entreat us to look to Christ. Now he is gone, our blood is not at his door if we perish.' God grant that you may not have to bear the bitter reproach of your own conscience! But, as I feel 'the time is short,' I will stir you up so long as I am in this Tabernacle."

Though the scene along the route was striking, that presented at the cemetery was, in some respects, even more so. The long line of ministers, and students, and other friends, all in mourning garb, reaching from the entrance to the grave itself, was a sight that could never be forgotten by those who saw it. At length, the vast throng clustered in a dense mass around and upon the slope outside the cemetery chapel, where the last service was to be conducted. The principal part in the closing ceremony fell to the share of Pastor Archibald G. Brown, and nothing could have been more beautiful, or more suitable, than his solemn and touching words. They came straight from his heart: they entered thousands of other hearts. With great pathos and many pauses, he said:—

"Beloved President, Faithful Pastor, Prince of Preachers, Brother Beloved, Dear Spurgeon,—We bid thee not 'farewell,' but only for a little while 'good-night.' Thou shalt rise soon, at the first dawn of the resurrection day of the redeemed. Yet is not the 'good-night' ours to bid, but thine. It is we who linger in the darkness; thou art in God's own light. Our night, too, shall soon be past, and with it all our weeping. Then, with thine, our songs shall greet the morning of a day that knows no cloud nor close, for there is no night there.

"Hard Worker in the field, thy toil is ended! Straight has been the furrow thou hast ploughed. No looking back has marred thy course. Harvests have

followed thy patient sowing, and Heaven is already rich with thine ingathered sheaves, and shall be still enriched through years yet lying in eternity.

"Champion of God, thy battle long and nobly fought is over! The sword, which clave to thine hand, has dropped at last; the palm branch takes its place. No longer does the helmet press thy brow, oft weary with its surging thoughts of battle; the victor's wreath from the Great Commander's hand has already proved thy full reward.

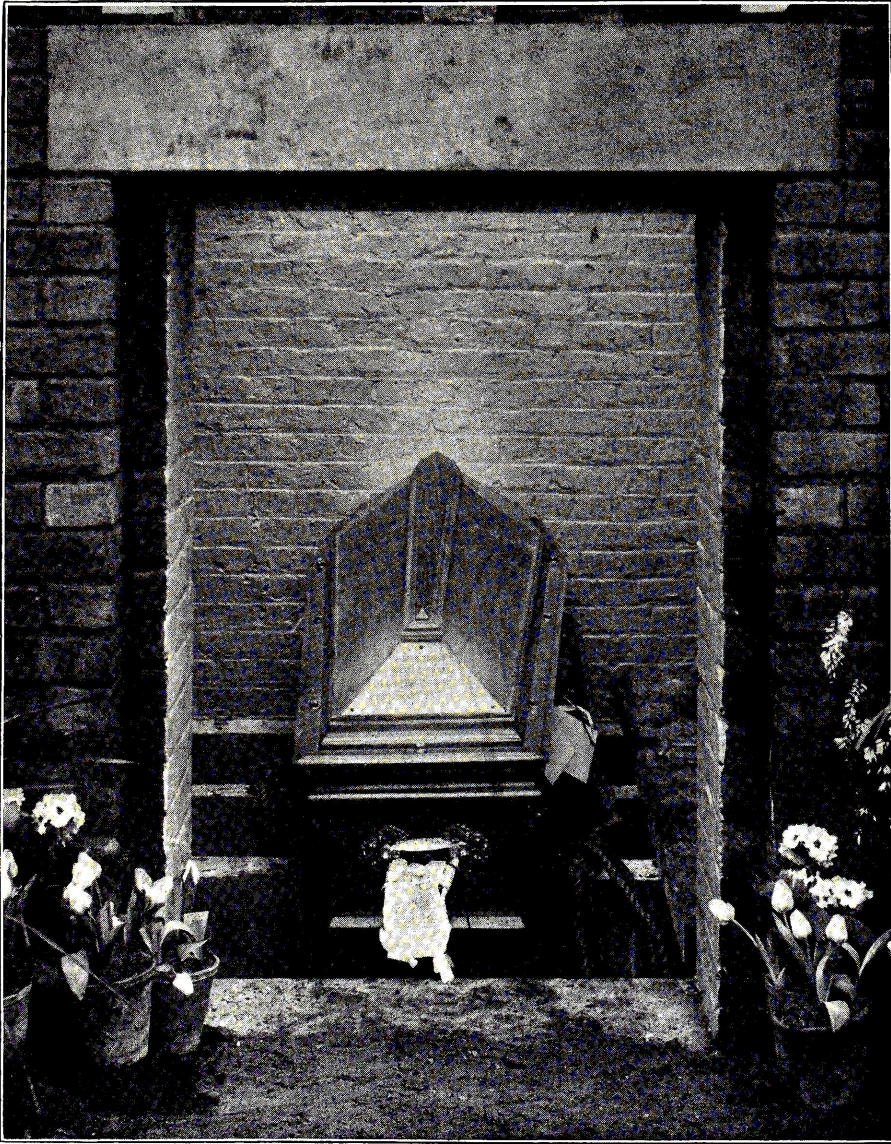
"Here, for a little while, shall rest thy precious dust. Then shall thy Well-beloved come, and at His voice thou shalt spring from thy couch of earth, fashioned like unto His glorious body. Then spirit, soul, and body shall magnify thy Lord's redemption. Until then, beloved, sleep! We praise God *for* thee; and, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, we hope and expect to praise God *with* thee. Amen."

The memorial number of *The Sword and the Trowel* contained the following paragraphs, which will fitly close the account of that memorable season:—"While we gathered around the grave, a little patch of blue sky appeared, just over our heads, as if to remind us of the glory-land above; and while Mr. Brown was speaking, a dove flew from the direction of the Tabernacle towards the tomb, and, wheeling in its flight over the crowd, almost seemed to pause. In ancient days, it would have been an augury: to us, it spoke only peace. As the service proceeded, a little robin poured forth its liquid note all the while from a neighbouring tombstone; the redbreast made appropriate music, fabled as it was to have had its crimson coat ever since it picked a thorn from the Saviour's bleeding brow. Well, we do not believe that; but we believe what we sang at the grave, the truth that Mr. Spurgeon lived to preach, and died to defend,—

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

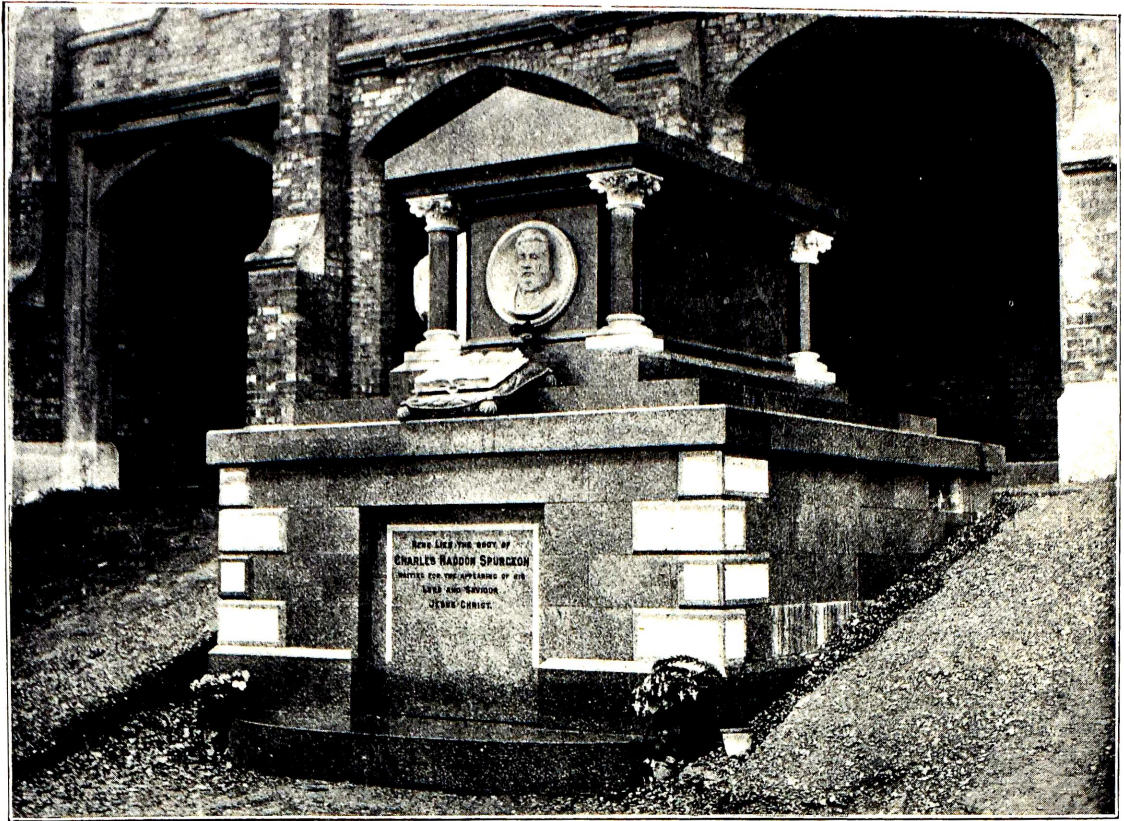
"Many remarked that the whole of the memorial services, unique as they were, were characterized by a simplicity and heartiness completely in harmony with the entire life of the beloved Pastor; and it was most significant that, when the olive casket was lowered into the vault, not even the glorified preacher's name was visible;—it was just as *he* would have wished it;—there was nothing to be seen but the text at the foot of the coffin, and the open Bible. Of course, the Bible was not buried; it is not dead, it 'liveth and abideth for ever;' and who knows whether it may not prove, more than ever, the means of quickening the dead, now that he, who loved it dearer than his life, can no longer proclaim its blessed truths with the living voice? God grant it!"

After the sorrowing crowd had dispersed, the accompanying view was taken.



THE OLIVE CASKET IN THE TOMB AT NORWOOD CEMETERY.

On the day that the Pastor said to his secretary, at Mentone, "My work is done," he added, with very peculiar emphasis, "Remember, a plain slab, with C. H. S. on it ; nothing more." The allusion evidently was to a gravestone, and it was another indication of his humility. Those who were, at that time, responsible for the arrangements were unwilling to carry out his wish, so they gave instructions for the erection of the monument represented on the next page. The inscription on



C. H. SPURGEON'S MONUMENT AT NORWOOD CEMETERY.

the lower part is copied from *John Ploughman's Talk*, with the substitution of Mr. Spurgeon's full name instead of "John Ploughman." On the right-hand side of the upper portion is the verse he always wrote in friends' albums, when they asked for his autograph and a quotation,—

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

with the following verse, describing his present joyous employment,—

"Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing thy power to save,
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave."

Thus, even from the tomb, he continues to preach the gospel he loved to proclaim while here,—the gospel of salvation by grace, through faith in the precious blood of Jesus,—the gospel that tells of "redeeming love" and Jesu's "power to save." Oh, that those who refused his message from the pulpit might accept it from the grave and from the glory!