

CHAPTER XLI.

“In Labours More Abundant.”

If Christ should leave the upper world, and come into the midst of this hall, this morning, what answer could you give, if, after showing you His wounded hands and feet, and His rent side, He should put this question, “I have suffered thus for thee, what hast thou done for Me?” Let me put that question for Him, and in His behalf. You have known His love, some of you fifty years, some of you thirty, twenty, ten, three, one. For you He gave His precious life, and died upon the cross, in agonies most exquisite. What have you done for Him? Turn over your diary. Can you remember the contributions you have given out of your wealth? What do they amount to? Add them up. Think of what you have done for Jesus, how much of your time you have spent in His service. Add that up, turn over another leaf, and then observe how much time you have spent in praying for the progress of His Kingdom. What have you done there? Add that up. I will do so for myself; and I can say, without a boast, that I have zealously served my God, and have been “in labours more abundant;” but when I come to add all up, and set what I have done side by side with what I owe to Christ, it is less than nothing and vanity; I pour contempt upon it all, it is but dust of vanity. And though, from this day forward, I should preach every hour in the day; though I should spend myself and be spent for Christ; though by night I should know no rest, and by day I should never cease from toil, and year should succeed to year till this hair was hoary and this frame exhausted; when I come to render up my account, He might say, “Well done;” but I should not feel it was so, but should rather say, “I am still an unprofitable servant; I have not done that which it was even my bare duty to do, much less have I done all I would to show the love I owe.” Now, as you think what you have done, dear brother and sister, surely your account must fall short equally with mine.—C. H. S., *in sermon preached at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens, June 26, 1859.*



BEFORE I came to London, I usually preached three times on the Lord's-day, and five nights every week; and after I became Pastor at New Park Street Chapel, that average was fully maintained. Within two or three years, it was considerably exceeded, for it was no uncommon experience for me to preach twelve or thirteen times a week, and to travel hundreds of miles by road or rail. Requests to take services in all parts of the metropolis and the provinces poured in upon me, and being in the full vigour of early manhood, I gladly availed myself of every opportunity of preaching the gospel which had been so greatly blessed to my own soul. In after years, when weakness and pain prevented me from doing all that I would willingly have done for my dear Lord, I often comforted myself with the thought that I did serve Him with all my might while I could, though even then I always felt that I could never do enough for Him who had loved me, and given Himself for me. Some of my ministerial brethren used to mourn over the heavy burden that rested upon them because they had to deliver their Master's message twice on the Sabbath, and once on a week-night; but I could not sympathize with them in their complaints, for the more often I preached, the more joy I found in the happy service. I was also specially sustained under the strain of

such constant labour by continual tokens of the Lord's approval. I find that, preaching to my own people at New Park Street, on the last Sabbath of 1855, from Deuteronomy xi. 10—12,—“For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: but the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: a land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year;”—I was able to bear this testimony to the Divine power that had accompanied the Word:—

“Beloved friends, I can say that, as a minister of the gospel, the eyes of the Lord have been specially upon me all this year. It has been my privilege very frequently to preach His Word; I think, during the past twelve months, I have stood in the pulpit to testify His truth more than four hundred times, and blessed be His Name, whether it has been in the North, in the South, in the East, or in the West, I have never lacked a congregation; nor have I ever gone again to any of the places where I have preached, without hearing of souls converted. I cannot remember a single village, or town, that I have visited a second time, without meeting with some who praised the Lord that they heard the Word of truth there from my lips. When I went to Bradford last time, I stated in the pulpit that I had never heard of a soul being converted through my preaching there; and the good pew-opener came to Brother Dowson, and said, ‘Why didn’t you tell Mr. Spurgeon that So-and-so joined the church through hearing him?’ and instantly that dear man of God told me the cheering news.”

It would not be possible for me to make more than a very incomplete list of my multitudinous engagements during those early years; and, indeed, there is no occasion for me to attempt to do so, for the record of them is on high; yet certain circumstances impressed a few of the services so powerfully upon my mind that I can distinctly recall them even after this long interval.

I had promised to give some of my “Personal Reminiscences” at the annual meeting of the Pastors’ College held in the Tabernacle on December 1, 1880; and while I sat in my study, that morning, with my two secretaries, Mr. Keys and Mr. Harrald, I said to the former:—“I recollect an incident, which occurred during my first year in London, in which you were concerned.” This is the story. Old Mr. Thomas Olney—“Father Olney,” as he was affectionately called by our Park Street friends,—was very anxious that I should go and preach at Tring, the little Hertfordshire town where he was born, and where his father, Mr. Daniel Olney, was for many years a deacon in one of the three Baptist churches. He found it was not a very easy matter to arrange, for the people had heard either so much or so little

about me that I could not be allowed to appear in one of the chapels because I was too high in doctrine for the good folk who worshipped there, and permission could not be obtained for the use of another chapel because I was too low in doctrine for the dear Hyper-Calvinist friends who met there, and sang, with a meaning good Dr. Watts never intended,—

“We are a garden wall'd around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground;
A little spot, enclosed by grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness.”

But there was a third place,—the West End Chapel,—the minister of which was a Mr. William Skelton, who thought that I was all right in doctrine, so Mr. Olney obtained consent for me to preach there. If I remember rightly, the worthy man's stipend only amounted to about fifteen shillings a week. He had invited us to tea at his house; but while we sat in his humble home, my conscience rather smote me because my good deacon and I were consuming some of his scanty store of provisions, and I began to think of some plan by which we could repay him for his kindness. I noticed that our friend was wearing an alpaca coat, which was very shiny, and in places was so worn that I could see through it. We went to the chapel, and the service proceeded, and all the while I was pondering in my mind what could be done for the worthy man who had lent us his chapel, and entertained us so generously. During the singing of one of the hymns, Mr. Keys came up to the pulpit, and said to me, “The pastor of this church is a very poor man, the people are able to give him very little; it would be a great kindness, sir, if you could have a collection for him, and get him a new coat.” That was just what I had been thinking, so at the close of the service I said to the congregation:—“Now, dear friends, I have preached to you as well as I could, and you know that our Saviour said to His disciples, ‘Freely ye have received, freely give.’ I don't want anything from you for myself, but the minister of this chapel looks to me as though he would not object to a new suit of clothes.” I pointed down to my worthy deacon, and said, “Father Olney, down there, I am sure will start the collection with half a sovereign (he at once nodded his head to confirm my statement); I will gladly give the same amount; and if you will all help as much as you can, our brother will soon have a new suit, and a good one, too.”

The collection was made, it realized a very fair sum, and the minister was in due time provided with suitable garments. I apologised to him, after the service, for my rudeness in calling public attention to his worn coat; but he heartily thanked me for what I had done, and then added, “Ever since I have been in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, my Master has always found me my livery. I have often wondered where the next suit would come from, and I really was wanting a new one very badly; but now you have provided it for me, and I am very grateful both to

the Lord and also to you." I don't remember doing quite the same thing on any other occasion, though I may have helped some of the Lord's poor servants in a different way.

As far as I can remember, this is a true account of what happened at Tring in August, 1854; and I have often related the story. Someone else, however, evidently thought that it was not sufficiently sensational, so it was very considerably altered, and ultimately found its way into *The Glasgow Examiner*, in May, 1861, as a communication from the London correspondent of that paper. It is worth while to compare the "authorized" and "revised" versions of the incident, for the discrepancies in the latter are fairly typical of the inaccuracies in hundreds of other "stories" that have been told of me during my ministry in London. This is what the London correspondent wrote :—

"REV. C. H. SPURGEON AND THE FARMERS.

"Apropos of Mr. Spurgeon, I have to chronicle a circumstance which displays the characteristic benevolence of the rev. gentleman in a most amiable light. I had the anecdote from an eye-witness, and hence can vouchsafe (*sic*) for its authenticity. A short time ago, Mr. Spurgeon, while temporarily resident at Tring, received a requisition, signed by the principal inhabitants of that rural locality, begging him to address them. The rev. gentleman having courteously assented, the good people of Tring began to look about them for a building suitable to the occasion. A Nonconformist minister was first applied to for the loan of his chapel, but returned an indignant refusal. An application to the vicar for the use of the parish church met with a similar response. An open-air meeting, in the existing state of the weather, was out of the question; and, there being no room in the village sufficiently large to accommodate a quarter of the expected audience, it began to be feared that the whole affair would drop through, more especially as Mr. Spurgeon had to leave for town by an early train on the following morning.

"In this dilemma, a small farmer in the neighbourhood offered the use of a large barn, which was gladly accepted. An extemporaneous pulpit was hastily constructed, and long before the hour appointed every corner of the place was crowded with expectant listeners. On entering the pulpit, Mr. Spurgeon informed his congregation that, although he had only been asked to give one sermon, it was his intention to deliver two. After a long and brilliant discourse in his own peculiarly forcible and impressive style, he paused for a few minutes, and then proceeded :— 'And now for sermon number two,—a plain, practical sermon. Our friend who gave us the use of this building is a poor man. When I saw him, this morning, he wore a coat all in tatters; his shirt absolutely grinned at me through the holes. Let us show our appreciation of his kindness by buying him a new suit of clothes.' The

suggestion was immediately adopted, and in the course of a few minutes some £10 or £12 was collected. On his return to London, Mr. Spurgeon related the circumstance to some of his congregation, who testified their appreciation of the respect paid to their Pastor by subscribing a further sum of £20 for the benefit of the Hertfordshire farmer."

I believe the friends at Tring were pleased with the service, for, not long afterwards, I was invited to go there again, to preach the Sunday-school anniversary sermons. This was, I think, at one of the other Baptist chapels in the town. I addressed the children in the afternoon, and preached to the adults in the evening. At the close of the afternoon service, some of the Hyper-Calvinist friends, who had been present, found fault with what they called my unsound teaching. The Holy Spirit had very graciously helped me in speaking to the many young people who were gathered together, and I believe that some of them were brought to the Saviour; but, among other things, I had said to them that God had answered my prayers while I was a child, and before I was converted. That was certainly true, for, on many occasions, long before I knew the Lord, I had gone to Him with my childish petitions, and He had given me what I had asked of Him. I told the children that this fact had greatly impressed me while I was a boy, and it led me to believe more firmly in God's overruling power, and in the efficacy of prayer, and I urged them also to pray to Him. This gave great offence to my critics, so five or six of those grave old men gathered round me, and tried to set me right in their peculiar fashion. Did I not know that the Scripture declared that "the prayer of a sinner is abomination unto the Lord"? That is a sentence which I have never been able to find in my Bible, and I told them so. Then they asked, "How can a dead man pray?" I could not tell, but I knew that *I* prayed even while I was "dead in trespasses and sins." They said that it was impossible; but I was equally positive that it could be done, for I had done it. They still maintained that it was not sound doctrine, and that God did not hear the prayers of sinners. There was quite a little ring formed around me, and I did my best to answer the objections; but, after all, the victory was won, not by Barak, but by Deborah. A very old woman, in a red cloak, managed to squeeze herself into the circle, and turning to my accusers, she said, "What are you battling about with this young man? You say that God does not hear the prayers of unconverted people, that He hears no cry but that of His own children. What do you know about the Scriptures? Your precious passage is not in the Bible at all, but the psalmist did say, 'He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry' (Psalm cxlvii. 9). Is there any grace in *them*? If God hears the cry of the ravens, don't you think He will hear the prayers of those who are made in His own image? You don't know anything at all about the matter, so leave the young

man alone, and let him go on with his Master's work." After that vigorous speech, my opponents quickly vanished, and I walked away in happy conversation with the dear old soul who had so wisely delivered me from the cavillers.

I had quite a different experience on the occasion when I went to preach at Haverhill, in Suffolk. The congregation that day had the somewhat unusual privilege, or affliction, of listening to two preachers discoursing by turns upon the same text! The passage was that grand declaration of the apostle Paul, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians ii. 8). It does not often happen to me to be late for service, for I feel that punctuality is one of those little virtues which may prevent great sins. But we have no control over railways and breakdowns; and so it happened that I reached the appointed place considerably behind time. Like sensible people, they had begun their worship, and had proceeded as far as the sermon. As I neared the chapel, I perceived that someone was in the pulpit preaching, and who should the preacher be but my dear and venerable grandfather! He saw me as I came in at the front door, and made my way up the aisle, and at once he said, "Here comes my grandson! He may preach the gospel better than I can, but he cannot preach a better gospel; can you, Charles?" As I pressed through the throng, I answered, "You can preach better than I can. Pray go on." But he would not agree to *that*. I must take the sermon, and so I did, going on with the subject there and then, just where he left off. "There," said he, "I was preaching on 'For by grace are ye saved.' I have been setting forth the source and fountain-head of salvation; and I am now showing them the channel of it, 'through faith.' Now, you take it up, and go on."

I am so much at home with these glorious truths, that I could not feel any difficulty in taking from my grandfather the thread of his discourse, and joining my thread to it, so as to continue without a break. Our agreement in the things of God made it easy for us to be joint-preachers of the same discourse. I went on with "through faith," and then I proceeded to the next point, "and that not of yourselves." Upon this, I was explaining the weakness and inability of human nature, and the certainty that salvation could not be of ourselves, when I had my coat-tail pulled, and my well-beloved grandsire took his turn again. When I spoke of our depraved human nature, the good old man said, "I know most about that, dear friends;" so he took up the parable, and for the next five minutes set forth a solemn and humbling description of our lost estate, the depravity of our nature, and the spiritual death under which we were found. When he had said his say in a very gracious manner, his grandson was allowed to go on again, to the dear old man's great delight; for now and then he would say, in a gentle tone, "Good! Good!" Once he said, "Tell them that again, Charles," and of course I did tell them *that* again. It was a happy exercise to

me to take my share in bearing witness to truths of such vital importance, which are so deeply impressed upon my heart. Whenever I read this text, I seem to hear that dear voice, which has been so long lost to earth, saying to me, "TELL THEM THAT AGAIN." I am not contradicting the testimony of forefathers who are now with God. If my grandfather could return to earth, he would find me where he left me, steadfast in the faith, and true to that form of doctrine which was once for all delivered to the saints. I preach the doctrines of grace because I believe them to be true; because I see them in the Scriptures; because my experience endears them to me; and because I see the holy result of them in the lives of believers. I confess they are none the less dear to me because the advanced school despises them: their censures are to me a commendation. I confess also that I should never think the better of a doctrine because it was said to be "new." Those truths which have enlightened so many ages appear to me to be ordained to remain throughout eternity. The doctrine which I preach is that of the Puritans: it is the doctrine of Calvin, the doctrine of Augustine, the doctrine of Paul, the doctrine of the Holy Ghost. The Author and Finisher of our faith Himself taught most blessed truth which well agreed with Paul's declaration, "By grace are ye saved." The doctrine of grace is the substance of the testimony of Jesus.

Some of the special services it was my privilege to conduct in London, in those long-past days, remain in my memory with great vividness. The first time I was asked to preach at one of the representative gatherings of the denomination was on January 10, 1855, when the annual meetings of the London Association of Baptist Churches were held at New Park Street Chapel, which was crowded both afternoon and evening, to the manifest astonishment of the grave and venerable ministers and delegates who had usually met on such occasions in much smaller numbers. My subject was, "The Holy War," the text being 2 Cor. x. 4: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." Rev. Thomas Binney, of the Weigh House Chapel, near the Monument, was in the congregation that afternoon, and as he walked away, one of our friends heard him say, concerning the service, "It is an insult to God and man; I never heard such things in my life before." Our brother was so indignant that he turned to him, and said, "The man who can speak like that of a young minister of Jesus Christ is one of whom I shall be ashamed as long as I live, unless he repents having uttered such unkind remarks." I know this story is true, for I had it from the lips of the good man himself. Many years afterwards, he was again in Mr. Binney's company, so he reminded him of the incident; and our friend told me that no one could have spoken of me with more intense and hearty esteem than did the venerable man at that time. "But," he added, "you know, my dear sir, that your minister

has greatly improved since those early days. I very soon found out my mistake, and you may depend upon it that my sentiments with regard to Mr. Spurgeon are completely changed. I did not at all blame you for rebuking me as you did ; I only wish I had as many friends to stick to me, and speak up for me, as your minister has always had. If I ever said anything against him, I might just as well have pulled down a skep of bees about my head ; but now I have no feeling towards him but that of the utmost regard and affection." I also know that, long before this confession,



REV. THOMAS BINNEY, LL.D.

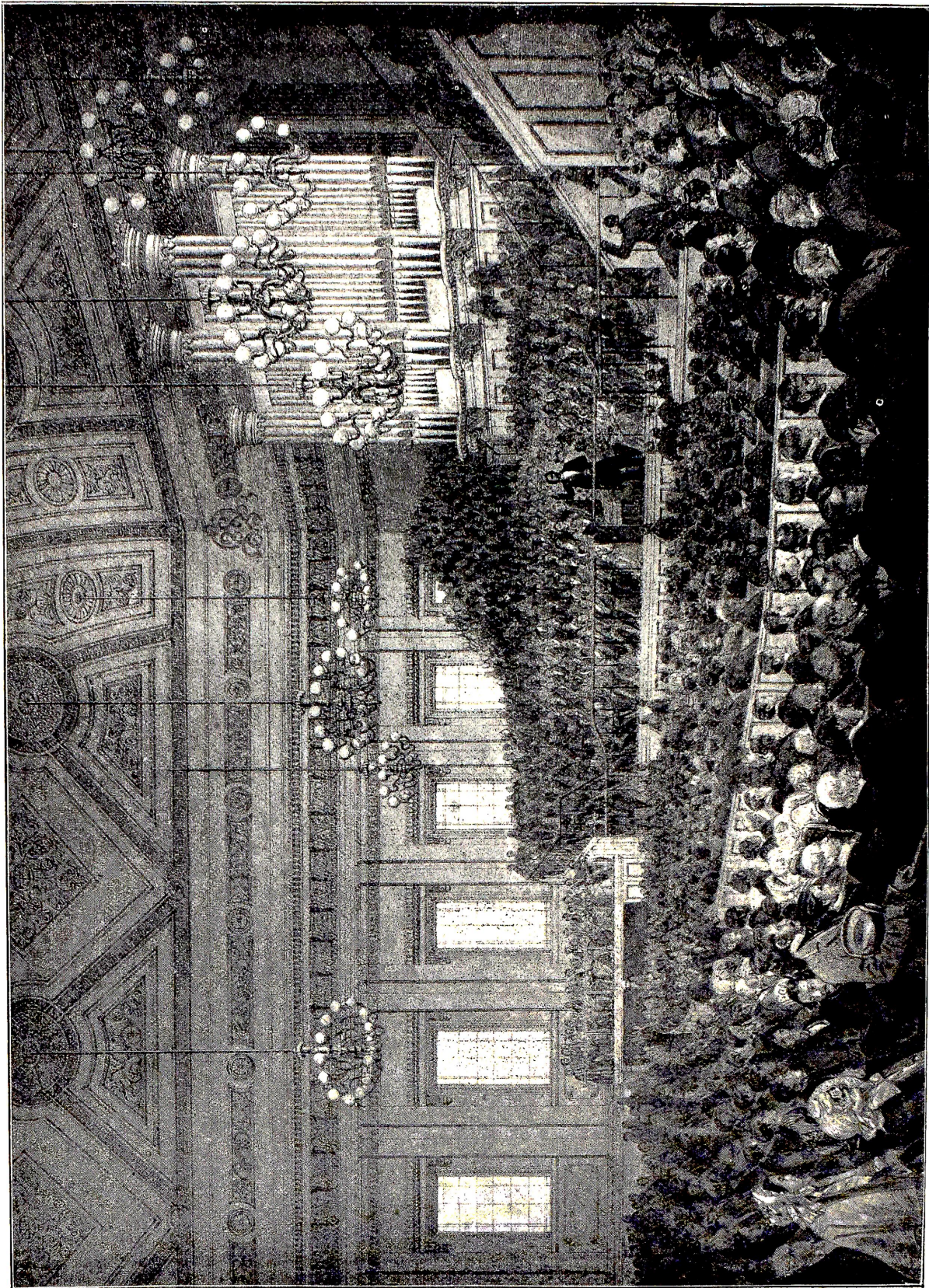
Mr. Binney, while addressing the students of one of the Congregational Colleges, had said, in reply to some disparaging remarks concerning me which he had overheard :—"I have enjoyed some amount of popularity, I have always been able to draw together a congregation ; but, in the person of Mr. Spurgeon, we see a young man, be he who he may, and come whence he will, who at twenty-four hours' notice can command a congregation of twenty thousand people. Now, I have never been able to do that, and I never knew of anyone else who could do it."

The Freeman thus reported the meetings of the day :—

"LONDON BAPTIST ASSOCIATION.—Whatever reason may be assigned for the fact, it is certain that an Association meeting in London is very different from one in the country. Perhaps the ministers and members of the several churches meet so often

that an annual gathering is no novelty ; perhaps the walk through London streets, or the jolt in an omnibus or cab, has fewer attractions than the Whitsuntide jaunt by railroad or pleasant country lane ; or perhaps the thing has escaped due attention amid the throng of metropolitan claims ;—but certain it is, that the London Particular Baptist Association, holding, as it does, from a sense of duty, a meeting every year, has only given generally the impression of being a somewhat dull affair. Indeed, it is not enlivening either to preacher or hearer to find one's self in New Park Street Chapel with a congregation of seventy people, on a January week-day afternoon !

“This year, we are bound to say, all was different. The popularity of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, the recently-settled Pastor at New Park Street, attracted a crowded audience on the afternoon of the 10th instant. The metropolitan churches of the denomination appeared for the most part well represented, the only noticeable exception being the absence of several leading ministers, owing, as was explained, to the Quarterly Mission Committee being holden, by some mischance which will probably not occur again, upon the same day. The preacher treated with much earnestness on the ‘strongholds’ of the evil one that we are called to subdue, and on ‘the weapons of our warfare,’ which are ‘mighty through God’ to the task. The vigour and originality of the sermon, we cannot forbear remarking, sufficiently accounted to us for the popularity of the youthful preacher, and indicated powers which, with due culture, may by the Divine blessing greatly and usefully serve the Church in days to come. A very large company remained in the chapel to tea, and in the evening the place was thronged to overflowing for the public meeting,—which, however, was not distinguished by any feature worthy of remark, save the delivery of two or three brief, simple, Evangelical addresses. It appears that many churches in London are not connected with the Association, and of those which are, several sent no reports. No complete statistics, therefore, could be presented. Of those churches from which letters were read, most seemed stationary,—some were prosperous. The accounts, perhaps, on the whole, were quite equal to the average.”



C. H. SPURGEON PREACHING AT EXETER HALL, FEBRUARY, 1855.