

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### Early Criticisms and Slanders (*Continued*).

There are some of us who come in for a very large share of slander. It is seldom that the slander market is much below par; it usually runs up at a rapid rate; and there are persons who will take shares to any amount. If men could dispose of railway stock as they can of slander, those who happen to have any scrip would be rich enough by to-morrow at twelve o'clock. There are some who have a superabundance of that matter; they are continually hearing rumours of this, that, and the other; and there is one fool or another who has not brains enough to write sense, nor honesty sufficient to keep him to the truth, who, therefore, writes the most infamous libels upon some of God's servants, compared with whom he himself is nothing, and whom for very envy he chooses to depreciate. Well, what matters it? . . . Young men, are you striving to do good, and do others impute wrong motives to you? Do not be particular about answering them; just go straight on, and your life will be the best refutation of the calumny. David's brother said that, in his pride and the naughtiness of his heart, he had come to see the battle. "Ah!" thought David, "I will answer you by-and-by." Off he went across the valley to fight Goliath; he cut off his head, and then came back to his brother with a glorious answer in his conquering hand. If any man desires to reply to the false assertions of his enemies, he need not say a word; let him go and do good, that will be his answer. I am the subject of detraction, but I can point to hundreds of souls that have been saved by my feeble instrumentality, and my reply to all my enemies is this, "You may say what you like; you may find fault with the matter and manner of my preaching, but God saves souls by it, and I will hold up that fact, like giant Goliath's head, to show you that, although my preaching is only like David's sling and stone, God has thereby gotten the victory."—C. H. S., in sermon preached at Exeter Hall, June 15, 1856.

I do not expect to see so many conversions in this place as I had a year ago, when I had far fewer hearers. Do you ask why? Why, a year ago, I was abused by everybody; to mention my name, was to mention the name of the most abominable buffoon that ever lived. The mere utterance of it brought forth oaths and curses; with many men it was the name of contempt, kicked about the street as a football; but then God gave me souls by hundreds, who were added to my church, and in one year it was my happiness personally to see not less than a thousand who had then been converted. I do not expect that now. My name is somewhat esteemed, and the great ones of the earth think it no dishonour to sit at my feet; but this makes me fear lest my God should forsake me while the world esteems me. I would rather be despised and slandered than aught else. This assembly, that you think so grand and fine, I would readily part with, if by such a loss I could gain a greater blessing. . . . It is for us to recollect, in all times of popularity, that "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" follows fast upon the heels of "Hosanna!" and that the crowd of to-day, if dealt with faithfully, may turn into the handful of to-morrow; for men love not plain speaking. We should learn to be despised, learn to be contemned, learn to be slandered, and then we shall learn to be made useful by God. Down on my knees have I often fallen, with the hot sweat rising from my brow, under some fresh slander poured upon me; in an agony of grief, my heart has been well-nigh broken; till at last I learned the art of bearing all, and caring for none. And now my grief runneth in another line, it is just the opposite; I fear lest God should forsake me, to prove that He is the Author of salvation, that it is not in the preacher, that it is not in the crowd, that it is not in the attention I can attract, but in God, and in God alone. This I hope I can say from my heart,—if to be made as the mire of the streets again, if to be the laughing-stock of fools and the song of the drunkard once more will make me more serviceable to my Master, and more useful to His cause, I will prefer it to all this multitude, or to all the applause that man could give.—C. H. S., in sermon preached at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens, May 10, 1857.



THE next attack to the one described in the previous chapter was of a very different character. It was contained in the following paragraph published by *The Ipswich Express*, February 27, 1855, in a letter from its London correspondent:—

"*A Clerical Poltroon*.—There is some little excitement in the religious world, created by a young man, a Baptist minister, and whose father, I am told, is an Independent minister of the name of Spurgeon, in

Colchester. This youth is fluent, and the consequences are most distressing. As his own chapel is under repair, he preaches in Exeter Hall every Sunday, and the place is crammed to suffocation. All his discourses are redolent of bad taste, are vulgar and theatrical, and yet he is so run after that, unless you go half-an-hour before the time, you will not be able to get in at all. I am told, one leading minister of the Independent denomination, after hearing this precocious youth, said that the exhibition was 'an insult to God and man.' Actually, I hear, the other Sunday, the gifted divine had the impudence, before preaching, to say, as there were many young ladies present, that he was engaged,—that his heart it was another's, he wished them clearly to understand that,—that he might have no presents sent him, no attentions paid him, no worsted slippers worked for him by the young ladies present. I suppose the dear divine has been rendered uncomfortable by the fondness of his female auditors; at any rate, such is the impression he wishes to leave. The only impression, however, he seems to have produced upon the judicious few is one of intense sorrow and regret that such things should be, and that such a man should draw."

Mr. Spurgeon's feeling about the matter can be judged by the following letter to his father :—

"75, Dover Road,

"4th March, 1855.

"Dear Father,

"Do not be grieved at the slanderous libel in this week's *Express*. . . .

"Of course, it is *all a lie*, without an atom of foundation; and while the whole of London is talking of me, and thousands are unable to get near the door, the opinion of a penny-a-liner is of little consequence.

"I beseech you not to write; but if you can see Mr. Harvey, or some official, it might do good. A full reply on all points will appear next week.

"I only fear for you; I do not like you to be grieved. For myself, I WILL REJOICE; the devil is roused, the Church is awakening, and I am now counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. . . . Good ballast, father, good ballast; but, oh! remember what I have said before, and do not check me.

"Last night, I could not sleep till morning light, but now my Master has cheered me; and I 'hail reproach, and welcome shame.'

"Love to you all, especially to my dearest mother. I mean to come home April 16th. So, amen.

"Your affectionate son,

"C. H. SPURGEON."

On March 6, *The Ipswich Express* contained the following paragraphs :—

“THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

“A gentleman of good position in London complains, as ‘a friend of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon,’ of the statements respecting that gentleman, last week, in the letter of our London correspondent, which are, he assures us, ‘a tissue of falsehoods.’ That being the case, we lose no time in contradicting them, and at the same time expressing our regret that they should have appeared in our columns. Of Mr. Spurgeon we know nothing personally, and, of course, can have no desire to say anything which should cause pain to him or his friends. It has been, and will still be, our constant desire in criticising public men to avoid anything like personalities. We much regret that our London correspondent should have reported mere hearsay (which we are now informed was incorrect) respecting Mr. Spurgeon, and also that we did not give his letter that revision before its appearance in print which all letters for the press should receive, but which Editors, in the hurry of the day of publication, are too apt to neglect.

“A London publisher also sends us a sermon delivered by Mr. Spurgeon on the 11th ult., at Exeter Hall, stating that we ought to read and review it, in justice to the rev. gentleman. We have received, from an anonymous correspondent in London, another sermon delivered by Mr. Spurgeon last November, accompanied by a like request. It is not our habit to review sermons; but, under the circumstances, we admit the justice of these demands, and shall comply with them. Our correspondent having criticised Mr. Spurgeon’s preaching (harshly, as the friends of the preacher think), we shall consider ourselves bound to take an opportunity of reviewing these discourses. In so doing, the friends of Mr. Spurgeon may be assured we shall bring to the task the best of our ability, and a perfectly unbiassed judgment; we shall ‘nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice.’”

The Editor published several letters from those who wrote in Mr. Spurgeon’s defence, as well as from others who attacked him, and on April 24 he commenced his promised review of the sermons, as follows :—

“Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. We have had, in a measure, the reviewal of Mr. Spurgeon’s sermons thrust upon us, and in the fulfilment of our task we may, perhaps, assist our readers to judge whether that gentleman has achieved any real, permanent greatness, or whether he has had a factitious, fleeting greatness thrust upon him by his ignorant admirers.

“The *Express* of February 27th contained, as usual, a letter from our London correspondent, a gentleman favourably known as a writer on politics and general literature. This letter contained some rather severe criticism on Mr. Spurgeon’s



style of preaching, and a line or two respecting a rumour, heard by our correspondent, of some absurd remarks said to have been made on a certain occasion by Mr. Spurgeon previous to preaching. We did not read the letter until it appeared in print. . . . As soon as we saw the paragraph, we blamed ourselves for publishing, as well as our correspondent for forwarding, anything of *mere hearsay* which could possibly give annoyance to the preacher in question or his friends. And we have since learned, on the undoubted authority of his own published effusions, that Mr. Spurgeon really does run into so many extravagancies that to attribute to him any which he has never perpetrated would not only be a wrong, but a 'wasteful and ridiculous excess.'

"However, in a day or two, we received from several of Mr. Spurgeon's acquaintances (some of them his intimate friends) a flat contradiction of the absurd story of 'the slippers.' For the credit of the ministry we were glad to have it thus authoritatively denied, and lost no time in stating our sincere regret that we had, through an inadvertence, given publicity to an incorrect report. More than this, we published several of the longest letters out of the many we received from Mr. Spurgeon's friends,—stuffed full of the most glowing eulogiums of that gentleman as a minister and a man,—and in compliance with the wishes of some very ardent in his cause, we promised to review Mr. Spurgeon's sermons. We printed about twenty times as much in his praise as had appeared in his dispraise,—we courteously carried on for some time a considerable correspondence with the London Spurgeonites,—and although we think theology is out of place in a newspaper, we agreed, for once, rather than the least injustice should be committed, to step out of our usual course, and criticise sermons. Could we do more? Indeed, the line we took showed so clearly the absence of any ill-feeling on our part to Mr. Spurgeon, that the gentleman who first (rather angrily) called our attention to the obnoxious paragraph, finished a lengthy correspondence with us by saying, 'I am perfectly satisfied with your explanation, and think it does you honour.'"

The "review" was continued on May 1st, and concluded on May 29th. The tone of it may be judged from the closing paragraphs:—"There is enough foolishness in London to keep up, in flourishing style, Tom Thumb, Charles Kean, the Living Skeleton, C. H. Spurgeon, and many other delusions all at once, and yet to allow a vast mass of sober-minded citizens to go 'the even tenor of their way,' quite unaffected by such transient turmoils. Our decided opinion is, that in no other place but London could Mr. Spurgeon have caused the *furor* that he has excited. It must not be forgotten that in London, or anywhere else, a religious delusion is, of all others, the most easy to inaugurate and carry on. When a man obtains possession of a pulpit, he has credit for meaning well, at any rate, and expressions are



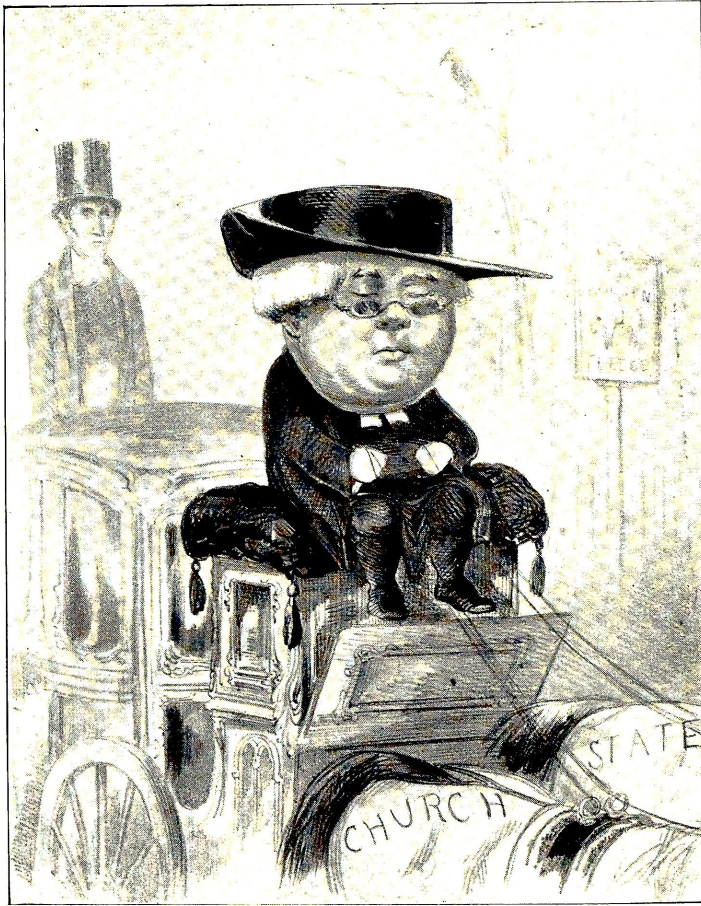
thenceforward often listened to from him, without hostile criticism, which would not be tolerated, if enunciated from any other position.

“Mr. Spurgeon's career is suggestive of various interesting questions. If such a man can obtain, in a short time, the position he now certainly occupies, does that fact say much for the condition of a great portion of the religious world? If Mr. S. be, as is stated, the very best among a large section of preachers, what sort of a man is the very worst of that section? Does the pulpit, upon the whole, keep pace with the age, or does it lag behind? Will not the immense success of such as Spurgeon go far to account for that aversion of men of taste to the public profession of Evangelical Religion complained of long ago by John Foster?”

Although the falsehood published in *The Ipswich Express* was promptly contradicted, it was widely copied into other papers. *The Empire* (London), and *The Christian News* (Glasgow), published the paragraph in full, while portions of it were incorporated into articles that appeared in various parts of the kingdom, and the story of “the slippers” was repeated so often that probably many people were foolish enough to believe it, and others were wicked enough to say that they heard Mr. Spurgeon make the statement!

*The Essex Standard*, April 18, 1855 (see Mr. Spurgeon's remarks on page 18), contained a long letter, signed “ICONOCLAST,” describing a Sunday evening service at Exeter Hall. The writer said:—“The mighty gathering and the ‘religious *furor*’ made me think of Demosthenes haranguing the Athenians, Cicero before the Roman senate, Peter the Hermit preaching the Crusade, Wesley on his father's tomb at Epworth, and Whitefield stirring the breasts of the thousands in Hyde Park; and therefore I scanned somewhat curiously both ‘orator’ and auditors. A young man, in his 21st year, but looking much older, short in stature and thick set, with a broad massive face, a low forehead, an expressionless eye, a wide and sensual mouth, a voice strong but not musical,—suggestive of *Stentor* rather than *Nestor*,—the very reverse of a *beau idéal* of an orator: without the eye of fire, where was the heart of flame? Orpheus without his lyre (*flute*, Mr. Spurgeon says), what was the potent charm that was to change the ‘swine of the metropolis’ into men, and convert sinners into saints? We must wait for the thoughts that breathe, and the words that burn. The hymn was sung right lustily, and the preacher proceeded to read and expound the 3rd of Philippians. . . . It was evident that *exposition* was not his forte. Then followed what his audience called prayer. It was an apostrophe to the Invisible, containing certain petitions first for himself, then for the elect saints, and then for the outer-court worshippers. It was such an utterance as indicated low views of Deity, and exalted views of self. Indeed, self is never out of sight, and is presented to the listener as a ‘little child’, a ‘babbling’, a ‘baby’, a

'battering ram', '*little David*,' 'this despised young man,' 'this ranting fellow,' and 'an empty ram's horn.' If reverence is the greatest mark of respect to an earthly parent, how much more is it due to the Supreme Father of all! . . . When the painful effect of this most arrogant dictation to Deity allowed me to think, I could not but rejoice in that 'form of sound words' by which the devotions of the Church are sustained from Sabbath to Sabbath, and by which,

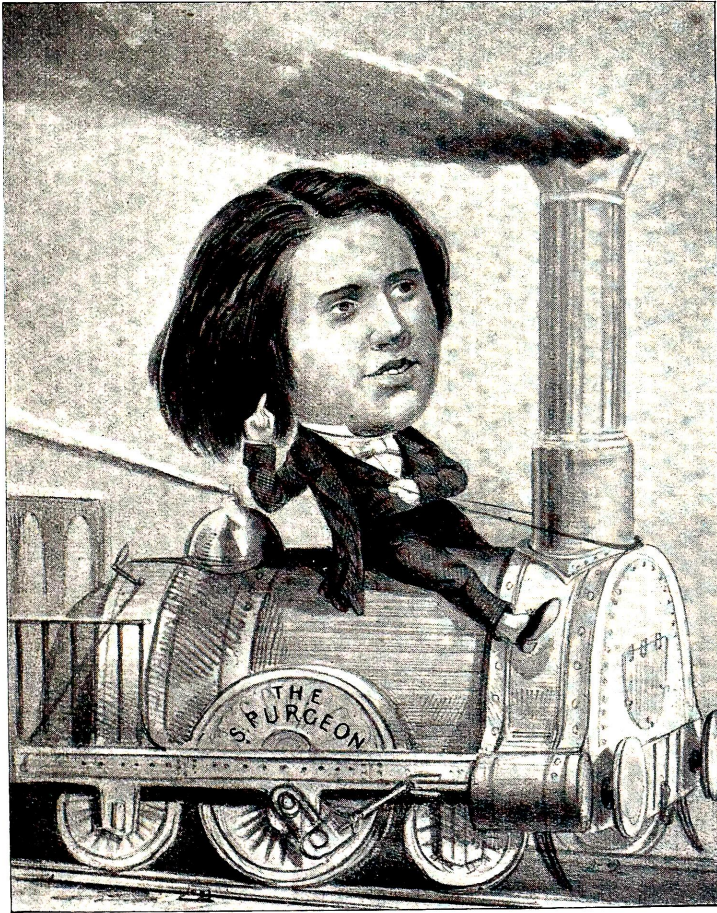


THE SLOW COACH.

also, such outrageous violations of decorum are rendered impossible. The discourse was from Philippians iii. 10: '*That I may know Him.*' The various objects of human pursuit being designated and discussed, we had put before us the object, nature, and effects of Paul's knowledge. . . . Speaking of his study, Mr. Spurgeon said it was his '*dukedom*', where he could talk to Milton and Locke as *slaves*, and say, 'Come down here.' Mr. Spurgeon loves controversy, but with the modesty



peculiar to himself told us that, nowadays, 'he found no foeman worthy of *his* steel.' His favourite action is that of washing his hands, and then rubbing them dry. He belongs to the peripatetic, or Walker school, perpetually walking up and down as an actor treading the boards of a theatre. His style is that of the vulgar colloquial, varied by rant. . . . All the most solemn mysteries of our holy religion are by him rudely, roughly, and impiously handled. Mystery is vulgarised, sanctity profaned,



THE FAST TRAIN.

common sense outraged, and decency disgusted. . . . His rantings are interspersed with coarse anecdotes that split the ears of the groundlings; and this is popularity! and this is the 'religious *furor*' of London! and this young divine it is that throws Wesley and Whitefield in the shade! and this is the preaching, and this the theology, that five thousand persons from Sabbath to Sabbath hear, receive, and approve, and—profit by it!"



The next issue of *The Essex Standard* contained another communication in a similar strain :—

“Mr. Editor,—The letter of ‘Iconoclast’ in your Wednesday’s impression is a faithful delineation of the young preacher who is making so great a stir just now. Had we seen it previously, we should have been kept from taking the trouble to go to Earl’s Colne yesterday, to hear what extremely disgusted us,—a young man of 21 years assuming airs, and adopting a language, which would be scarcely tolerated in the man of grey hairs. In common with many others, though obliged to smile during his performances, we felt more inclined to weep over such a prostitution of the pulpit and hours devoted to professedly religious worship. His prayer, to us, appeared most profanely familiar ; and never were we impressed more with the contrast between this effusion and the beautifully-simple, reverential, and devout language of the Church of England Liturgy, and said, within our hearts, ‘Would that Dissenters would bind down their ministers to use those forms of sound words, rather than allow of these rhapsodies, which, to all persons of taste and true devotion, must have been very offensive !’ It is a matter of deep regret to many that one of the best Dissenting chapels in London should be occupied by a youth of Mr. Spurgeon’s caste and doctrinal sentiments ; and they very properly shrink from recognizing him among the regular ministers of the Baptist denomination ; and we heard it regretted more than once yesterday that he should have been chosen to represent a Society so respectable as the Baptist Home Missionary Society. If gain were their object, they certainly obtained it, as we understand the collections were large ; but we submit no such motive can be tolerated at the cost of so much propriety. I exceedingly regret to write thus of one who, until I heard him yesterday, I thought probably was raised up for usefulness ; but a sense of duty to the public leads me to express my opinions and sentiments in this plain, unflinching manner.

“I am, Mr. Editor,

“Halstead,

“Yours respectfully,

“April 18th, 1855.”

“A LOVER OF PROPRIETY.”

The following week, a letter of quite another kind was published in the same paper :—

“Sir,—Your readers have had the opinions of two supporters of the Established Church on the preaching of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon ; and I trust to your well-known fairness to allow a Dissenter an opportunity of expressing the sentiments held by many who have enjoyed the pleasure of listening to the fervid words of that distinguished minister of the gospel.

“Mr. Spurgeon institutes a new era, or more correctly, revives the good old

style of Bunyan, Wesley, and Whitefield,—men whose burning eloquence carried conviction to the hearts of their hearers,—men who cared nought for the applause of their fellow-mortals, but did all for God's glory. In the steps of these apostles does Mr. S. follow, and who could desire more noble leaders?

“The pulpit is now too much abused by the mere display of intellect; instead of the indignant burst of a Luther against the iniquities of mankind, we have only the passive disapprobation of the silvery-tongued man of letters. The preachers address their cold, ‘packed-in-ice’ discourses to the educated portion of their audience; and the majority, the uneducated poor, are unable, in these ‘scientific’ sermons, to learn the way of holiness, from the simple fact that they are above their comprehension. How unlike these ministers—who appear to consider the gospel so frail that it would lose its power if delivered with unflinching candour,—are to the holy Saviour! His words were always characterized by the greatest simplicity, and by a thorough detestation of those ‘blind guides who strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.’

“Mr. Spurgeon goes to the root of the evil; his discourses are such as a child can understand, and yet filled with the most elevating philosophy and sound religious instruction. Taking the Word as his only guide, and casting aside the writings—however antiquated—of fallible men, he appeals to the *heart*, not to the *head*; puts the living truth forcibly before the mind, gains the attention, and then, as he himself says, fastens in the bow the messenger shaft, which, by the blessing and direction of the Almighty, strikes home to the heart of the sinner.

“He holds that irreligion is to be fought against, not to be handled with ‘fingers of down,’ and hence Exeter Hall is crammed. It is objected that these are the lowest of the London poor. What of that? They, above all, need religious training. I suppose there are few advocates in this country for the opinion that the aristocracy of the land *alone* have souls; Jehovah has breathed His spirit into the democracy, and Mr. S. is the man for them. In my humble opinion, if there were more C. H. Spurgeons, there would be fewer Sabbath desecrationists, fewer tendencies to the idol-worship of Rome, and fewer disciples of Holyoake and Paine.

“In conclusion, let me suggest that, even if Mr. Spurgeon were guilty of all laid to his charge, would it not be better for Christians to gloss over the failings of a brother-worker (for no one doubts the sincerity of the young man's efforts), than to seek here and there for the dross amongst the pure metal,—making mountains out of molehills, and wantonly refusing the golden ears because mixed with the necessary chaff?

“I am, Sir,

“Your obedient servant,

“VOX POPULI.”

To the Editor of *The Chelmsford Chronicle*, who had published an article of a more friendly character than those in other East Anglian papers, Mr. Spurgeon wrote :—

“75, Dover Road,  
“April 24th, 1855.

“My Dear Sir,

“I am usually careless of the notices of papers concerning myself,—referring all honour to my Master, and believing that dishonourable articles are but advertisements for me, and bring more under the sound of the gospel. But you, my dear sir (I know not why), have been pleased to speak so favourably of my labours that I think it only right that I should thank you. If I could have done so personally, I would have availed myself of the pleasure, but the best substitute is by letter. Amid a constant din of abuse, it is pleasant to poor flesh and blood to hear *one* favourable voice. I am far from deserving much that you have said in my praise, but as I am equally undeserving of the coarse censure poured on me by *The Essex Standard*, &c., &c., I will set the one against the other. I am neither eloquent nor learned, but the Head of the Church has given me sympathy with the masses, love to the poor, and the means of winning the attention of the ignorant and unenlightened. I never sought popularity, and I cannot tell how it is so many come to hear me; but shall I now change? To please the polite critic, shall I leave ‘*the people*’, who so much require a simple and stirring style? I am, perhaps, ‘vulgar’, and so on, but it is not intentional, save that I *must* and *will* make the people listen. My firm conviction is, that we have quite enough *polite* preachers, and that ‘the many’ require a change. God has owned me to the most degraded and off-cast; let others serve their class: these are mine, and to them I must keep. My sole reason for thus troubling you is one of gratitude to a disinterested friend. You may another time have good cause to censure me;—do so, as I am sure you will, with all heartiness; but my young heart shall not soon forget ‘a friend.’

“Believe me,

“My dear sir,

“Yours very sincerely,

“C. H. SPURGEON.”

*The Bucks Chronicle*, April 28, 1855, published an article signed, “A BRITON,” of which the following portion sufficiently indicates the character of the whole :—

“THE POPULAR MINISTER.

(“*From our London correspondent.*.)

“Scarcity produces dearness; rarity, curiosity. Great preachers are as scarce as Queen Anne’s farthings. The market is glutted with mediocrity;—a star is looked



upon, in the theological world, as a prize equally with green peas in Covent Garden Market at Christmas. We have been inundated with the slang phrases of the profession until they have acquired the sameness of our milkman's cry, when he places his pails upon the ground, and, as he gives the bell-handle a spasmodic twitch, utters his well-known 'M-i-l-k.'

"We had thought the day for dogmatic, theologic dramatising, was past,—that we should never more see the massive congregation listening to outrageous manifestations of insanity,—no more hear the fanatical effervescence of ginger-pop sermonising, or be called upon to wipe away the froth, that the people might see the colour of the stuff. In this we were mistaken. A star has appeared in the misty plain of orthodoxy; and such a star that, were it not for the badge which encircles that part of it called neck, we should, for the more distinguishing characteristic, write comet. It has made its appearance in Exeter Hall; and is to be seen on the first day of the week, by putting a few 'browns' into a basket. The star is a Spurgeon,—not a carp, but much resembling a pike. Thousands flock weekly to see it; and it shines grandiloquently. It is a parson,—a young parson. Merciful goodness! such a parson seldom talks. It is a railway speed of joining sentences, conflabergasticated into a discourse. It is now near eleven o'clock a.m. He rises to read; and, as if the Book of Inspiration was not fine enough in its composition, enters into explanations of his own as apt as a coal-heaver would give of Thucydides (*sic*). Never mind! the great gun of starology in theology has a mission. Not to convert the doggerelisms of Timbuctoo into rationalisms,—not to demonstrate the loving-kindness of the great Fatherhood,—not to teach the forgiveness of Jehovah Jirah (*sic*) in His great heart of mercy,—not to proclaim the extension of the kingdom of the Master of assemblies. No! but to teach that, if Jack Scroggins was put down in the black book, before the great curtain of events was unfolded, that the said Jack Scroggins, in spite of all he may do or say, will and must tumble into the limbo of a brimstone hell, to be punished and roasted, without any prospect of cessation, or shrinking into a dried cinder; because Jack Scroggins had done what Jack Scroggins could not help doing. . . . It is not pleasant to be frightened into the portal of bliss by the hissing bubbles of the seething cauldron. It is not Christian-like to say, 'God must wash brains in the Hyper-Calvinism a Spurgeon teaches before man can enter Heaven.' It does not harmonize with the quiet majesty of the Nazarene. It does not fall like manna for hungry souls; but is like the gush of the pouring rain in a thunderstorm, which makes the flowers to hang their heads, looking up afterwards as if nothing had happened. When the Exeter Hall stripling talks of Deity, let him remember that He is superior to profanity, and that blasphemy from a parson is as great a crime as when the lowest grade of humanity utters the brutal oath at which the virtuous stand aghast."

In one of Mr. Spurgeon's discourses delivered in the year 1855, there is the following remarkable paragraph, which shows that the foregoing article entirely misrepresented the usual style of his preaching; careful readers will note that he protested against some of the very expressions that he was charged with uttering:—

“Enthusiastic divines have thought that men were to be brought to virtue by the hissings of the boiling cauldron; they have imagined that, by beating a hell-drum in the ears of men, they should make them believe the gospel; that, by the terrific sights and sounds of Sinai's mountain, they should drive men to Calvary. They have preached perpetually, ‘Do this, and thou art damned.’ In their preaching, there preponderates a voice horrible and terrifying; if you listened to them, you might think you sat near the mouth of the pit, and heard the ‘dismal groans and sullen moans,’ and all the shrieks of the tortured ones in perdition. Men think that by these means sinners will be brought to the Saviour. They, however, in my opinion, think wrongly: men are frightened into hell, but not into Heaven. Men are sometimes driven to Sinai by powerful preaching. Far be it from us to condemn the use of the law, for ‘the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ;’ but if you want to get a man to Christ, the best way is to bring Christ to the man. It is not by preaching law and terrors that men are made to love God.

“‘Law and terrors do but harden,  
All the while they work alone;  
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,  
Soon dissolves a heart of stone.’

“I sometimes preach ‘the terror of the Lord,’ as Paul did when he said, ‘Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;’ but I do it as did the apostle, to bring them to a sense of their sins. The way to bring men to Jesus, to give them peace, to give them joy, to give them salvation through Christ, is, by God the Spirit's assistance, to preach Christ,—to preach a full, free, perfect pardon. Oh, how little there is of preaching Jesus Christ! We do not preach enough about His glorious Name. Some preach dry doctrines; but there is not the unction of the Holy One revealing the fulness and preciousness of the Lord Jesus. There is plenty of ‘Do this, and live,’ but not enough of ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’”

*The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, April 28, 1855, to which Mr. Spurgeon alludes on page 19, had an article somewhat similar to the one in the Buckinghamshire paper of the same date:—

“Just now, the great lion, star, meteor, or whatever else he may be called, of the Baptists, is the Rev. M. (*sic*) Spurgeon, minister of Park Street Chapel,

Southwark. He has created a perfect *furor* in the religious world. Every Sunday, crowds throng to Exeter Hall—where for some weeks past he has been preaching during the enlargement of his own chapel,—as to some great dramatic entertainment. The huge hall is crowded to overflowing, morning and evening, with an excited auditory, whose good fortune in obtaining admission is often envied by the hundreds outside who throng the closed doors. For a parallel to such popularity, we must go back to Dr. Chalmers, Edward Irving, or the earlier days of James Parsons. But I will not dishonour such men by comparison with the Exeter Hall religious demagogue.\* They preached the gospel with all the fervour of earnest natures. Mr. Spurgeon preaches *himself*. He is nothing unless he is an actor,—unless exhibiting that matchless impudence which is his great characteristic, indulging in coarse familiarity with holy things, declaiming in a ranting and colloquial style, strutting up and down the platform as though he were at the Surrey Theatre, and boasting of his own intimacy with Heaven with nauseating frequency. His fluency, self-possession, oratorical tricks, and daring utterances, seem to fascinate his less-thoughtful hearers, who love excitement more than devotion. . . . I have glanced at one or two of Mr. Spurgeon's published sermons, and turned away in disgust from the coarse sentiments, the scholastical expressions, and clap-trap style I have discovered. It would seem that the poor young man's brain is turned by the notoriety he has acquired and the incense offered at his shrine. From the very pulpit he boasts of the crowds that flock to listen to his rodomontade. Only lately, he told his fair friends to send him no more slippers, as he was already engaged; and on another occasion gloried in the belief that, by the end of the year, not less than 200,000 of his published trashy sermons would be scattered over the length and breadth of the land. This is but a mild picture of the great religious lion of the metropolis. To their credit be it spoken, Mr. Spurgeon receives no countenance or encouragement from the ornaments of his denomination. I don't think he has been invited to take part in any of their meetings. Nor, indeed, does he seek such fellowship. He glories in his position of lofty isolation, and is intoxicated by the draughts of popularity that have fired his feverish brain. He is a nine days' wonder,—a comet that has suddenly shot across the religious atmosphere. He has gone up like a rocket, and ere long will come down like a stick. The most melancholy consideration in the case is the diseased craving for excitement which this running after Mr. Spurgeon by the 'religious world' indicates. I would charitably conclude that the greater part of the multitude that weekly crowd to his theatrical exhibitions consists of people who are not in the habit of frequenting a place of worship."

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\* It is worthy of note that the paper which, in 1855, thus described Mr. Spurgeon, in 1898, in reviewing Vol. I. of his *Autobiography*, spoke of him as "this noble Puritan preacher and saintly Christian."



What higher compliment than this could the slanderer have paid the dear young preacher! Mr. Spurgeon's own testimony, concerning many of his first London hearers, was that they had not been accustomed to attend any house of prayer until they came to New Park Street Chapel, Exeter Hall, or the Surrey Gardens Music Hall. Best of all, many of them became truly converted, and so helped to build up the great church which afterwards worshipped in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. In one of his earliest sermons at the Music Hall, Mr. Spurgeon said:—

“I have many a time had doubts and fears, as most of you have had; and where is the strong believer who has not sometimes wavered? I have said, within myself, ‘Is this religion true, which, day after day, I incessantly preach to the people? Is it correct that this gospel has an influence upon mankind?’ And I will tell you how I have reassured myself. I have looked upon the hundreds, nay, upon the thousands whom I have around me, who were once the vilest of the vile,—drunkards, swearers, and such like,—and I now see them ‘clothed, and in their right mind,’ walking in holiness and in the fear of God; and I have said within myself, ‘This must be the truth, then, because I see its marvellous effects. It is true, because it is efficient for purposes which error never could accomplish. It exerts an influence among the lowest order of mortals, and over the most abominable of our race.’ . . . I could a tale unfold, of some who have plunged head-first into the blackest gulfs of sin; it would horrify both you and me, if we could allow them to recount their guilt. I could tell you how they have come into God's house with their teeth set against the minister, determined that, say what he would, they might listen, but it would be only to scoff. They stayed a moment; some word arrested their attention; they thought within themselves, ‘We will hear that sentence.’ It was some pointed, terse saying, that entered into their souls. They knew not how it was, but they were spell-bound, and stood to listen a little longer; and, by-and-by, unconsciously to themselves, the tears began to fall, and when they went away, they had a strange, mysterious feeling about them that led them to their chambers. Down they fell on their knees; the story of their life was all told before God; He gave them peace through the blood of the Lamb, and they came again to His house, many of them, to say, ‘Come, all ye that fear the Lord, and hear what He hath done for our souls.’”

*The Lambeth Gazette* was a paper published so near to the scene of Mr. Spurgeon's ministry that it would have been easy for the Editor to ascertain *facts* concerning his life and work; yet its issue for September 1, 1855, contained an article from which the following is an extract:—

“The fact cannot be concealed, mountebankism is, to a certain class of minds, quite as attractive in the pulpit as in the fields of a country town. The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon is now the star of Southwark. Mr. Wells (commonly known by

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the curious *sobriquet* of 'Wheelbarrow Wells'), of the Borough Road, has, for some years past, had the run in this line; but he has, at last, got a rival well up in his 'tip', and likely to prove the favourite for a long time. He is a very young man, too, and the young 'sisters' are dancing mad after him. He has received slippers enough from these lowly-minded damsels to open a shoe shop; and were it not that he recently advertised them that he was 'engaged', he would very soon have been able to open a fancy bazaar with the nicknacks that were pouring in upon him. No doubt he is a very good young man, with the best of intentions; but will not this man-worship spoil him? Between the parts of the service, his mannerism in the pulpit is suggestive of affectation and vanity;—it might be only an overpowering sense of responsibility; yet it would do for either state of feeling. Who can wonder at it? . . .

"Let it not be supposed that the writer has any wish to cripple the usefulness of the young minister. On the contrary, he would be happy to hear of 'much good being done.' What he laments over is the spiritual poverty and want of taste indicated by the crowds who are so eager to feed upon the very 'husks' of a discarded style of preaching. Doubtless, the young minister will be the means of breaking up much fallow ground,—would that it were then passed over to a more skilful husbandman!—but it is painful to hear of old Christians turning again to such 'beggarly elements', instead of allowing themselves to be 'built up and established in the faith.' May prosperity attend you, Mr. Spurgeon; but try, do try, to instruct as well as amuse your congregation. Do not be satisfied with the ripple that passes over the face of the waters; but stir them, if you can, to their lowest depths."

*The Bristol Advertiser*, April 12, 1856, thus introduced its report of a sermon by Mr. Spurgeon in that city:—

"It is very easy for public opinion to mistake the signs of greatness; and for individuals to mistake the signs of public opinion. For a time, weakness may command notoriety,—it never can hold fame. We are not among those, therefore, who accept the hasty verdicts of the crowd. We have often seen that audacity, eccentricity, or even stolidity itself can secure the homage which is always paid to genius; but rash and ignorant devotees discover their mistake very soon; and, though their quondam hero continue to make a noise, they, from sheer indifference, cease to notice him. Indeed, there are quackeries in public as well as in professional life; Dr. Holloways among the vendors of religious doctrine as well as among the vendors of patent medicines. They work wonderful cures. They get advertised everywhere. They have agents all about the country, ready and willing to assist them in pushing the trade. And, unfortunately, there is a world of superstitious, curious, and idle people who provide a profitable market for the spurious article.



But quacks are always short-lived; and though a Morrison may find a successor, he himself quickly gets bowed out of society.

“Now, what is there in Mr. Spurgeon to account for the extraordinary sensation he makes everywhere? It is not the doctrine he preaches; for that is ‘orthodox’; that is, it is preached by a thousand other clergymen. It is not his personal appearance, for that is but ordinary: his forehead is low; his eye is small, and though capable of vivid flashes of self-appreciation, not radiant with those ‘heavenly’ rays by which sentimental ladies are usually fascinated; his figure is broad and stumpy; his manners are rude and awkward. In short, we can find no genuine qualities in this gentleman sufficient to explain the unrivalled notoriety he has acquired. If he were simple in his pretensions, and had the serene and sacred dignity of religious earnestness to support him, his destitution of refinement, his evident ignorance, his positive vulgarities of expression and of manner might be forgiven. We should feel that he was doing good in an important direction, and that to follow him with criticism or contempt would be, in a sort, profane. Or if he possessed unusual powers of mind, imagination, or speech, we could understand how many would seek to hear him. But his intellect not only lacks culture, it is evidently of meagre grasp. He has fancy, but all his larger illustrations failed, either in fitness or in development. He is fluent; he talks on without stopping; he has certain theatrical attitudes of which he knows how to make the most; his voice is powerful; and his enunciation clear; and thus many of the *mechanical* effects of oratory are under his sway. But his thoughts are commonplace, and his figures false, though striking. He says good things smartly; but his best things are his tritest, and his most striking are his most audacious sentences. . . . Solemnly do we express our regret that insolence so unblushing, intellect so feeble, flippancy so ostentatious, and manners so rude should, in the name of religion, and in connection with the church, receive the acknowledgment of even a momentary popularity. To our minds, it speaks sad things as to the state of intelligence, and calm, respectful, and dignified piety among a mass of people who call themselves the disciples of Jesus. Where curiosity is stronger than faith, and astonishment easier to excite than reverence to edify, religious life must either be at a very low ebb, or associated with some other deleterious elements.”

*The Daily News*, a paper from which something better might have been expected, had, in its issue of September 9, 1856, a long article on “Popular Preachers,—The Rev. Mr. Spurgeon,” in which it said:—“We are accustomed to look grave when the old mysteries and miracle-plays are mentioned. We pity the ignorance of those ancestors of ours who could find food for amusement or helps to devotion in the representation of doggerel dramas, where God the Father, our

Saviour, the Holy Spirit, the devil, Adam and Eve, and, in short, all the principal personages, human or supernatural, mentioned in Scripture, were brought on the stage. We are liable to entertain shrewd doubts as to the piety of the writers of these horrible travesties of the sacred narratives, and to lament over the crassness of the intellect of those who could find entertainment in them. We can see nothing more instructive than in the awful contest between the devil and the baker, which was generally the concluding scene of the 'galantee show' performances with which the Christmas of our childhood was enlivened. In Protestant countries in general, and in England in particular, we shrink from undue familiarity with holy words and things. We have just as much aversion to see a church turned into a theatre as to see a theatre turned into a church. We hold an opinion, grounded as much on the principles of good taste as of religion, that it is almost as offensive to see a clergyman perform in his pulpit as to hear actors invoke Heaven in a theatre. This opinion, however, is not quite universally entertained. Let any person who wishes to convince himself of the truth of this, take his station opposite to Exeter Hall on Sunday evening at about a few minutes before six o'clock. We say opposite, because, unless he arrives some time before the hour mentioned, there will be no standing-room on the pavement from which the entrance to the hall ascends. At six, the doors open, and a dense mass of human beings pours in. There is no interruption now to the continuous stream until half-past six o'clock, when the whole of the vast hall, with its galleries and platform, will be filled with the closely-packed crowd.

"If the spectator has not taken care to enter before this time, he will have but small chance of finding even standing-room. Suppose him to have entered early enough to have found a seat, he will naturally look around him to scan the features of the scene. They are remarkable enough to excite attention in the minds of the most listless. Stretching far away to the back are thousands of persons evidently eager for the appearance of someone. Towering up the platform, the seats are all crowded. Nearly all the eyes in this multitude are directed to the front of the platform. The breathless suspense is only broken occasionally by the struggle, in the body of the hall, of those who are endeavouring to gain or maintain a position. Suddenly, even this noise is stopped. A short, squarely-built man, with piercing eyes, with thick black hair parted down the middle, with a sallow countenance only redeemed from heaviness by the restlessness of the eyes, advances along the platform towards the seat of honour. A cataract of short coughs, indicative of the relief afforded to the ill-repressed impatience of the assembly, announces to the stranger that the business of the evening has commenced. He will be told with a certain degree of awe by those whom he asks for information, that the person just arrived is the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon. He will perhaps hear, in addition to this, that Mr. Spurgeon



is beyond all question the most popular preacher in London; that he is obliged to leave off preaching in the evening at his chapel in New Park Street, Southwark, on account of the want of room to accommodate more than a mere fraction of the thousands who flock to hear him; that Exeter Hall has been taken for the purpose of diminishing in a slight degree the disappointment experienced; but that nothing will be done to afford effectual relief until the new chapel which is in contemplation is built, and which is intended to hold 15,000 persons." (In a later chapter, it will be seen that Mr. Spurgeon corrected this inaccuracy concerning the accommodation to be provided in the Metropolitan Tabernacle; he never had any intention of building a chapel "to hold 15,000 persons.")

The article concluded thus:—"We might fill columns with specimens of this pulpit buffoonery, but we have given enough to show the nature of Mr. Spurgeon's preaching. We might have brought forward instances of his utter ignorance of any theology except that current among the sect to which he belongs; and of his ludicrous misinterpretations of Scripture, occasioned by his want of even a moderate acquaintance with Oriental customs and forms of language. . . . A congregation that constantly listens to the spiritual dram-drinking that Mr. Spurgeon encourages, will become not only bigoted, but greedy after stronger doses of excitement. What excited them once, will fall flat upon their palate. The preacher will be obliged to become more and more extravagant as his audience becomes more and more exacting, and the end may be an extensive development of dangerous fanaticism."

*The Illustrated Times*, October 11, 1856, published a portrait—or rather, a caricature—of Mr. Spurgeon, with a lengthy article containing one of the many prophecies that subsequent events proved to be false. The writer said:—

"Mr. Spurgeon's popularity is unprecedented; at all events, there has been nothing like it since the days of Wesley and Whitefield. Park Street Chapel cannot hold half the people who pant to hear him, and even Exeter Hall is too small. Indeed, it is reported on good authority that his friends mean to hire the Concert Room at the Surrey Gardens, and firmly believe that he will fill that. Nor is his popularity confined to London; in Scotland, he was very much followed; and, lately, we ourselves saw, on a week-day, in a remote agricultural district, long lines of people all converging to one point, and on enquiring of one of the party where they were going, received for answer, 'We're a go'in' to hear *Maester Spudgin*, sir.'

"WILL HIS POPULARITY LAST?"

"We more than doubt it. It stands on no firm basis. Thousands who go now to hear him only go through curiosity. Men are very much like sheep; one goes through a hedge, then another, and another; at last the stream gathers *crescit eundo*, and the whole flock rushes madly forward. This has been a good deal the case with



Mr. Spurgeon's congregation, but the current will soon turn and leave him; and as to those who have gone from a slightly different, if not better, motive, it is hardly likely that he will retain them long. He must bid high if he does,—offering them every Sunday a stronger dram than they had the last."

POSTSCRIPT BY MRS. C. H. SPURGEON.

No defence of my beloved is needed now. God has taken him to Himself, and "there the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest." The points of these arrows are all blunted,—the stings of these scorpions are all plucked out,—the edge of these sharp swords is rusted away. "And where is the fury of the oppressor?"

A strange serenity has brooded over my spirit as these chapters have recalled the heartless attacks made on God's servant; I have even smiled as I read once again the unjust and cruel words written by his enemies; for he is so safe now, "with God eternally shut in;" and I can bless the Lord for the suffering all ended, and the eternity of bliss begun. "For Thou hast made him most blessed for ever: Thou hast made him exceeding glad with Thy countenance."

But, at the time of their publication, what a grievous affliction these slanders were to me! My heart alternately sorrowed over him, and flamed with indignation against his detractors. For a long time, I wondered how I could set continual comfort before his eyes, till, at last, I hit upon the expedient of having the following verses printed in large Old English type, and enclosed in a pretty Oxford frame. (This was before the days of the illuminated mottoes which at present are so conspicuous in our homes, and so often silently speak a message from God to us.)

**"Blessed are ye, when men shall rebile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."—Matthew v. 11, 12.**

The text was hung up in our own room, and was read over by the dear preacher every morning,—fulfilling its purpose most blessedly, for it strengthened his heart, and enabled him to buckle on the invisible armour, whereby he could calmly walk among men, unruffled by their calumnies, and concerned only for their best and highest interests.