

CHAPTER LXIX.

The Pastors' College, 1861—1878 (Continued).

Honorat, in the opening years of the fifth century, retired to the little island, near Cannes, which still bears his name; and attracted around him a number of students, many of whom became such famous missionaries that the Romish Church has enrolled them among her "saints." The one best known to us is Patrick, the evangelizer of Ireland. Christianity was then almost as pure as at the first, and we can well imagine the holy quietude in which, among the rocks of this sunny isle, hundreds of good men spent the years of their preparation for future ministry. With constant meditation and prayer, it must have been a Patmos to them; and when they left its shores, they went forth, full of zeal, to cry, like John the divine, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." In all ages, it has seemed good unto the Lord to gather men around some favoured instructor, and enable them, under his guidance, to sharpen their swords for the battle of life. Thus did Honorat and Columba, in the olden days, and so did Wycliffe and Luther and Calvin, in the Reformation times, train the armies of the Lord for their mission. Schools of the prophets are a prime necessity if the power of religion is to be kept alive and propagated in the land. As we sat under the umbrageous pines by the calm sea, and gazed upon the almost more than earthly scene around, our heart swelled with great desires, and our prayer went up to Heaven that we also might do something to convert the nations ere we go hence, and be no more. If God wills it, we may yet commence new missionary operations, and we mean, on our return, to call our men together to pray about it.—C. H. S., in "*Notes from Mentone*," 1877.



THE following account, in Mr. Spurgeon's own words, was always regarded by him as "the best history" of the Pastors' College; and it is, for that reason, the most suitable record to appear in his "Standard Life." With the particulars and portraits published in Vol. II., Chapter XLVI., and the further reminiscences supplied here and in the previous chapter by former students, it furnishes the fullest and most reliable information concerning the important Institution which the peerless President often called "his firstborn and best beloved."

The Pastors' College (commenced in 1856) has unceasingly been remembered of the God of Heaven, to whom all engaged in it offer reverent thanksgiving. When it was commenced, I had not even a remote idea of whereunto it would grow. There were springing up around me, as my own spiritual children, many earnest young men who felt an irresistible impulse to preach the gospel; and yet, with half an eye, it could be seen that their want of education would be a sad hindrance to them. It was not in my heart to bid them cease their preaching; and, had I done so, they would, in all probability, have ignored my recommendation. As it seemed that they would preach, though their attainments were very slender, no other course was open but to give them an opportunity to educate themselves for the work.

Two friends, Mr. Winsor and Mr. W. Olney, both deacons of the church, promised aid, which, with what I could myself give, enabled me to take one student

(Mr. T. W. Medhurst), for whom I sought to find a tutor. In Mr. George Rogers, then the Pastor of the Independent Church, Albany Road, Camberwell, God sent us the very best man. He had been preparing for such work, and was anxiously waiting for it. This gentleman, who remained until 1881 our principal tutor, is a man of Puritanic stamp, deeply learned, orthodox in doctrine, judicious, witty, devout, earnest, liberal in spirit, and withal juvenile in heart to an extent most remarkable in a man of his years. My connection with him has been one of uninterrupted comfort and delight. The most sincere affection exists between us, we are of one mind and of one heart; and what is equally important, he has in every case secured not merely the respect but the filial love of every student.

Encouraged by the readiness with which the first students found spheres of labour, and by their singular success in soul-winning, I enlarged the number, but the whole means of sustaining them came from my own purse. The large sale of my sermons in America, together with my dear wife's economy, enabled me to spend from £600 to £800 a year in my own favourite work; but, on a sudden, owing to my denunciations of the then existing slavery in the States, my entire resources from that "brook Cherith" were dried up. I paid as large sums as I could from my own income, and resolved to spend all I had, and then take the cessation of my means as a voice from the Lord to stay the effort, as I am firmly persuaded that we ought under no pretence to go into debt. On one occasion, I proposed the sale of my horse and carriage, although these were almost absolute necessities to me on account of my continual journeys in preaching the Word. This my friend Mr. Rogers would not hear of, and actually offered to be the loser rather than this should be done. Then it was that I told my difficulties to my people, and the *weekly offering* commenced; but the incomings from that source were so meagre as to be hardly worth calculating upon. I was brought to the last pound, when a letter came from a banker in the City, informing me that a lady, whose name I have never been able to discover, had deposited a sum of £200, to be used for the education of young men for the ministry. How did my heart leap for joy! I threw myself then and henceforth upon the bounteous care of the Lord, whom I desired with my whole heart to glorify by this effort. Some weeks later, another £100 came in from the same bank; as I was informed, from another hand. Soon afterwards, a beloved deacon of the church at the Tabernacle began to provide an annual supper for the friends of the College, at which considerable sums have from year to year been contributed. A dinner was also given by my liberal publishers, Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster, to celebrate the issue of my five hundredth weekly sermon, at which £500 were raised and presented to the funds. The College grew every month, and the number of students rapidly advanced. Friends known and unknown, from far and near, were moved to give little or much to my work, and so the supplies

increased as the need enlarged. Then another earnest deacon of the church, espoused as his special work the weekly offering, which has been, for many years, a steady source of income. There have been, during this period, times of great trial of my faith; but, after a season of straitness, never amounting to absolute want, the Lord has always interposed, and sent me large sums (on one occasion, £1,000) from unknown donors. When the Orphanage was thrust upon me, it did appear likely that this second work would drain the resources of the first, and it is very apparent that it does attract to itself some of the visible sources of supply; but my faith was firm that the Lord could as readily maintain both Institutions as one, and He has done so.

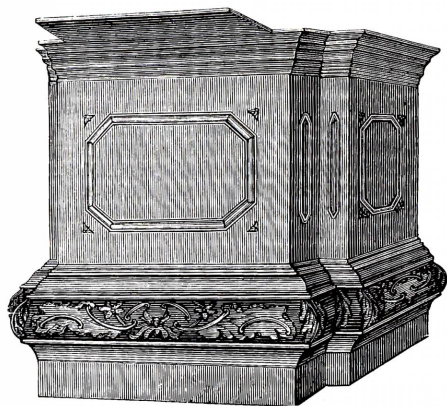
Pecuniary needs, however, have made up but a small part of my cares. Many have been my personal exercises in selecting the men. Candidates have always been plentiful, and the choice has been wide; but it is a serious responsibility to reject any, and yet more so to accept them for training. When mistakes have been made, a second burden has been laid upon me in the dismissal of those who appeared to be unfit. Even with the most careful management, and all the assistance of tutors and friends, no human foresight can secure that, in every case, a man shall be what we believed and hoped. A brother may be exceedingly useful as an occasional preacher, he may distinguish himself as a diligent student, he may succeed at first in the ministry, and yet, when trials of temper and character occur in the pastorate, he may be found wanting. We have had comparatively few causes for regret of this sort; but there have been some such, and these have pierced us with many sorrows. I devoutly bless God that He has sent to the College some of the holiest, soundest, and most self-denying preachers I know, and I pray that He may continue to do so; but it would be more than a miracle if all should excel. While thus speaking of trials connected with the men themselves, it is due to our gracious God to bear testimony that these are not worthy to be compared with the great joy which we experience in seeing so many hundreds of brethren still serving the Lord according to their measure of gift, and all, it is believed, earnestly contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints; nor is the joy less in remembering that many have sweetly fallen asleep after having fought a good fight. At this hour, some of our most flourishing Baptist churches are presided over by pastors trained in our College; and, as years shall add ripeness of experience and stability of character, others will be found to stand in the front rank of the Lord's host.

The College was for some little time aided by the zealous services of Mr. W. Cubitt, of Thrapston, who died among us, enjoying our highest esteem. Mr. Gracey, the classical tutor, a most able brother, is one of ourselves, and was in former years a student, though, from possessing a solid education, he needed little instruction

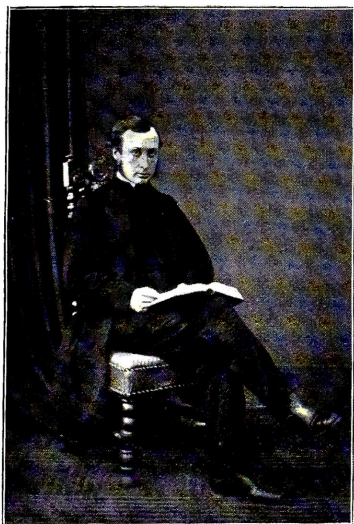
from us except in theology. In him we have one of the most efficient tutors living, a man fitted for any post requiring thorough scholarship and aptness in communicating knowledge. Mr. Fergusson, in the English elementary classes, does the first work upon the rough stones of the quarry, and we have heard from the men whom he has taught in the evening classes speeches and addresses which would have adorned any assembly, proving to demonstration his ability to cope with the difficulties of uncultured and ignorant minds. Mr. Johnson, who zealously aids in the evening, is also a brother precisely suited to the post which he occupies. These evening classes afford an opportunity to Christian men engaged during the day to obtain an education for nothing during their leisure time, and very many avail themselves of the privilege. Nor must I forget to mention Mr. Selway, who takes the department of physical science, and by his interesting experiments and lucid descriptions, gives to his listeners an introduction to those departments of knowledge which most abound with illustrations. Last, but far from least, I adore the goodness of God which sent me so dear and efficient a fellow-helper as my brother in the flesh and in the Lord, J. A. Spurgeon. His work has greatly relieved me of anxiety, and his superior educational qualifications have tended to raise the tone of the instruction given.

(Mr. Spurgeon does not here mention his own important part in the training of his students, but one of them—Pastor W. D. McKinney, now of Ansonia, Connecticut, U.S.A.,—has written the following graphic description of the ever-memorable Friday afternoon classes :—

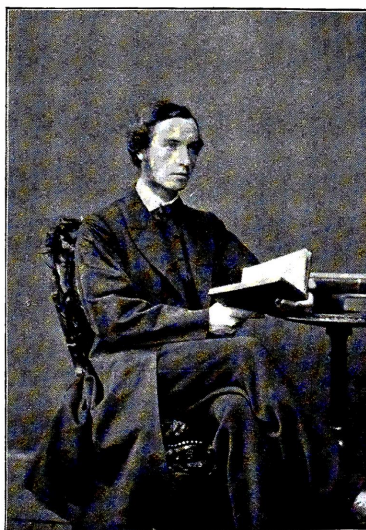
"Friday afternoon" came at last. The old, familiar clock pointed to three ; the door opened on the stroke of the hour, the beloved President appeared, and walked up to the desk,—Dr. Gill's pulpit,—while hands clapped, feet stamped, and voices



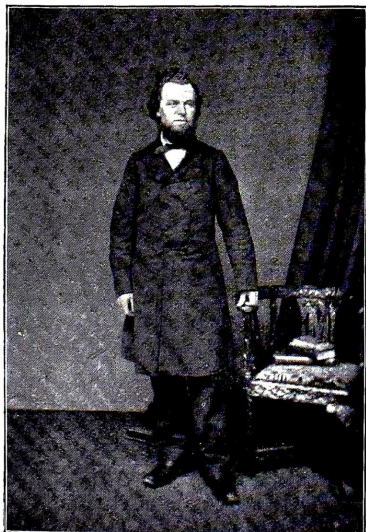
DR. GILL'S PULPIT.



VICE-PRESIDENT J. A. SPURGEON.



PROFESSOR DAVID GRACEY.



PROFESSOR A. FERGUSSON.



PROFESSOR W. R. SELWAY.

EARLY TUTORS OF THE PASTORS' COLLEGE.

cheered, till he had to hold up his hand, and say, 'Now, gentlemen, do you not think that is enough? The floor is weak, the ceiling is not very high, and, I am sure, you need all the strength you have for your labours.'

"In those days, the President was in his prime. His step was firm, his eyes bright, his hair dark and abundant, his voice full of sweetest music and sacred merriment. Before him were gathered a hundred men from all parts of the United Kingdom, and not a few from beyond the seas. They were brought together by the magic of his name, and the attraction of his personal influence. His fame had gone out into all lands. His sermons were published in almost all languages. Many sitting before him were his own sons in the faith. Among his students he was at his ease, as a father in the midst of his own family. The brethren loved him, and he loved them.

"Soon, the floods of his pent-up wisdom poured forth; the flashes of his inimitable wit lit up every face, and his pathos brought tears to all eyes. It was an epoch in student-life to hear him deliver his *Lectures to my Students*. What weighty



THE DESK ROOM, PASTORS' COLLEGE (WHERE THE LATER "LECTURES TO MY STUDENTS" WERE DELIVERED).

and wise discourse he gave us on the subject of preaching! How gently he corrected faults, and encouraged genuine diffidence! What withering sarcasm for all fops and pretenders! Then came those wonderful imitations of the dear

brethren's peculiar mannerisms,—one with the hot dumpling in his mouth, trying to speak; another, sweeping his hand up and down from nose to knee; a third, with his hands under his coat-tails, making the figure of a water-wagtail. Then the one with his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, showing the 'penguin' style of oratory. By this means, he held the mirror before us so that we could see our faults, yet all the while we were almost convulsed with laughter. He administered the medicine in effervescing draughts.

"After this, came the wise counsel, so kind, so grave, so gracious, so fatherly; then the prayer that lifted us to the mercy-seat, where we caught glimpses of glory, and talked face to face with the Master Himself. Afterwards, the giving out of the appointments for the next Lord's-day took place; the class was dismissed for tea, and then came the men who wanted advice. Some were in trouble, others in joy; and the President listened patiently to all their tales; anon he would laugh, and then he would weep. At last, he is through, 'weary in the work, but not weary of it.' His cheery voice gradually dies away as he ascends the stairs to his 'sanctum.' We did not grieve as we parted from him; for we knew that, God willing, on the next Friday afternoon, we should once more see his bright, genial face, and hear his wit and wisdom again.")

In dealing with aspirants for the ministry, I have constantly to fulfil the duty which fell to the lot of Cromwell's "Triers." I have to form an opinion as to the advisability of aiding certain men in their attempts to become pastors. This is a most responsible duty, and one which requires no ordinary care. Of course, I do not set myself up to judge whether a man shall enter the ministry or not, but my examination merely aims at answering the question whether the Pastors' College shall help him or leave him to his own resources. Certain of our charitable neighbours accuse me of having "a parson manufactory," but the charge is not true at all. I never tried to make a minister, and should fail if I did; I receive none into the College but those who profess to be ministers already. It would be nearer the truth if they called me "a parson-killer," for a goodly number of beginners have received their quietus from me; and I have the fullest ease of conscience in reflecting upon what I have so done. It has often been a hard task for me to discourage a hopeful young brother who has applied for admission to the College. My heart has always leaned to the kindest side, but duty to the churches has compelled me to judge with severe discrimination. After hearing what the candidate has had to say, having read his testimonials and seen his replies to questions, when I have felt convinced that the Lord has not called him, I have been obliged to tell him so.

I had a curious experience with one applicant. His Pastor had given him an

open letter, warmly commending him to me as a man called to the ministry ; but, in another communication, sent to me by post, the minister wrote that the young man was not at all likely ever to become a preacher, and that he had only written the recommendation because the candidate's father was his chief deacon, and he feared to offend him by telling him the truth. I felt that it was quite unjust to put upon me the onus of refusing the young man ; so, when he arrived, I gave him the epistle I had received, and left him and his father to settle the matter with their Pastor in the best way they could.

Physical infirmities raise a question about the call of some excellent men. I would not, like Eusthenes, judge men by their features ; but their general physique is no small criterion, and I feel assured that, when a man has a contracted chest, with no distance between his shoulders, the all-wise Creator did not intend him habitually to preach. If He had meant him to speak, He would have given him, in some measure, breadth of chest sufficient to yield a reasonable amount of lung force. A man who can scarcely get through a sentence without pain, can hardly be called to "cry aloud, and spare not." Brethren with defective mouths and imperfect articulation are not usually qualified to preach the gospel. The same rule applies to brethren with no palate, or an imperfect one. I once had an application for admission to the College from a young man who had a sort of rotary action of his jaw, of the most painful sort to the beholder. His Pastor commended him as a very holy man, who had been the means of bringing some to Christ, and he expressed the hope that I would receive him, but I could not see the propriety of it. I could not have looked at him, while he was preaching, without laughter, if all the gold of Tarshish had been my reward, and in all probability nine out of ten of his hearers would have been more sensitive than myself. A man with a big tongue which filled up his mouth and caused indistinctness, another without teeth, another who stammered, another who could not pronounce all the alphabet, I have had the pain of declining on the ground that God had not given them those physical appliances which are, as the Prayer-book would put it, "generally necessary."

One brother I have encountered—one did I say?—I have met ten, twenty, a hundred brethren, who have pleaded that they were quite sure that they were called to the ministry—because they had failed in everything else ! This is a sort of model story :—"Sir, I was put into a lawyer's office, but I never could bear the confinement, and I could not feel at home in studying law. Providence clearly stopped up my road, for I lost my situation." "And what did you do then?" "Why, sir, I was induced to open a grocer's shop." "And did you prosper?" "Well, I do not think, sir, I was ever meant for trade ; and the Lord seemed quite to shut up my way there, for I failed, and was in great difficulties. Since then, I have done a little in a life-assurance agency, and tried to get up a school, beside selling tea ; but my

path is hedged up, and something within me makes me feel that I ought to be a minister." My answer generally is, "Yes, I see ; you have failed in everything else, and therefore you think the Lord has especially endowed you for His service ; but I fear you have forgotten that the ministry needs the very best of men, and not those who cannot do anything else." A man who would succeed as a preacher would probably do right well either as a grocer, or a lawyer, or anything else. A really valuable minister would have excelled in any occupation. There is scarcely anything impossible to a man who can keep a congregation together for years, and be the means of edifying them for hundreds of consecutive Sabbaths ; he must be possessed of some abilities, and be by no means a fool or a ne'er-do-well. Jesus Christ deserves the best men to preach His gospel, and not the empty-headed and the shiftless.

I do believe that some fellows have a depression in their craniums where there ought to be a bump. I know one young man who tried hard to get into the College ; but his mind had so strange a twist that he never could see how it was possible to join things together unless he tied them by their tails. He brought out a book ; and when I read it, I found at once that it was full of my stories and illustrations ; that is to say, every illustration or story in the book was one that I had used, but there was not one of them that was related as it ought to have been. This man had so told the story that it was not there at all ; the very point which I had brought out he had carefully omitted, and every bit of it was told correctly except the one thing that was the essence of the whole. Of course, I was glad that I did not have that brother in the College ; he might have been an ornament to us by his deficiencies, but we can do without such ornaments ; indeed, we have had enough of them already.

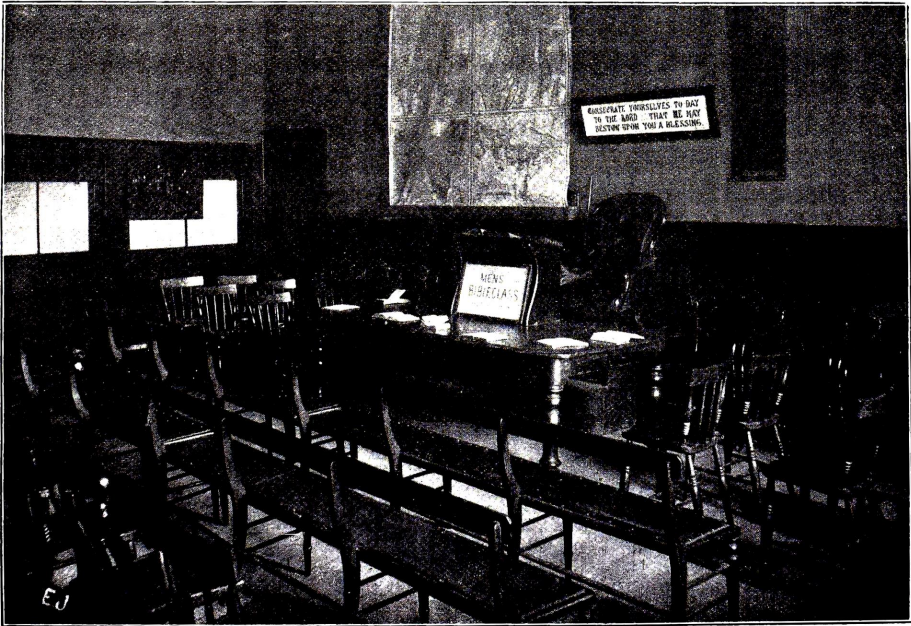
One young gentleman, with whose presence I was once honoured, has left on my mind the photograph of his exquisite self. That face of his looked like the title-page to a whole volume of *conceit* and *deceit*. He sent word into my vestry, one Sabbath morning, that he must see me at once. His audacity admitted him ; and when he was before me, he said, "Sir, I want to enter your College, and should like to enter it at once." "Well, sir," I said, "I fear we have no room for you at present, but your case shall be considered." "But mine is a very remarkable case, sir ; you have probably never received such an application as mine before." "Very good, we'll see about it ; the secretary will give you one of the application papers, and you can see me on Monday." He came on the Monday, bringing with him the questions, answered in a most extraordinary manner. As to books, he claimed to have read all ancient and modern literature, and after giving an immense list, he added, "This is merely a selection ; I have read most extensively in all departments." As to his preaching, he could produce the highest testimonials, but hardly thought they would be needed, as a personal interview would convince me of his ability at once. His

surprise was great when I said, "Sir, I am obliged to tell you that I cannot receive you." "Why not, sir?" "I will tell you plainly. You are so dreadfully clever that I could not insult you by receiving you into our College, where we have none but rather ordinary men; the President, tutors, and students, are all men of moderate attainments, and you would have to condescend too much in coming among us." He looked at me very severely, and said with dignity, "Do you mean to say that, because I have an unusual genius, and have produced in myself a gigantic mind such as is rarely seen, I am refused admittance into your College?" "Yes," I replied, as calmly as I could, considering the overpowering awe which his genius inspired, "for that very reason." "Then, sir, you ought to allow me a trial of my preaching abilities; select me any text you like, or suggest any subject you please, and here, in this very room, I will speak upon it, or preach upon it without deliberation, and you will be surprised." "No, thank you, I would rather not have the trouble of listening to you." "Trouble, sir! I assure you it would be the greatest possible pleasure you could have." I said it might be, but I felt myself unworthy of the privilege, and so bade him a long farewell. The gentleman was unknown to me at the time, but he has since figured in the police court as too clever by half.

Beside those brethren who apply to me for admission to the College, I am often consulted by others who wish me to say whether I think they ought or ought not to preach, and I have more than once felt myself in the position of the Delphic oracle,—not wishing to give wrong advice, and therefore hardly able to give any. I had an enquiry from a brother whose minister told him he ought not to preach, and yet he felt that he must do so. I thought I would be safe in the reply I gave him, so I simply said to him, "My brother, if God has opened your mouth, the devil cannot shut it; but if the devil has opened it, I pray the Lord to shut it directly." Some time afterwards, I was preaching in the country, and, after the service, a young man came up to me, and thanked me for encouraging him to go on preaching. For the moment, I did not recall the circumstances, so he reminded me of the first part of my reply to his enquiry. "But," I said, "I also told you that, if the devil had opened your mouth, I prayed the Lord to shut it." "Ah!" he exclaimed, "but that part of the message did not apply to me."

From quite the early days of the College, I arranged for a regular course of lectures on physical science; and many of the brethren have thanked me, not only for the knowledge thus imparted, but also for the wide field of illustration which was thereby thrown open to them. The study of astronomy, as illustrative of Scriptural truth, proved specially interesting. The science itself was very helpful to many of the students. I remember one brother who seemed to be a dreadful dolt; we really thought he never would learn anything, and that we should have to give him up in

despair. But I introduced to him a little book called *The Young Astronomer*; and he afterwards said that, as he read it, he felt just as if something had cracked inside his head, or as if some string had been snapped. He had laid hold of such enlarged ideas that I believe his cranium did actually experience an expansion which it ought to have undergone in his childhood, and which it did undergo by the marvellous force of the thoughts suggested by the study of even the elements of astronomical science. Another student, who evidently had not paid very special attention to the lecturer, wondered whether that star, which always hung just over his chapel, was Jupiter! Of course, the result of his foolish question was that "Jupiter" became his nickname ever afterwards, even though he was not "a bright particular" star in our College constellations.



MR. SELWAY'S LECTURE-ROOM (ALSO USED FOR MEN'S BIBLE-CLASS), METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE.

I have often noticed one thing in some who have seemed unable to understand even the elements of science; the Holy Spirit has taught them the Word of God, and they are clear enough about that. When we have been reading a chapter out of some old Puritanic book, or when we have been diving into the depths of theology, those brethren have given me the smartest and sharpest answers of the whole class. When we have been dealing with things experimental and controversial, I find that

those men have been able to vanquish their opponents at once, because they are deeply read in the Word of God. The Spirit has taught them the things of Christ, if He has not taught them anything else.

One night, Mr. Selway, in the course of the experiments with which he enlivened his lectures, playfully turned a little jet of water on to one of the students, little dreaming what would be the consequences of the harmless pleasantry which had amused successive batches of the men who had listened to him in the room just at the back of the lower platform in the Tabernacle. In an instant, the young man, who was sitting near the table on which stood the glass tubes, jars, and other apparatus used by the lecturer, swept the whole mass to the floor in a terrific crash before anyone could be aware of his intention, much less prevent him from carrying it into effect. It was a sad exhibition of an ungovernable temper which, I greatly fear, in after years, cost the student far more than the price of the destroyed apparatus which he was required to replace. Mr. Selway, who was a singularly calm, self-possessed individual, simply said, "That young *gentleman* will some day be sorry for what he has done;" and then proceeded with his lecture,—of course, without any more experiments that evening!

Bad as this display of passion was, there was one student who did something which, in certain aspects, was worse, for there was an element of deliberation about it which was absent on the other occasion. It has long been our rule that each brother should read in the College at least one discourse which he has himself composed, and which his comrades are expected to criticise. Any attempt at plagiarism would, therefore, be manifestly unfair; and, if detected, would meet with well-merited condemnation. One man, when it came to his turn, was actually reckless and foolish enough to take one of my printed sermons,—I suppose condensed,—and to read it as though it had been his own composition; and he had to thank his brethren that he was not instantly expelled from the Institution. Several of them at once recognized the discourse; and, as soon as the time for criticism arrived, proceeded to pull it to pieces most mercilessly. They found fault with the introduction, the divisions, the subdivisions, the illustrations, the application,—with everything, in fact, except the doctrine;—I think that was all right! I was so pleased with the critical acumen displayed that I forgave the offender; but I let it be distinctly understood that, for the future, any student repeating the offence, whether with my sermon or anyone else's, would be forthwith dismissed in disgrace.

As a rule, the men who have come to the College have been so anxious to make the best use of their time while with us, that they have laboured at their studies most diligently; but, occasionally, we have had a lazy student who has

tried to shirk his class and other work. One who, in his day, was a conspicuous instance of this lack of appreciation of the privileges placed within his reach, had an experience which ought to have made him both a sadder and a wiser man, though I am not sure that it had either effect. When the other brethren, who resided in the same house, were preparing their lessons, he so often interrupted them with questions about the translation of simple words with which he ought to have been perfectly familiar, that one of them determined to try to cure him of the practice. On that particular occasion, he came to enquire the meaning of the Latin word "*omnibus*." "Oh!" said the young wag, "that's easy enough; *omni*—twenty-six, and *bus*—to carry; *omnibus*, a vehicle to carry twenty-six persons! You know that you constantly see the notice in the omnibus, 'licensed to carry twenty-six persons.'" The next morning, it so happened that Mr. Gracey asked the lazy man to translate the very passage which contained the word "*omnibus*." In due course, he gave the rendering which had been supplied to him, with a result that can be better imagined than described.

If he was not diligent in one respect, he was certainly industrious in another direction, and he managed to get engaged to three ladies at once! As soon as I knew of it, I sent for him, and told him that he must make his choice, and I hoped the other two would sue him for breach of promise. I never heard that they did so, and probably they were well rid of a man who could trifle with them in such a fashion. He appeared to do well for a time in the ministry, but he afterwards left the Baptist denomination, and therefore is not now numbered in our ranks.

Occasionally, I have given the students a little exercise in extempore speaking, in order to develop their facility of utterance if unexpectedly called upon for a sermon or address. Various topics are written on slips of paper, these are placed in a hat, and each brother is expected in turn to draw one out, and to speak straight off on the subject stated. Of all these efforts, the most successful that I remember related to the word Zacchæus, which fell to the lot of one who, as soon as he had glanced at it, said :—"Mr. President and brethren, my subject is Zacchæus, and it is therefore most appropriate to me; for, first, Zacchæus was little of stature, so am I; secondly, Zacchæus was very much 'up a tree,' so am I; thirdly, Zacchæus 'made haste, and came down,' and so will I;" and thereupon the speaker resumed his seat. The students called to him to go on; but I said, "No; he could not add anything to such a perfect little speech without spoiling it." Certainly, he was a better judge of the suitability of a subject than another of the students, who went to preach at Portsmouth shortly after the training ship *Eurydice* went down off the Isle of Wight with over three hundred souls on board. Thinking that he would "improve the occasion," he announced, as the theme of his discourse, Psalm cvii. 30: "*So He bringeth them unto their desired haven.*" A more inappropriate text, under the

circumstances, could scarcely have been selected ; but even a good man, with right intentions, may make blunders which, to other people, are utterly unaccountable.

At one of our closing meetings at the College, before the brethren went away for their vacation, I said that I was a poor man, or I would give every student a present, and I told them what I would have selected if I had been rich. I remember one brother to whom I said that I would give him a corkscrew, because he had a good deal in him, but he could not get it out. "As to you, my brother," I said to another student, "I should give you a sausage-stuffer, for you need to have something put into you." There was one friend to whom I should have liked to present a canister of Chapman and Hall's gunpowder. He was to have two pounds of it, and someone was to set it alight exactly at the second head of his discourse. Of course, the brethren were amused at the idea, but I advised them to read Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, where the historian records that Bishop Hooper, and others who were burned, had friends who came with bags of gunpowder, to put under their arms when they were going to the stake. I did not want the students to be made to die, but to be made thoroughly alive, and I promised to talk to my wife about supplying dynamite as well as books to poor ministers, so that they might be stirred up, and made a blessing to their hearers.

I have had some amusing experiences with deacons in search of a minister. One wrote to ask if I would send a student who could "fill the chapel." I replied that I had not one big enough, and added that I thought it was the business of the people to try to gather the congregation, but that I could send a brother who would do his best to fill the pulpit, and preach the gospel faithfully. In his next letter, the deacon explained that this was just what he and the church wanted, only he had failed to express his meaning clearly.

At one place, where a student—a brother of no little ability,—had preached with considerable acceptance, he was informed that, if he had been a bigger man, he would have been invited to the pastorate ! I really could not blame him when I heard that, in reply to this very foolish objection, he said to the deacons, "If Mr. Spurgeon had known that you wanted bulk instead of brains, he would have sent you a bullock !" He might have told them that, in looking for quantity, instead of quality, they might, possibly, find themselves burdened with the support of a donkey !

The officers of a small church in the country applied to me for a minister ; but the salary they were prepared to pay was so small that, in reply to their request, I wrote:—"The only individual I know, who could exist on such a stipend, is the angel Gabriel. He would need neither cash nor clothes ; and he could come down from Heaven every Sunday morning, and go back at night, so I advise you to invite him." The corresponding deacon of another church, which was needing a Pastor, sent me

such a long list of the qualifications that must be possessed by the man whom they could look up to as their leader, that I recommended him to take a large sheet of brown paper, and cut out a minister of the size and shape desired, or else to seek to secure the services of the eminent Dr. So-and-so, who had been for a good many years in glory, for I could not think of anyone else who could fulfil the conditions that such an important church and diaconate seemed to regard as indispensable. Like one of the other deacons, he also wrote again; and his second letter being more reasonable than the first, I was able to recommend a brother with whom the church appeared to be perfectly satisfied.

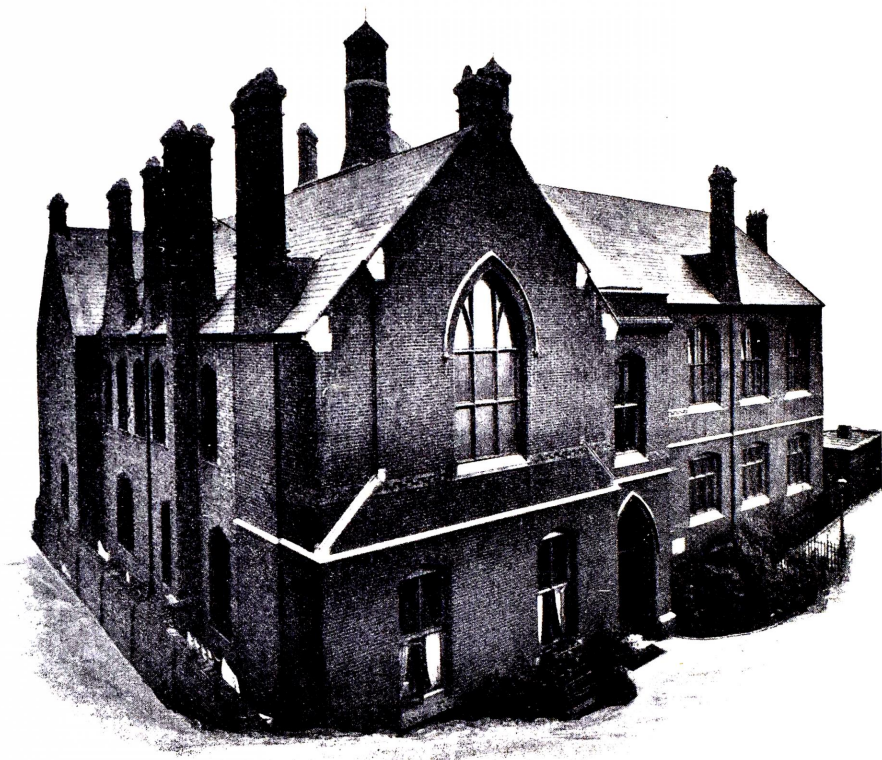
(Probably every member of the Pastors' College brotherhood could supplement the beloved President's store of stories with his own reminiscences of his "Alma Mater." Some brethren have kindly done so, and most of their communications will be found in the chapter on "Pure Fun" in the latter part of the present volume. But there is just one series of Mr. Spurgeon's sayings to his students which must find a place here,—namely, the farewell words spoken to them on leaving College, or on removing to another pastorate. The gracious and gifted William Anderson, when he was going from Warkworth to Reading, received the apostolic injunction, with a new meaning attached to it, "Give attendance to Reading." Mr. Dobson relates that the parting message to him was:—"Go to Deal, and fight the De'il. Hit him hard; I owe him no love." To Harry Wood,—a devoted brother whose hair was so bright that his fellow-students used playfully to gather round him to warm their hands at the fire,—the dear President wrote from Mentone a loving letter which concluded:—"You are so well known to me that I think I see you,—especially your distinguished head of hair,—and I look you in the face with a tear of love in separation, and say, '*God bless you, Wood! Go, and blaze away for your Lord.*'"

Mr. Welton has thus recorded the remarkable message given to him, in 1867, when he accepted his first pastorate at Thetford:—"I want you to go under an operation before you leave. I am going to *put out one of your eyes, to stop up one of your ears, and to put a muzzle on your mouth.* Then you had better have a new suit of clothes before you go, and you must tell the tailor to make *in the coat a pocket without a bottom.* You understand my parable?" "I think so, sir; but should like your interpretation." "Well, there will be many things in your people that you must look at with *the blind eye*, and you must listen to much with *the deaf ear*, while you will often be tempted to say things which had better be left unsaid; then, remember *the muzzle.* Then all the gossip you may hear, when doing pastoral work, must be put into *the bottomless pocket.*"

Several students, at different periods in the history of the College, on being sent out as pioneers to start new churches, received this singular charge:—"Cling

tightly with both your hands ; when they fail, catch hold with your teeth ; and if they give way, hang on by your eyelashes !” Mr. Saville went to Carlisle with these words ringing in his ears, and he obeyed them all too literally. With true heroism, he would not let his dear President know the hardships he was enduring for Christ’s sake and the gospel’s ; but someone, who discovered the plight he was in, wrote about his trials and sufferings ; and as soon as the tidings reached Mr. Spurgeon, substantial help was sent to him.

Perhaps the most pathetic farewell of all was the one spoken to Mr. E. H. Ellis, who was leaving for Australia, in March, 1891. Referring to “The ‘Down-grade’ Controversy,” Mr. Spurgeon said, “Good bye, Ellis ; you will never see me again, *this fight is killing me.*” *A month later, the fatal illness commenced !*



THE PASTORS' COLLEGE, TEMPLE STREET, SOUTHWARK.

For about fourteen years after the opening of the Tabernacle, the College classes were held in various rooms below the great sanctuary ; but as the number of

students continued to grow, the accommodation became increasingly inadequate to the requirements of the work. Mr. Spurgeon was always on the look-out for a suitable site for buildings specially adapted for the purpose; and years before any ground was available, he began putting aside such amounts as he could spare, ready for the time when they would be needed. Various legacies, left to him personally, amounting in the aggregate to some thousands of pounds, were devoted to this object; so that, when the final effort was at last made, it was accomplished with comparative ease. The total cost of the building and furnishing was £15,000, all of which was paid; and when the property was put in trust, only a sufficient sum was invested to pay the rates and keep it in repair, as the President objected on principle to any larger amount being left as an endowment of the College. Without making mention of his own generous gifts, Mr. Spurgeon thus relates how the rest of the funds came to him, and tells of his gratitude at the completion of the commodious and greatly-needed new premises:—"The way in which the money was raised was another instance of Divine goodness. £3,000 was given as a memorial to a dear and lamented husband. £2,000 was a legacy to the College from a reader of the sermons. The ministers who had been formerly students came to our help in a princely fashion. Large amounts were made up by the unanimous offerings of Tabernacle friends, on days when the Pastor invited the members and adherents to be his guests at the College. In answer to prayer, the gold and the silver have been ready when needed. How our heart exults, and blesses the Name of the Lord!"

The freehold of the ground was purchased of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and Mr. Spurgeon often referred to the courtesy with which they treated him during the negotiations. In his own characteristic fashion, he told the brethren, at one of the annual Conferences, that he had secured the parson's garden, behind the Tabernacle, as the site for the new College, and he was going to cultivate it for him by growing Dissenters on it! When the buildings were finished, they were solemnly dedicated to the holy service for which they had been erected, by a prayer-meeting in every room, the President leading the devotions in each separate department, and then asking one of the tutors or students to follow him in pleading for the Lord's blessing on all the work to be carried on within those walls. The full answers to those fervent supplications will only be known in eternity. In addition to the special purpose for which the College was built, it is also the place where the annual Conferences are held, the headquarters of the Colportage Association, the home of a large portion of the Tabernacle Sunday-school and Bible-classes; and after the disastrous fire in April, 1898, it proved a most welcome and providential shelter for the burned-out church and its many societies and agencies.

Not long after the College buildings were erected, a deputation from the local

authority met Mr. Spurgeon by appointment to decide the amount at which the new premises were to be rated. While conducting the gentlemen through the different rooms, the President briefly narrated the history of the Institution, and recounted various instances in which the money necessary for carrying on the work had come directly in answer to prayer. The chairman of the deputation, who evidently did not believe that the funds came in any such way, said, "That is your idea, Mr. Spurgeon; but the fact is, certain good people have confidence in you, and therefore they send you contributions for your College and Orphanage." "Yes," replied the Pastor, "there may be some truth in that remark; but if the good people did not think of me, God would send the devil with the money rather than let His cause suffer." No further reference was made to the matter until the gentlemen had finished their investigations, and consulted as to the value to be fixed for rating purposes, when the chairman, speaking for his colleagues, said to Mr. Spurgeon, "We have been greatly interested in all that we have seen and heard, and we look upon this College as a valuable addition to the educational advantages of the parish. We should be very glad if we could let it go without being rated at all; but we have a duty to perform to the public, so that is not possible. We have agreed to fix the amount at —, which we think you will consider satisfactory; and, personally, I think it is such a capital Institution that I shall be glad if you will accept ten pounds towards its maintenance." The President thanked him very heartily, and then added, "You said that it was the *good* people who gave me the money; I hope that adjective applies to you?" "Oh, dear no!" replied the gentleman, "certainly not;" and his companions appeared very surprised at the whole transaction.

Afterwards, whenever anyone wanted to raise the question of the rating of the College, he always said, "Well, if you like to go to see Mr. Spurgeon about it, you may; my last visit cost me ten pounds, and I am not going again, and I should advise you to leave the good man alone. He is a benefactor to the whole district, and ought to be encouraged, and not hindered."

Until the year 1865, no statistics were collected from the brethren educated in the College; and even since that time, it has not been possible to get all the ministers to send in returns regularly, so that the figures tabulated have been below instead of above the truth. To the end of 1878, over five hundred students had been trained in the Institution, of whom twenty-five had been "called home." Of the four hundred and fifty then engaged as Baptist pastors, evangelists, and missionaries, less than three hundred filled up the statistical forms, which showed that, during the year, they had baptized 3,600 persons; and during the fourteen years there had been a net increase to the churches of 33,319 members. The sons of the College had already found their way into all the four quarters of the globe, and the

beloved President's prayer that the missionary spirit should be increased among the brethren was being graciously answered, for some of them had gone forth to India, China, Japan, Africa, Spain, Italy, the West Indies and South America, beside a considerable contingent in the Australasian and Canadian colonies and the United States.

This chapter would scarcely be complete without specimens of Mr. Spurgeon's letters to the students while in College or after they had entered the ministry. The first, preserved by Pastor C. L. Gordon, exerted a powerful influence upon the men to whom it was written :—

“Nightingale Lane,

“Clapham,

“September 11th, 1865.

“Beloved Brethren,

“I am called away from you this afternoon ; and I should much regret this if it were not that it has come into my heart to suggest to you to spend our usual time in prayer, instead of in teaching and learning. My heart is often heavy with trials, arising out of the College work, which is so dear to me that I am perhaps unduly anxious over it. I am bowed to the very dust when I fear that any brother is erring in doctrine, lacking in grace, or loose in behaviour. I have as little to lament as it is possible there should be where we are all such imperfect creatures. But, my brethren, I would fain have you all the best men living ; and when you are not, I am distressed exceedingly. Just now, one brother, by his general self-indulgent habits, has lost the respect of his people, and must move. I do not want to inflict a curse on another congregation, and I do not want to cast him off. Between these two courses, I am perplexed. Pray for me, for him, for all the brethren, and for yourselves.

“In your society, I always feel so much at home that I must appear to you to be all happiness and mirth. Alas ! it is not so ; I am happy in the Lord, and blest in Him ; but I am often a poor cast-down mortal, groaning under the burden of excessive labour, and sad at heart because of the follies of those whom I hoped to have seen serving the Lord with zeal and success. Do give me your warmest consideration in your supplications. Believe me when I assure you that you are, for Christ's sake, very dear to me. Do not be led away from the faith which you all professed when you entered the College. Cling to the two great collateral truths of Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility. Live near to God, and love the souls of men. I make some sacrifices for your sake ; but I count them gain, and my work for you is a delight. But do plead for more grace to rest on us all, and upon those settled in the ministry. Levity of conduct in my brethren brings heaviness of heart to me ; and what is inconsistent pleasure to them, is terrible agony to me. Oh, how can the ministers of God be smoking and drinking when

souls are dying, and talking lightness and wantonness when sinners are perishing? It must not be so among us. May the Lord prevent it! Seeking ever your soul's best interest, and desiring your fervent prayers,

“I am, dearly-beloved brethren,

“Your affectionate brother,

“C. H. SPURGEON.”

The next epistle is as timely and important now as when it was penned, during the dear President's small-pox illness :—

“Clapham,

“Dec. 2, 1869.

“My Dear Friend,

“Being debarred from serving the Lord by my own public ministry, it has been laid upon my heart to endeavour to stir up my brother-ministers to use increased diligence while they are permitted the great pleasure and privilege of preaching the Word. I pray that every word I write may be approved of God, and may be, by the Holy Ghost, rendered serviceable to you.

“It has struck me painfully that, for some little while, a somewhat listless spirit has fallen upon many of the churches, and perhaps upon the ministers also. A short time ago, we heard more than we do now of special services, revival meetings, and aggressive efforts upon the world; perhaps these may still be in full and vigorous operation among your people, but in many places it is not so; the pace of holy work has slackened, and the church is falling back into that dreary routine which is easily reached, but is deadly in its consequences. Meanwhile, our direct enemies, the Romanizing Anglicans, have taken up the weapons which we have laid aside, and are making most ostentatious, and it is to be feared most successful, use of them. They are evidently wise in their generation, for they not only borrow from Rome, but they copy from us. Is this intended by our Lord to irritate us to renewed activity? Does He thus chide us by causing us to see how others burn with zeal, and in their ardour compass sea and land to make proselytes? Does He not thereby say to us, ‘Behold how these men are quick to adopt all methods; are ye, My servants, dull of understanding?’

“Despite the mischief done by wild excitement, there can be no question that the Holy Spirit does very graciously bless means prayerfully adopted by His servants for arousing the churches and ingathering sinners. Many pastors can bear witness that persons, who have remained undecided under their ordinary services, have been led to surrender their hearts to Jesus at some special meeting. If God had but blessed such efforts in the smallest degree, we ought to repeat them; but as He has, in many cases, eminently smiled upon them, our duty is clear as the sun.

Will you not, then, if you have hitherto omitted to do so, give serious heed to the suggestion that you should hold a series of services for calling in the careless population around, and for leading to decision, under the power of the Holy Spirit, those who have heard in vain? To secure the ear of the outside world, let all proper means be used. If the people will not come into our chapels, let earnest services be held out of doors, or in halls, barns, or theatres, or wherever else they will come. Let our members be exhorted to assist us in drawing in the outlying masses. To win attention, it may be, in some cases, best to call in other labourers. Certain individuals, whose gifts are of a special character, are better adapted than the best of pastors may be for evangelizing and exhortation; we ought to feel no difficulty in accepting the aid of such brethren. A new voice may attract ears that have grown dull of hearing under us. A change with a trusty brother may be good for both congregations, and for both preachers. We would by any means save some, and therefore no stone should be left unturned. Perhaps, if you are within easy reach of town, the most acceptable aid might be rendered to you by some of our London ministers; if such be your desire, a letter addressed to our dear friend, Mr. Frank White, might bring you into contact with suitable brethren.

"My dear brother, how soon you and I will be laid aside from our service! Our grave is preparing; is our work done? If mine be accomplished, I tremble as I think how poverty-stricken my life has been, compared with my opportunities; and I pray to have my years lengthened, that I may render a better account of my stewardship. Your own feelings are probably much the same. Let us not allow the confession to evaporate in mere regret; but let us, in the fear of God, seek to be more diligent in the future. Meanwhile, if we loiter, death does not; our hearers are perishing before our eyes; and the millions are passing into eternal misery as fast as time can bear them. Impelled by the love which brought our Master from His throne, and made Him a sacrifice for men, let us bestir ourselves. To us has He committed the Word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors for Christ. Let us not bring contempt upon our office and the gospel by a want of zeal; but, by the good Spirit of the Lord, let us resolve to be instant in season and out of season.

"Our private prayers, my brother, must be more frequent and fervent. Could we not, as members of the same College, as well as brethren in the one family in Heaven and earth, enter into a brotherly compact to mention each other in our prayers at least once every day? Could not the months of January and February be specially marked by our reminding our people of our brethren and their labours, that they may join their prayers with ours? The next three months would be a season to be remembered if there should be unusual activity in all our churches, and prevalent intercession from all our members. Brother, what doth hinder us from receiving a great blessing? We are not straitened in God; let us not be straitened

in our own bowels. For the love of our Lord Jesus, and the honour of His Name, let us plead, and labour, and agonize, and believe; and the blessing will come, it shall not tarry.

“Receive assurances of my purest and warmest love, and believe me ever to be,

“Your brother and servant for Jesus’ sake,

“C. H. SPURGEON.”

This letter was written to the College men labouring in foreign lands:—

“Clapham,

“Sept. 30th, 1873.

“Beloved Brother,

“I have been requested to salute you in the name of the Conference of brethren in connection with the Pastors’ College, and I do so most heartily. Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied unto you! But I must also add the assurance of my own sincere love to you, and my fervent prayer that the Lord may be with you. Oceans divide us in body; but we are one in Christ, and by His Spirit we are knit together in one fellowship. We who are at home have enjoyed a considerable measure of the Divine blessing, although we earnestly desire to see far greater things. Our prayer is, that you who are abroad may be far more successful than we have been; may you yet do great things and prevail! Your trials are peculiar, but your God is all-sufficient. The minds of your people are tinged with the special circumstances of the land where you labour, but the gospel is as suitable to them as to our own countrymen. Hearts are hard in every place, but the Spirit works effectually with the Word, and subdues wills most obdurate, to the obedience of the faith. Be of good courage; your God and ours is faithful to His promise; He will not leave you to be put to shame.

“I am sure, my beloved brother, that your growing experience must have endeared to you the gospel of the grace of God. I feel more and more every day that nothing but salvation by grace will ever bring me to Heaven, and therefore I desire more and more explicitly to teach the grand truths of electing love, covenant security, justification by faith, effectual calling, and immutable faithfulness. Love to souls, as it burns in our hearts, will also lead us to preach a free as well as a full salvation; and so we shall be saved at once from the leanness of those who have no doctrine, and from the bitterness of those to whom creed is everything. We have aimed at the happy *via media* of a balanced ministry, and succeeding years confirm us in the correctness of our views.

“I pray you, in these evil days, be firm, clear, and decided in your testimony for the truth as it is in Jesus; nothing else will keep us clear of the blood of men’s souls. May the Holy Ghost anoint you anew for the struggle which lies before you! By the love which has long existed between us, I beseech you, be faithful unto death.

I reach my hand across the flood, and lovingly grasp yours ; and my heart goes with the word,—The Lord bless thee, my brother, and keep thee, and lift up the light of His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace !

“All goes well at the Tabernacle. Our beloved friend, Mr. Rogers, is still among us, enjoying perennial youth in his advanced age. The other tutors are strong to labour. Our brethren are multiplied, and, as a body of ministers, they are such as you may remember with satisfaction. I am obliged to lithograph this letter, because I could not write so many copies ; but, in each case, the signature is with my own hand ; and I pray you, dear brother, do not look upon the lines as mere official writing. I love you in my heart ; accept that love, and the hearty greetings of all our brotherhood at home. Remember us in your prayers, especially remember me. By the memory of happy days in the past, when we looked each other in the face, do not forget us ; and, far more, do not forget your allegiance to our common Lord. Blessed be His Name for ever, we live alone for His glory ! May He reign gloriously in your congregation ! The blessing of the Triune God be with you, dear brother !

“Yours for ever heartily,

“C. H. SPURGEON.”

The students in the College in 1875 received these earnest words from their suffering President :—

“Dear Brethren,

“I feel sure that you have all stuck to your studies diligently ; and my prayer is, that the Holy Spirit may sanctify your human acquirements by a double measure of His anointing. Your power lies in His grace rather than in natural gifts or scholastic acquisitions. Without the Spirit, you will be failures, and worse ; therefore, pray much, and see to it that your whole selves are in such a condition that the Spirit of God can dwell in you ; for in some men He cannot reside, and with some men He cannot work. Let the channel through which the living water is to flow be both clear and clean.

“I feel in an agony when I imagine any one of you going forth to preach unendowed by the Spirit. The Lord alone knows how I have the work of the College on my heart, and what exercises it has cost me ; and, verily, if souls are not won, churches are not built up, and Christ is not glorified by you, I have lived in vain as to the master-work of my life. I am not able to discover any motive in my heart for originating and carrying on the College, but a desire to glorify God, and to bless this generation by the promulgation of the pure gospel. For this end you came into the College ; do not miss it, any one of you ; and yet you will do so, if the Spirit rests not upon you. Be not content till Pentecost is repeated among you.

“Yours very heartily,

“C. H. SPURGEON.”)



"THE KING OF THE COLPORTEURS."

The title, "the king of the colporteurs," was playfully given by Mr. Spurgeon to Mr. Samuel King, of Warminster, one of the first six men engaged in this service, and who is still a book-agent in connection with the Association, although he has resigned the Colportage work in order to devote all his time to the duties of his pastorate.