

CHAPTER LXXXI.

Pure Fun.

The whole Church will be indebted to Dr. Stanford for having protested against the superstition which regards wit and humour as deadly sins. He has not only set forth the propriety of simple, natural mirth, but has well-nigh shown the duty of it. We knew that our beloved friend had a sly twinkle in his eye, and said things which sparkled with a subdued and chastened fun; but we hardly believed that he would become the defender of our faith in wit, and the avenger of those fierce assaults which have been made on humour. This book ought to shut the mouths of those melancholy critics who think that everything solemn should be sad, and that anything approaching to pleasantry must be wicked. The chapter upon "What have Christians to do with Wit and Humour?" gives us the utmost delight. The argument is as irresistible as the laughter which it provokes; and both the argument and the laughter are as wholesome and as holy as anything we have ever read. We are tempted to make copious quotations, but we had rather our friends should get the book for themselves; in fact, they will have to do so, for everybody will be forced to read it. We hope these wise and genial pages will work a revolution in the ideas of thousands who now blush when they smile, and put down an honest laugh in the category of things to be repented of.—C. H. S., *in review of Dr. Charles Stanford's volume, "The Wit and Humour of Life."*

It is a sort of tradition of the fathers that it is wrong to laugh on Sundays. The eleventh commandment is, that we are to love one another; and then, according to some people, the twelfth is, "Thou shalt pull a long face on Sunday." I must confess that I would rather hear people laugh than I would see them asleep in the house of God; and I would rather get the truth into them through the medium of ridicule than I would have it neglected, or leave the people to perish through lack of reception of the message. I do believe, in my heart, that there may be as much holiness in a laugh as in a cry; and that, sometimes, to laugh is the better thing of the two, for I may weep, and be murmuring, and repining, and thinking all sorts of bitter thoughts against God; while, at another time, I may laugh the laugh of sarcasm against sin, and so evince a holy earnestness in the defence of the truth. I do not know why ridicule is to be given up to Satan as a weapon to be used against us, and not to be employed by us as a weapon against him. I will venture to affirm that the Reformation owed almost as much to the sense of the ridiculous in human nature as to anything else, and that those humorous squibs and caricatures, that were issued by the friends of Luther, did more to open the eyes of Germany to the abominations of the priesthood than the more solid and ponderous arguments against Romanism. I know no reason why we should not, on suitable occasions, try the same style of reasoning. "It is a dangerous weapon," it will be said, "and many men will cut their fingers with it." Well, that is their own lookout; but I do not know why we should be so particular about their cutting their fingers if they can, at the same time, cut the throat of sin, and do serious damage to the great adversary of souls.—C. H. S., *in "Lectures to my Students."*



LEAMS of Mr. Spurgeon's ready humour have been visible at intervals all through this and the preceding volumes, but it was felt that the record of his happy life would not be complete unless at least one chapter was filled with specimens of that pure fun which was as characteristic of him as was his "precious faith."

All who were brought into the closest contact with him know that his wit was as abundant as his wisdom; indeed, full often, the wisdom found its most effective utterance by means of the witty words which gained an entrance for the message which might otherwise have been rejected. His fun was always pure,

with an emphasis ; and he showed how it was possible for the highest spirituality to find a fitting exemplification in the brightest and cheeriest character. Some of his most intimate friends have often said that there was not the slightest incongruity, after one of his brilliant witticisms which had set the whole company laughing, in hearing him say, "Let us pray," for both the merriment and the devotion were sanctified. He had no sympathy with the hymn-tinkerer who altered even the glorious hundredth Psalm by putting "fear" instead of "mirth" in the third line of the first verse ; and he always sang it according to the authorized version, as it appears in *Our Own Hymn-Book*,—

"All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice ;
Him serve with *mirth*, His praise forth tell ;
Come ye before Him, and rejoice."

In making a rather rough classification of Mr. Spurgeon's pure fun, as manifested under various aspects throughout his long public career, first may be placed a few incidents associated with a matter which he always regarded as of great importance,—

PUNCTUALITY.

Everyone who was acquainted with him knows how scrupulously punctual he was at all services and meetings, and that, unless something very unusual had detained him, he was ready to commence either the worship or the business proceedings at the exact minute fixed. In the New Park Street days, he was unavoidably late on one occasion when he was to meet the venerable deacons represented on page 15. One of them, the most pompous of the whole company, who was himself noted for his punctuality, pulled out his watch, and held it up reproachfully before the young minister. Looking at it in a critical fashion, Mr. Spurgeon said, "Yes ; it's a very good watch, I have no doubt, but it is rather old-fashioned, isn't it?"

He had often to suffer inconvenience and loss of time because those who had asked for interviews with him were not at the place arranged at the appointed hour. Frequently, after allowing a few minutes' grace, he would go away to attend to other service, leaving word that, as those he expected had not come according to the arrangement made, they must wait until he could find some other convenient opportunity of meeting them. This was to him an amusing method of giving a lesson which many greatly needed. "Punctuality is the politeness of kings ;" yet some who are "kings and priests unto God" are sadly deficient in that particular virtue. Sometimes, the Pastor would laughingly say that perhaps those who came so late were qualifying to act as lawyers, whose motto would be, "Procrastination is the hinge of business ; punctuality is the thief of time."

"General" Booth once sent an "*aide-de-camp*" to Mr. Spurgeon to ask for an interview for himself. The hour for him to come was named, but it was several minutes past the time when he arrived. Mr. Spurgeon, though sympathising with the efforts of the Salvation Army, never approved of what he called their "playing at soldiers," so he said, in a tone of gentle irony, "Oh, General! military men should be punctual!" It appeared that the object of "General" Booth was to ascertain if the Tabernacle could be lent to the Army for some great gathering; but he would not ask for the loan of the building until the Pastor gave him some sign that, if he did make such a request, it would be granted. There the matter rested.

The Pastor once had occasion to see Mr. Gladstone at Downing Street. Having asked for an interview of ten minutes, he arrived punctually, and, having transacted the business about which he had called, rose to leave directly the allotted time had expired. "The grand old man" was not willing to allow his visitor to go away so quickly;—though he said he wished others who called upon him would be as prompt both in arriving and departing;—and "the two prime ministers," as they were often designated, continued chatting for a good while longer. It was during the conversation which ensued that Mr. Spurgeon suggested to the great Liberal leader a grander measure of reform than any he had ever introduced;—his proposal was, that all the servants of the State, whether in the Church, the Army, the Navy, or the Civil Service, should be excluded from Parliament, just as the servants in a private family are not allowed to make the rules and regulations under which the household is governed. Possibly, archbishops, bishops, generals, admirals, noble lords, and right honourable gentlemen might imagine that this suggestion was a sample of Mr. Spurgeon's pure fun, but he introduced it to Mr. Gladstone with the utmost seriousness, and he often referred to it as a plan which would greatly and permanently benefit the whole nation, and which he believed his fellow-countrymen would adopt if it were laid before them by the great statesman to whom he submitted it.

The caricature on page 343, reproduced from *Figaro's* phrenological cartoons, shows one of the many instances in which Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Spurgeon were pictorially and amusingly associated, and it may therefore appropriately introduce a brief series of—

POLITICAL PLEASANTRIES.

On one of Mr. Spurgeon's visits to Mentone, a lady, who was a great admirer of Mr. Gladstone, asked the Pastor to guess the word which would explain the

following riddle : (1) What Mr. Gladstone likes ; (2) what he does not like ; (3) what he would like to do ; and (4) where his enemies would like to put him. When Mr. Spurgeon learned the solution of the puzzle, he was so pleased with it that he passed it on to other friends. The answers were,—(1) Reform ; (2) a Tory ; (3) to reform a Tory ; and (4) in a reformatory !

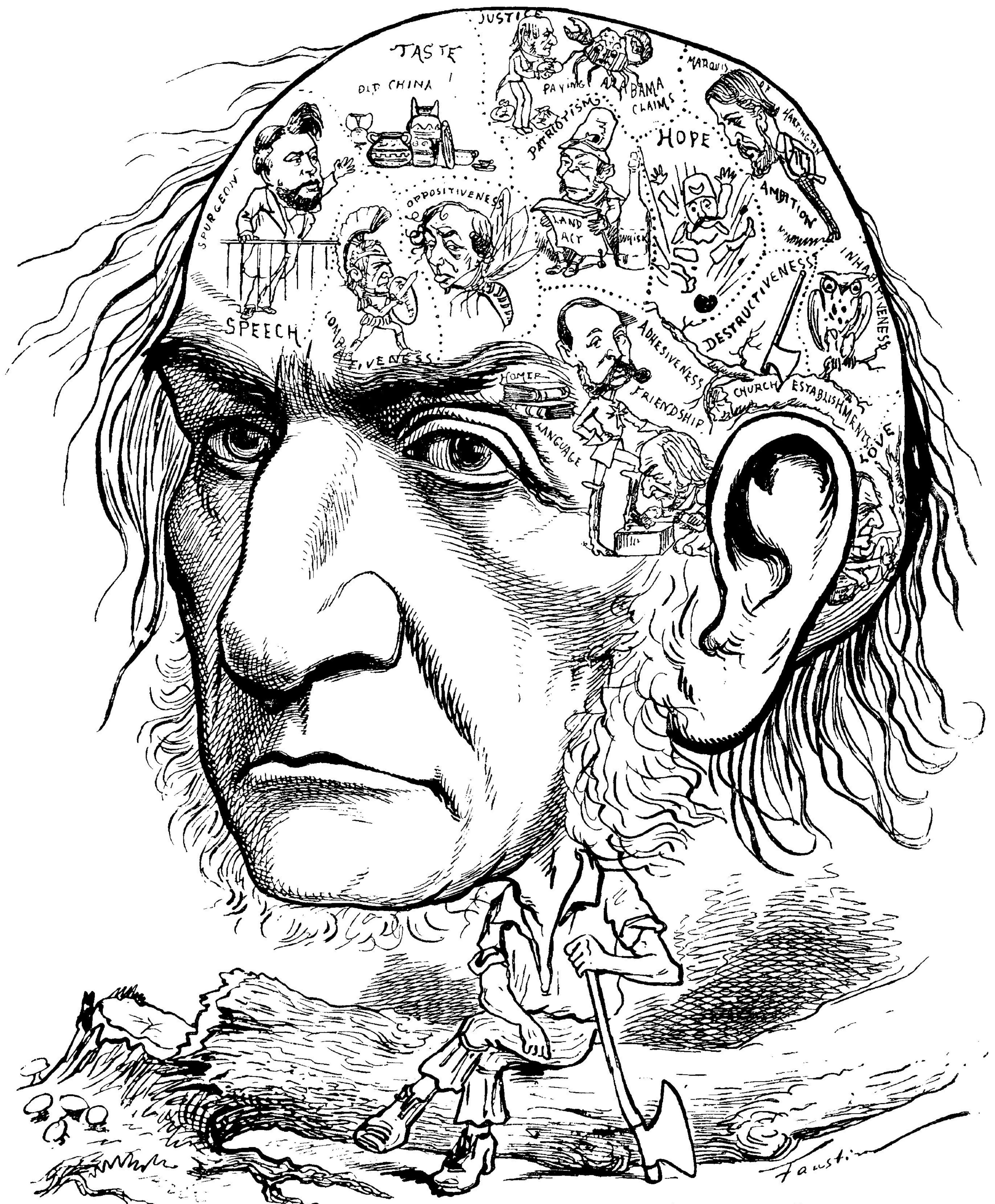
During a General Election, it was discovered, one Monday morning, that the front gates and walls of " Helensburgh House " had been, in the course of the night, very plentifully daubed over with paint to correspond with the colours of the Conservative candidates for that division of Surrey. In speaking, at the Tabernacle, the same evening, concerning the disfigurement of his premises, Mr. Spurgeon said, " It is *notorious* that I am *no Tory*, so I shall not trouble to remove the paint ; perhaps those who put it on will take it off when it has been there long enough to please them ; " and, in due time, they did so.

The mention of a General Election recalls a characteristic anecdote which Mr. Spurgeon delighted to tell. He had gone to preach for his friend, Mr. John Offord, and, contrary to his almost universal practice, was a little late in arriving. He explained that there had been a block on the road, which had delayed him ; and, in addition, he had stopped on the way to vote. " To vote ! " exclaimed the good man ; " but, my dear brother, I thought you were a citizen of the New Jerusalem ! " " So I am," replied Mr. Spurgeon, " but my ' old man ' is a citizen of this world." " Ah ! but you should mortify your ' old man.' " " That is exactly what I did ; for my ' old man ' is a Tory, and I made him vote for the Liberals ! "

At another General Election, it was widely reported that Mr. Spurgeon had declared that he would vote for the devil himself if he were a Liberal ; and so many enquiries with regard to the statement came from all parts of the country, that a large number of post cards had to be printed and sent in reply. Those who had started or circulated the falsehood were probably somewhat ashamed when they read Mr. Spurgeon's emphatic denial :—" I certainly should not vote for the devil under any circumstances, nor am I able to conceive of him as so restored as to become a Liberal. I think he has had a considerable hand in the invention of many a story which has of late been published concerning me."

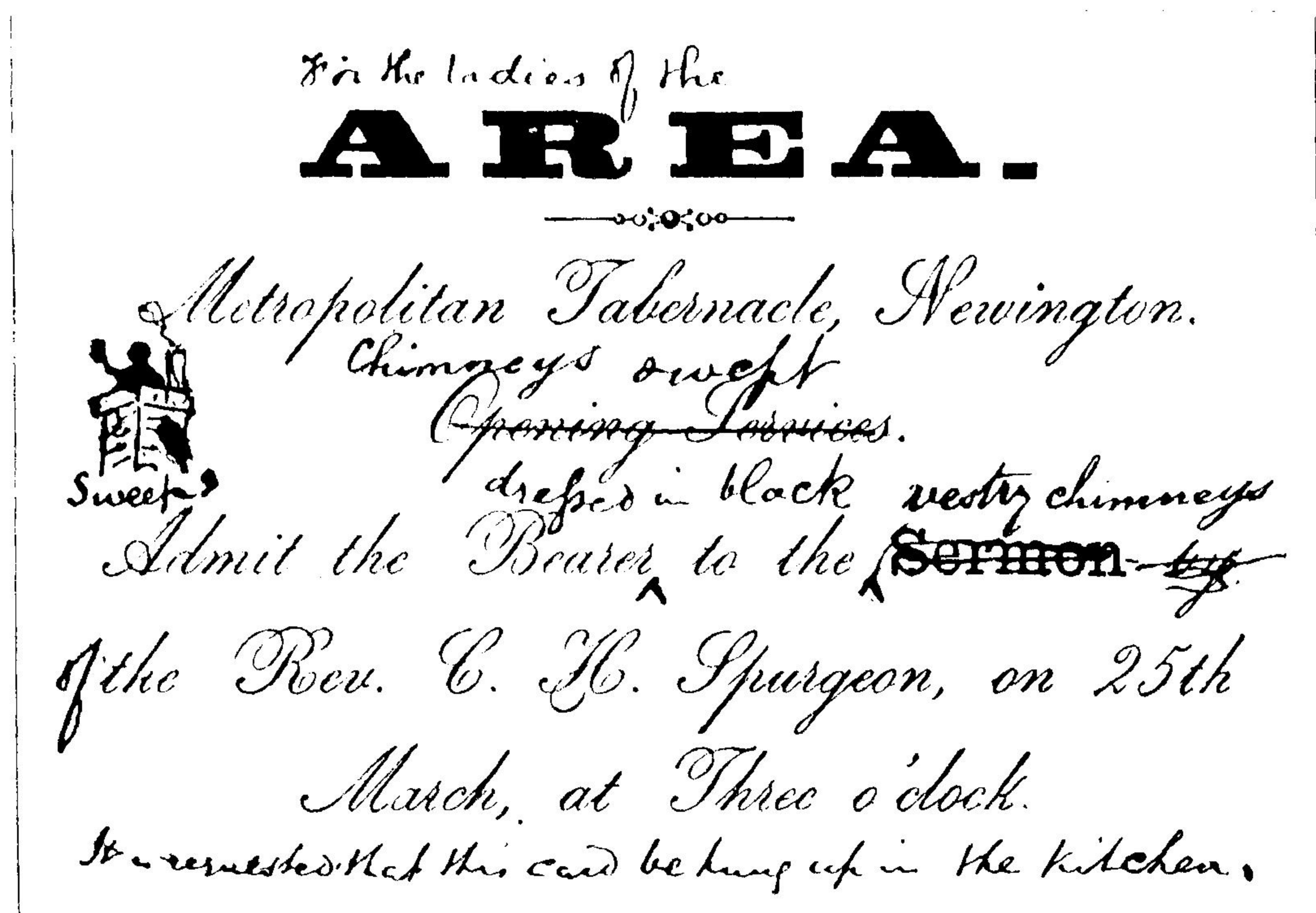
CRITICISM AND WITTICISM.

When the Tabernacle was about to be opened, tickets of admission to the various gatherings were printed. The one intended as a pass to the first service

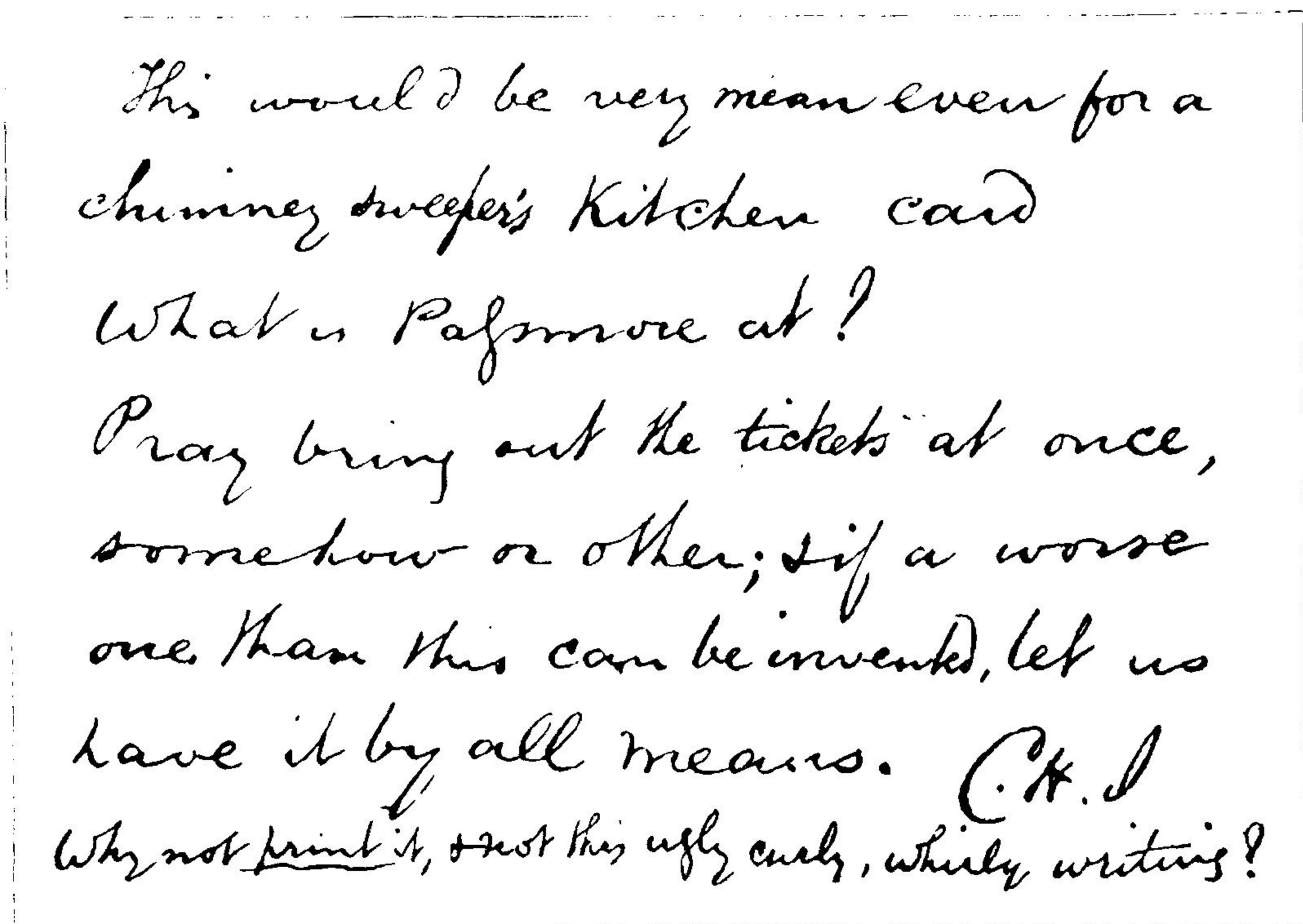


FIGARO'S PHRENOLOGY.—No. 2.

seemed to Mr. Spurgeon so unsuitable to the occasion that he turned it into a sweep's advertisement by annotating the front of it in this humorous style :—



He also wrote on the back the comments and queries here reproduced in facsimile,—



and sent the card to Mr. Passmore, who preserved it with the other epistolary curiosities that were published in Vol. II., Chapter XLVII.

One matter that always afforded Mr. Spurgeon the opportunity of poking a little good-natured fun at his esteemed publishers was the non-arrival of proofs for which he was looking. Frequently, at Mentone, or at some other place where the beloved author was combining rest and work, Mr. Passmore or Mr. Alabaster would be asked about the "Cock Robin shop" that he had left for a while. (A "Cock

Robin shop" is the trade designation of a small printing-office where cheap booklets, such as *The Death of Cock Robin*, are issued.) It was a theme for perennial merriment, and no protestations of the publishers availed to put an end to it. If sermon or magazine proofs were delayed, the invariable explanation was, "Perhaps they have had another order for *Cock Robins*, so my work has had to wait."

On one occasion, Mr. Spurgeon and his secretary had gone to Bournemouth for a week; and, not knowing beforehand where they would be staying, the printers were instructed to send proofs to the Post Office, to be left till called for. On enquiry, the officials declared that they had nothing for Mr. Spurgeon, so the following telegram was despatched to London:—"When you have finished *Cock Robins*, please forward proofs of sermon and magazine." It turned out that the fault was with the postal authorities, for they had only looked for letters, whereas the printed matter was in the office all the while in the compartment allotted to book-post packets.

At one of the meetings when contributions for the new Tabernacle were brought in, the names of Knight and Duke were read out from the list of subscribers, whereupon Mr. Spurgeon said, "Really, we are in grand company with a knight and a duke!" Presently, "Mr. King, five shillings," was reported, when the Pastor exclaimed, "Why, the king has actually given his crown! What a liberal monarch!" Directly afterwards, it was announced that Mr. Pig had contributed a guinea. "That," said Mr. Spurgeon, "is a guinea-pig."

The propensity of punning upon people's names was often indulged by the dear Pastor; and, doubtless, many readers of this chapter will recollect instances that have come to their own knowledge. Mr. Spurgeon could remember, in a very remarkable fashion, the faces and names of those whom he had once met; and if he made any mistake in addressing them, he would speedily and felicitously rectify it. A gentleman, who had been at one of the annual College suppers, was again present the following year. The President saluted him with the hearty greeting, "Glad to see you, Mr. Partridge." The visitor was surprised to find himself recognized, but he replied, "My name is Patridge, sir, not Partridge." "Ah, yes!" was the instant rejoinder; "I won't make *game* of you any more."

A lady in Worcestershire, writing to Mrs. Spurgeon concerning a service at Dunnington, near Evesham, says:—"Mr. Spurgeon shook hands with *seventy* members of one family, named Bomford, who had gone to hear him. One of our deacons, a Mr. Alway, was at the same time introduced to him; and, in his own inimitable and ready way, he exclaimed, 'Rejoice in the Lord, Alway!'"

Dr. John Campbell was once in a second-hand bookseller's shop with Mr. Spurgeon, and, pointing to *Thorn on Infant Baptism*, he said, "There is 'a thorn in

the flesh' for you." Mr. Spurgeon at once replied, "Finish the quotation, my brother,—‘the messenger of Satan to buffet me.’"

During the Baptismal Regeneration Controversy, a friend said to Mr. Spurgeon, "I hear that you are in hot water." "Oh, dear no!" he replied; "it is the other fellows who are in the hot water; I am the stoker, the man who makes the water boil!"

MINISTERIAL MIRTH.

Mr. Spurgeon made a very sparing use of his wit in the pulpit, though all his wits were always utilized there to the utmost. To one who objected to some humorous expression to which he had given utterance while preaching, he replied, "If you had known how many others I kept back, you would not have found fault with that one, but you would have commended me for the restraint I had exercised." He often said that he never went out of his way to make a joke,—or to avoid one; and only the last great day will reveal how many were first attracted by some playful reference or amusing anecdote, which was like the bait to the fish, and concealed the hook on which they were soon happily caught.

At the last service in New Park Street Chapel, the Pastor reminded his hearers that the new Tabernacle, which they were about to enter, was close to "The Elephant and Castle," and then, urging them all to take their own share of the enlarged responsibilities resting upon them as a church and people, he said, "Let every elephant bear his castle when we get there." This was simply translating, into the dialect of Newington, Paul's words, "Every man shall bear his own burden," and, doubtless, the form of the injunction helped to impress it upon the memory of all who heard it.

No student of the Pastors' College, who listened to the notable sermon delivered in the desk-room by the beloved President, would be likely ever to forget the text of the discourse after it had been thus emphasized:—"Brethren, take care that this is always one of the Newington Butts,—‘*But* we preach Christ crucified.’ Let others hold up Jesus simply as an Example, if they will; ‘but *we* preach Christ *crucified*.’ Let any, who like to do so, proclaim ‘another gospel, which is not another;’ ‘but *we* preach *Christ crucified*.’"

Among the most memorable sermons ever preached by Mr. Spurgeon was the one on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society, in Exeter Hall, on April 27, 1881, from Isaiah li. 2, 3. After setting forth the noble personality of Abraham, concerning whom the Lord said, "I called him alone," the preacher, by using a word in two senses, revealed the contrast between the father of the faithful and his time-serving nephew,—“Lot,—a poor miserable lot he was,—costing his noble uncle more trouble than he ever brought him profit.”

On one occasion, when Mr. Spurgeon was to preach in a Nonconformist "church" where the service was of a very elaborate character, someone else had been asked to conduct "the preliminaries." The preacher remained in the vestry until the voluntary, the lessons, the prayers, and the anthem were finished, then entering the pulpit, he said, "Now, brethren, let us *pray*;" and the tone in which the last word was uttered indicated plainly enough what he thought of all that had gone before.

When Mr. Cuff was minister at Providence Chapel, Hackney, one of the College Conference meetings was held there. The President presided, and in the course of his speech, he pointed to the organ, and said, "I look upon that as an innovation; and if I were here, I should want it to be an outovation, and then we would have an ovation over its departure. I was once asked to open an organ,—I suppose the people wanted me to preach in connection with the introduction of the new instrument. I said that I was quite willing to open it as Simple Simon opened his mother's bellows, to see where the wind came from, but I could not take any other part in the ceremony."

Preaching at a chapel in the country, Mr. Spurgeon gave out Dr. Watts's version of the 91st Psalm,—

"He that hath made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode;"—

and then added, "We'll sing it to the tune 'Refuge.'" The organist leaned over from the gallery, and whispered to the preacher, "It is not in our tune-book, sir." "Then it ought to be," answered Mr. Spurgeon, "no tune-book is complete unless 'Refuge' is in it;" and, turning to the congregation, he said, "The last time I was here, you people praised God for yourselves, but now you have a machine to do the praising for you. If it can't play 'Refuge,' we'll have it all the same, and I'll start it myself."

Relating to his students some of his experiences in his early ministerial days, the President said:—"I remember going to a little village to preach; the forms had no backs to them, and on the front bench were seated some ancient dames, each wearing a cloak and hood, like Little Red Riding Hood's, which made me feel that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. After the service had commenced, the front seat gave way with a crash, and down came all its occupants. This was too much for my gravity, and it was no use to go on with the sermon from the selected text, so I made the enquiry, 'Where did that form come from? Was it borrowed from the Established Church?' 'No, sir,' replied someone; 'it came from the Wesleyan Chapel.' 'Well then, you see, dear friends,' I said, 'Dissenting forms are no safer than those used by the Church of England, so I would advise you not to trust to any forms or ceremonies, but to the Lord Jesus

Christ, for He alone can save you.' That accident gave me a subject on which I was able to speak with freedom, and I hope with profit also, to my rustic hearers, who would probably long recollect my warning against borrowing any mere formal religion from either the Church or Dissent."

MATRIMONY AND MERRIMENT.

Mr. Spurgeon was, even on ordinary occasions, so happy and joyous, and the means of communicating so much pleasure to others, that it is not surprising that his services were in great demand when his friends were about to be married. Some of the sweetest reminiscences of the loving couples who have survived him are associated with the brightness that his presence and counsel imparted to their wedding-day. Naturally, the addresses given on such occasions bore considerable resemblance to one another, although there was always something special in each case. The earliest marriage service conducted by Mr. Spurgeon, of which the record has been preserved, was that of Pastor T. W. Medhurst and his first wife, Miss M. A. Cranfield. The wedding took place on May 26, 1859, at Kingston-on-Thames, where the first student of the Pastors' College had been ministering for more than two years. Mr. Spurgeon announced, at the commencement of the proceedings, that he was not going to perform the ceremony as if he were reading the burial service, nor as if he were about to thrust his two young friends into prison, and make their feet fast in the stocks. He also said that he hoped their wedded life would not be like the Church of England marriage service, which begins with "Dearly-beloved" and ends with "amazement." He trusted that they would both be "dearly-beloved" not only at the beginning of their united career, but all through to the end, and then for ever and ever; and that, while their sorrows would be mutually shared, their joys would all be multiplied. In expounding Ephesians v. 23, the Pastor, addressing the bride, said, "According to the teaching of the apostle, 'The husband is the head of the wife.' Don't you try to be the head; but you be the neck, then you can turn the head whichever way you like."

At another marriage service, many years afterwards, Mr. Spurgeon, commenting on the same passage, said to the bridegroom, another of "our own men," "My dear friend, don't you begin to feel proud because Paul says that the husband is the head of the wife. Solomon says that 'a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband;' and the crown is the top of the head. Still, the governing faculty should rest with the head; and the family will never be ordered aright unless we each keep our proper place." On the same occasion, he thus humorously described the difficulties and privileges of a pastor's wife:—"If I was a young woman, and was thinking of being married, I would not marry a minister, because the position of minister's wife is a very difficult one for anyone to fill. Churches do not give a married minister two

salaries, one for the husband and the other for the wife ; but, in many cases, they look for the services of the wife, whether they pay for them or not. The Pastor's wife is expected to know everything about the church, and in another sense she is to know nothing of it ; and she is equally blamed by some people whether she knows everything or nothing. Her duties consist in being *always at home* to attend to her husband and her family, and being *always out*, visiting other people, and doing all sorts of things for the whole church ! Well, of course, that is impossible ; she cannot be at everybody's beck and call, and she cannot expect to please everybody. Her husband cannot do *that*, and I think he is very foolish if he tries to do it ; and I am certain that, as the husband cannot please everybody, neither can the wife. There will be sure to be somebody or other who will be displeased, especially if that somebody had herself half hoped to be the minister's wife ! Difficulties arise continually in the best-regulated churches ; and the position of the minister's wife is always a very trying one. Still, I think that, if I was a Christian young woman, I would marry a Christian minister if I could, because there is an opportunity of doing so much good in helping him in his service for Christ. It is a great assistance to the cause of God to keep the minister himself in good order for his work. It is his wife's duty to see that he is not uncomfortable at home ; for, if everything there is happy, and free from care, he can give all his thoughts to his preparation for the pulpit ; and the godly woman, who thus helps her husband to preach better, is herself a preacher though she never speaks in public, and she becomes to the highest degree useful to that portion of the Church of Christ which is committed to her husband's charge."

Wedding breakfasts naturally afforded Mr. Spurgeon the opportunity of making many kind and witty remarks. He was very fond of saying to the bridegroom, "I really cannot compliment you upon your great discrimination in choosing your bride ;" and then, when the poor fellow was blushing to the roots of his hair, and the guests all round the table (if they had not previously heard the joke,) were saying to one another, "What can Mr. Spurgeon mean ?" he quietly added, "Any stupid, with half an eye, could see that she would make a man a good wife, so no discrimination was needed in your case, and I very heartily congratulate you upon your choice." The neat turn of the speech not only set the whole company at their ease, but proved a notable addition to the harmless merriment that always prevailed on such occasions until the time came for the closing devotional service before the happy couple started for their honeymoon.

At one wedding breakfast, Mr. Spurgeon made an amusing allusion to the fact that the bridegroom, a missionary brother from Japan, had been previously married. Speaking to the bride, he said, "You must not be too proud of your husband,

Mrs. ———, for he is only second-hand ; yet he is as good as new, for he has been Japanned !”



THE BAPTIST CHAPEL "IN A CORNER," QUEEN SQUARE, BRIGHTON.

Anyone acquainted with Queen Square Baptist Chapel, Brighton, or who looks at the position of that building as represented in the above view, will realize how appropriate was Mr. Spurgeon's reference to it after he had conducted a marriage service there. In the course of a charming address at the breakfast which followed the ceremony, he turned to the bridegroom, and said, "I tell my friend ——— that, whatever he says about his wedding, he will never be able to say, 'This thing was not done *in a corner* !'"

Even when he had not been present at the marriage of his friends, Mr. Spurgeon often managed to make merriment for them out of something which he heard or knew concerning the happy event. A notable instance of this occurred when "one of our own men" and his bride went to Mentone for their honeymoon, and someone sent to the beloved President a newspaper containing a full report of the service, and the details generally published on such occasions. In the course of

conversation, after the happy couple arrived, Mr. Spurgeon said to the bride, "Mrs. ———, if I was a young lady, going to be married, I should wear so-and-so and so-and-so." Turning to her husband, she exclaimed, "Oh, ———! Isn't it funny? That's just how I was dressed." "Then," said Mr. Spurgeon, "I should have so many bridesmaids, and they should wear such-and-such dresses and such-and-such hats." "Oh, ———! Why, that is just how many bridesmaids I had, and they were dressed exactly like that." "Then, for presents," said the Pastor, "I should like so-and-so and so-and-so." "Oh, ———! Isn't it funny? That is just what we had." It is not certain that the good lady knows even to this day how it came to pass that the great preacher's wishes and her own coincided so singularly! Certainly, he extracted a considerable quantity of pure fun out of her amazement as he proceeded with his recital of things to be desired at a wedding.

On one of his visits to Mentone, a friend asked him, "In what coloured ink should a promise of marriage be written?" He guessed all the colours he could think of, and then was informed that the right answer was, "in violet" (inviolable). He was so delighted with the conundrum,—both for its wit, and for its confirmation of the solemnity of an engagement with a view to marriage,—that he often tried the effect of it upon his friends, and seldom found one who was more successful in seeing through it than he himself had been, though all thought the answer to it was admirable.

"LEARNED IN THE LAW."

Mr. Spurgeon once spent an evening, with a few of Her Majesty's judges, at the house of Mr. Justice Lush, who was a very dear personal friend of his. After dinner, with an air of apparent seriousness, the Pastor said that he had a point of law that he should like to submit to the eminent authorities present. There was a man who had been lying in Camberwell for the last fortnight, and yet nobody would bury him; his friends would not arrange for his funeral, and neither the police nor the parish officials had been able to get him interred. The learned judges began consulting with one another, and quoting various Acts of Parliament that applied to such a case, and said that, if the relatives persistently refused to bury the man, the requisite power remained with certain local authorities whom they named. They were, however, considerably nonplussed when Mr. Spurgeon very quietly said, "There was one little item in the case that I omitted to mention, *the man is not dead yet!*" "Are you not afraid of the consequences of taking in Her Majesty's judges like that?" enquired Mr. Justice Lush; adding, "You really ought to be committed for contempt of court; but as you seem to be well up in legal matters, tell me,—Ought a man to be allowed to marry his widow's sister?" "Oh, yes!" exclaimed the Pastor, not suspecting the trap that had been laid for him, and in the

excitement of the moment thinking that the question had been, "Ought a man to be allowed to marry his deceased wife's sister?" "Then," said the judge, "we will cry quits, for even your friend in Camberwell could not marry his *widow's* sister!"

Later in the evening, Mr. Spurgeon told a story that invariably elicited the wrong reply, and that occasion was no exception to the rule. "A lady and gentleman were engaged to be married; they were walking along the sea-shore, when some dispute arose, and the lady, in a fit of temper, snatched the engagement ring from her finger, and threw it into the water. After a while, she found another lover, to whom she was married, and they went down to Scarborough to spend the honeymoon. On the first morning, they had fish for breakfast; and, as the bridegroom was dividing it, he felt something hard; what do you suppose the knife had cut against?" Of course, the judges, like everybody else, exclaimed, "The ring." "No," said Mr. Spurgeon, "it was only a bone!"

Pastor Charles Spurgeon mentions (on page 299) a service conducted by his dear father at Pollockshaws. During that visit to Scotland, Mr. Spurgeon was introduced to the Dean of Guild. "The Dean of Guild; oh, you are the gentleman who can go through every tollgate in England without paying!" "I was not aware that any such privilege was attached to my office." "It is quite true, sir," replied the dear Pastor; "*you* can go through every tollgate without paying, but the gatekeeper will charge for your horse and carriage!"

STUDY AND SMILES.

All the students of the Pastors' College, who have recorded their reminiscences of the time spent in connection with that Institution, have testified to the bright and joyous atmosphere which pervaded all the classes, and which has made that period in their history ever-memorable to them. From the very beginning of Mr. Spurgeon's work of training young men for the Christian ministry, hard study and a happy spirit have been delightfully combined. Even before there was any College, when a solitary student was under the charge of Mr. Rogers, coming events cast their *sunshine* before, as the two following paragraphs, supplied by Mr. Medhurst, clearly prove:—

"Soon after I went to live with Mr. Rogers, one Saturday morning Mr. Spurgeon called to see what progress we were making, when the following conversation took place:—'Well, friend Rogers,' enquired the dear Governor, 'how are you getting on with this zealous young Baptist?' 'Oh!' replied the tutor, 'we get along very nicely; but we don't say much about baptism. You know, Mr. Spurgeon, that when the Samaritan woman found the Saviour, she left her waterpot.' 'Yes,

friend Rogers,' was the prompt answer, 'she left her sprinkling machine, for the Lord Jesus had shown her the "much water" that there was in the deep well.'

"On another occasion, there had been a snowstorm during the night; so, in the morning, I joined Mr. Rogers' sons in a game of snowballing in front of the house. This, dear precise Mrs. Rogers considered very unbecoming on the part of a ministerial student! Mr. Spurgeon called shortly afterwards, on the same day, and the good old lady (she was a dear kind soul) asked him what he thought of me for so far forgetting what was due to my position as a candidate for the Christian ministry. Mr. Spurgeon replied, 'Well, Mrs. Rogers, I greatly admire the prevenient grace of God that did not allow me to come earlier this morning; for had I been here, I fear I should have been tempted to join in the snowballing.' Then, turning to me, he said, in a tone of assumed solemnity, 'Young man, you are forgiven this time; but see that you transgress no more,—until the next fall of snow!'"

Mr. Spurgeon evidently had great confidence, both in Mr. Rogers and in those who were trained by him, or he would not have committed to his care the hundreds of students who passed through the College during the long term of his principalship. It is to the credit of both tutor and taught that, although some few of the men have become Pædo-Baptists, no one of them has ever been known to attribute his change of sentiments to the influence of the Congregational Principal. Yet the subject of believers' baptism *versus* infant sprinkling was very often under discussion; and probably all the students, at some time or other, sought to lead Mr. Rogers into what they regarded as the light upon this important matter. The President used to say that the brethren treated their tutor as a kind of hone on which they tried to sharpen their Baptistic arguments, and he himself had many an encounter with the sturdy old Independent. A very favourite simile with him was that the Pædo-Baptist tutor of Baptist students resembled a hen sitting on ducks' eggs, and he humorously described the agitation of the poor bird as she stood trembling on the edge of the pond while the ducklings took to the water according to their nature! This comparison was greatly enjoyed by the merry audience, and they were not less pleased with Mr. Rogers' ready reply, "If I am as silly as an old hen, I have always managed up to the present to keep my head above water!"

Pastor Harry Abraham has written, for this volume, the following description of a lively scene which may be regarded as fairly representative of many similar occurrences in the history of the College:—

"WHEN ESSEX MEETS ESSEX."

"The summer holidays had ended. The opening day of a new session was

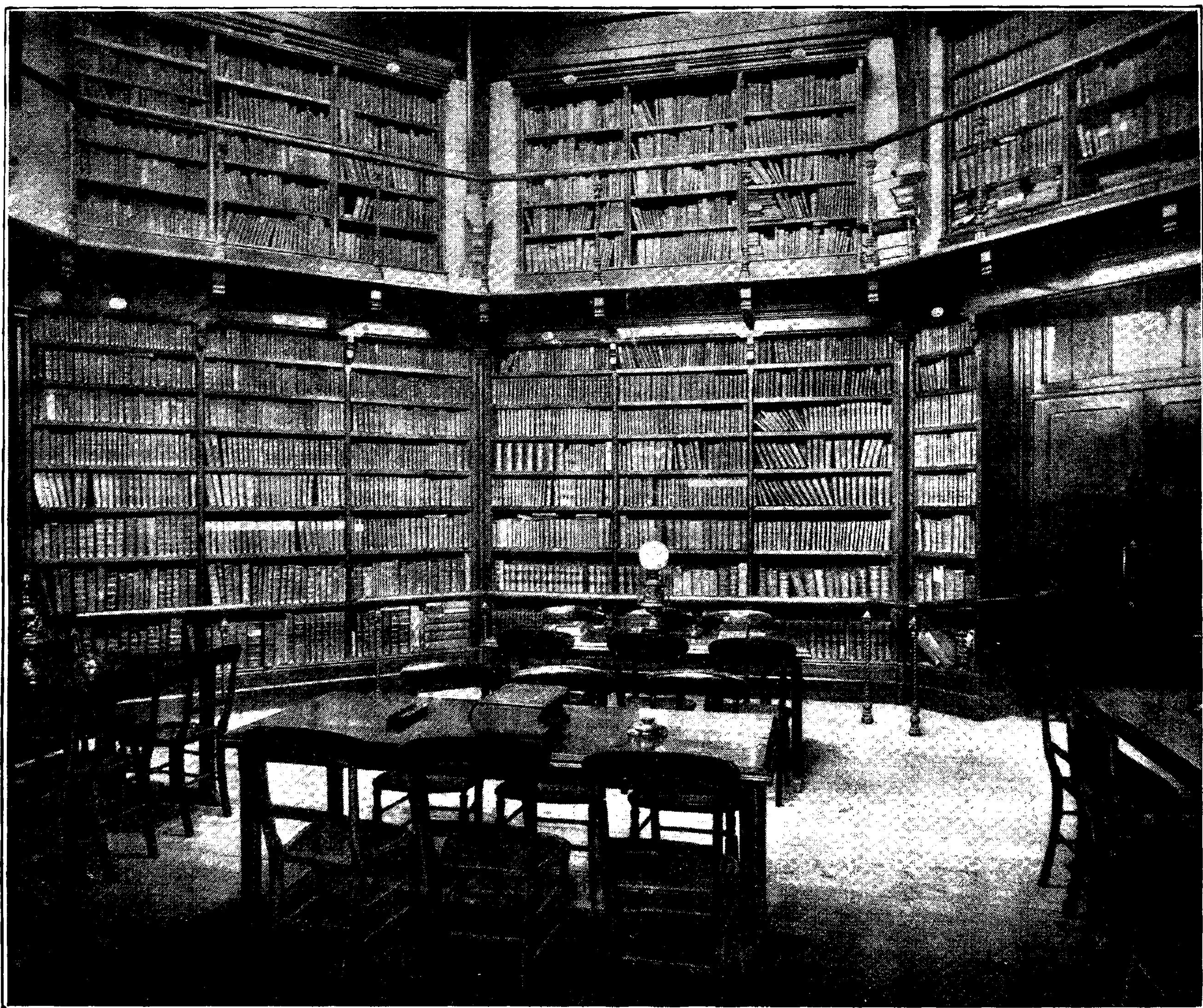
ever a time of glad greetings, and of pleasant preparations for the tasks which lay before us. Old friends were speaking mutual welcomes, and new students were regarded with kindly curiosity. The tutors were heartily received, as being at once our fathers and our brothers; for so was it ever in the days of Messrs. George Rogers, David Gracey, and Archibald Fergusson; while the dear President, C. H. Spurgeon, was still the best-loved,—most paternal and most fraternal of all.

“On the morning to which I now refer, the three tutors were in their places on the platform in the College lecture-hall, and nearly a hundred of us occupied the benches. The venerable and venerated George Rogers was telling, in characteristic fashion, how he had spent the vacation: attending recognition services, delivering charges, preaching sermons, and speaking at various meetings in places where ‘our own men’ were doing the Great Master’s work. The dear old man could never resist an opportunity of making some playful allusion to his own Pædo-Baptist views, in contrast with those which his hearers held,—always to the advantage of his own position, of course. An observation of this kind, which had just fallen from his lips, led Professor Gracey to interject the sentence, ‘But *you won’t be baptized.*’ ‘Yes, I will,’ replied the nimble-witted sage, ‘if you’ll let me *stand up to be done!*’ But the Irish wit of the classical tutor was equally quick, and he answered, ‘We’re quite willing to let you stand up *if only the water is deep enough!*’—a retort which the students emphasized with a merry peal of laughter and ringing cheers. ‘Ah!’ said the old man, in the familiar tone which always seemed gravest when his spirit was gayest, ‘you can’t find anything *deep enough for Mr. Gracey!*’

“In the very midst of the applause which followed this smart rejoinder, in came the President! Only those who knew how much he was beloved, and what a glad-some spirit of freedom was always associated with his coming upon such a scene, could have understood, or perhaps excused, the boisterous burst of welcome—laughter, cheers, and a general din of delight,—which sent the echoes flying about the lecture-room for a while. Ere the noise subsided, Mr. Spurgeon had reached the platform steps, where he paused,—lifted his right hand,—and exclaimed, ‘Brethren! brethren! I feel like Moses coming down from the mount; true, there isn’t much music, you are not exactly dancing, but you are making a great row; and, lo! I see that you are *worshipping—an Essex calf!*’ In an instant, Mr. Rogers had seized the sharp shaft of good-tempered humour, and, with exquisite grace and skill, had sent it flying back, by simply and swiftly *dropping into his chair*, with a profound and courtly bow, *leaving the President standing alone upon the platform, himself the Essex calf to whom the homage was being rendered!* A more perfect *tu quoque* in action could not be conceived, and no words can indicate the wonderful way in which it was done. It was the wittiest thing I ever saw, even from the most witty of octogenarians whom I have ever met. But the merry scene was not quite at an end

even then. 'Well, friend Rogers, what does all the noise mean?' asked the genial 'Governor.' 'Oh, sir! Mr. Gracey has been trying to put me down.' Like a flash came the Roland for the Oliver. 'Why, that's what I have been trying to do for the last twenty years, you old sinner, and *you won't go down!*'

"All the sparkling fun lingers in the memory,—pure as the holy joy of angels;—for there strangely mingles with it the recollection of the hallowed moments spent at the throne of grace before that meeting ended; and between the playfulness and the prayer there seemed to be no abrupt transition, no discord, no incongruity,—but all was perfect harmony and happiness."



THE LIBRARY OF THE PASTORS' COLLEGE.

Many other amusing reminiscences of College days have been preserved, but space can be spared for only one more, which relates to a certain period when the library had been closed for a while, mainly because some of the choice volumes,

which it ought to have contained, were missing. It seemed a long time to the students before they were able again to avail themselves of the privilege of consulting the many valuable books collected in that spacious room at the top of the building. One Friday afternoon, when the President took his place on the platform of the desk-room, he looked up at the clock, and seeing that it had stopped, said, "I cannot understand what is wrong with that clock; we have had it repaired several times, yet it won't go." One of the students thought he saw an opportunity of calling attention to another matter in which he and all the brethren were interested, so he said, "It's like the library, sir, it is shut up." "Yes," replied Mr. Spurgeon, "and very probably for the same reason, because some of the 'works' have been taken away!"

At the close of the annual Conferences, it was the President's custom to invite from a dozen to a score of the ministers to spend the Friday afternoon and evening at his house; not only for their own enjoyment, but also in order that they might repeat for Mrs. Spurgeon's benefit as many as possible of the notable sayings during the week, or recall any incident in which she would be specially interested. It was a very delightful winding-up of the meetings; and with prayer, and speech, and song, the time swiftly passed. On one of those occasions, the whole company started to march round the garden, singing, "Hold the fort." Mr. Spurgeon was walking in front of his little band of picked soldiers of the cross; but, as soon as the first verse of the hymn was finished, he cried, "Halt! Right about face! Quick march! *Now* you may sing,—

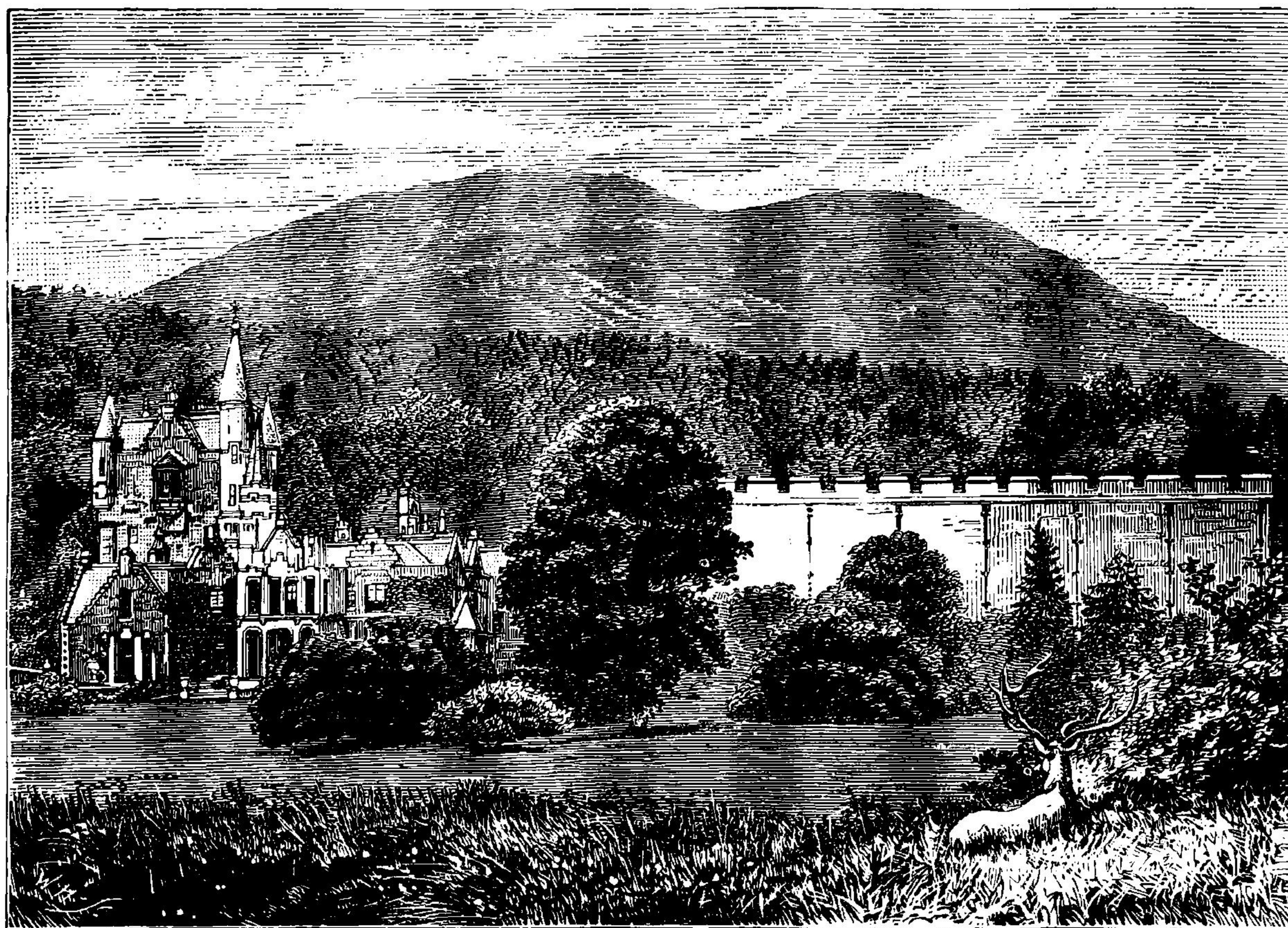
"See the mighty host advancing,
Satan leading on."

One year, Mr. W. Y. Fullerton was, with his beloved Pastor, the guest of Mr. Duncan at "Benmore." On the Sabbath, the evangelist preached at Kilmun; and, the following morning, when driving past the building where the service had been held, Mr. Spurgeon pointed to the house adjoining, where there was a notice, "Mangling done here," and amused the other visitors by trying to connect that announcement with the sermon of the preceding day.

Pastor W. Williams, of Upton Chapel, narrated, in his *Personal Reminiscences of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, an amusing experience which he had when it was his privilege to accompany his President to Mr. Duncan's. In connection with the illustration on the opposite page, he wrote:—

"In the foreground of the picture is a stag, lying majestically, with head erect, in the meadow (as though 'Benmore' belonged to him). There is a little incident connected with this stag which I think is worth relating. It may tell a 'wee' bit against the writer, but it illustrates Mr. Spurgeon's love of fun. Soon

after we were settled down at 'Benmore,' Mr. Duncan said to me, 'Can you shoot, Mr. Williams?' 'Yes,' I replied, 'I was almost born with a gun in my hand.' 'Well, then,' said he, 'I will send to Glasgow for a gun licence for you to-morrow.' I had not specially noticed the stag in the meadow, for there were plenty of deer close, too. The next evening, just as it was getting a little dusk, as Mr. Spurgeon, Mr. Duncan, and I were sitting outside the house, Mr. Spurgeon said, 'Oh, Mr. Williams, I have asked and obtained permission from Mr. Duncan for you to shoot

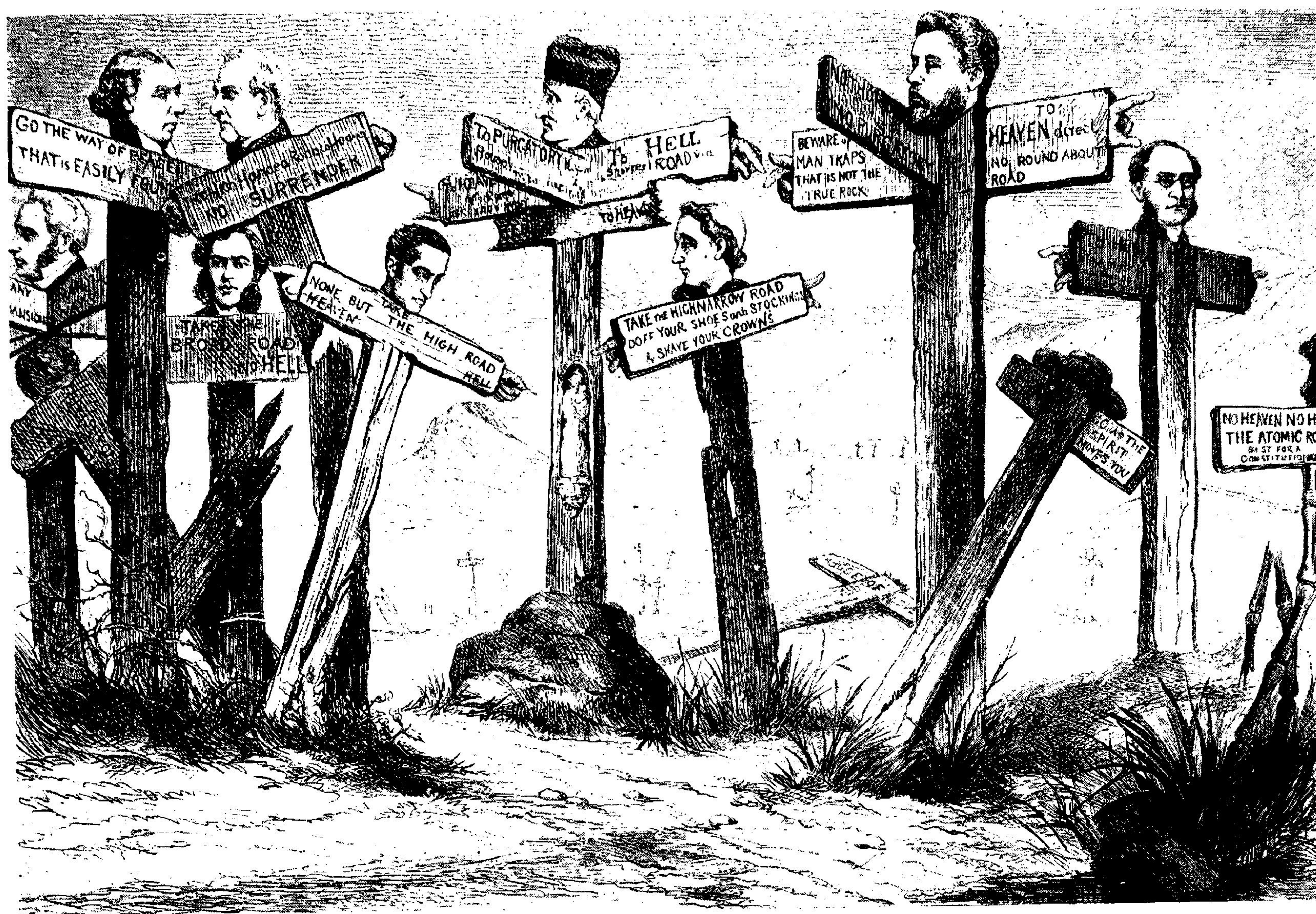


THE BRONZE STAG AT "BENMORE."

that fine stag in the meadow ; see, he is lying there now. But you are to shoot him as he lies ; for, if you get him to move, you won't hit him ; and Mr. Duncan says, if you kill him, you can have a haunch of the venison to take home with you. Now, there is a chance for you.' I expostulated, and said it was not fair to shoot at the animal *sitting* ; if I were allowed first to make him rise, I would fire. 'No, no,' said Mr. Spurgeon ; 'if you don't shoot him sitting, Mr. Duncan is sure you won't shoot him at all. He is a very unusual sort of stag.' I yielded, and crept quietly behind the trees in front of him until I got within forty yards of the animal, when, dusk as it was, I began to be suspicious, and soon discovered that *the stag was bronze*. I did not fire, or the reader might be now looking at the singular phenomenon of a lively-looking stag's body without a head. I turned round to find Mr. Spurgeon laughing with all his might. A tougher piece of venison than I should have liked to bring to London, was that stately monarch of the meadow."

For many years, Mr. Spurgeon's portrait occupied a prominent position in

most of the cartoons and caricatures in which representative public men were grouped together. In some of them, he was depicted in company that he never kept, and at scenes he never frequented; but the artists usually intended, even in such cases, to pay a well-deserved tribute to his popularity. Mr. Spurgeon regarded these productions only as so many more specimens of harmless pleasantry to be added to the large collection of pictures in his portfolios. In a few instances, there was no fun in the pictorial representations of the dear Pastor; but only coarse blasphemy, which made him shudder at the awful condition of heart of the human being who thus not merely ridiculed him, but also poured out his scorn upon all that he held sacred and precious. Still, these were the exceptions, few and far between, which saved him from the "woe" of having all men speaking well of him.



"THE DREAM OF PAUL, THE PARISH CLERK."

*"But what seem'd such a wondrous phase,
Their hands all pointed diff'rent ways."*

Among the ecclesiastical cartoons, one that interested and amused Mr. Spurgeon very much is here reproduced. It formed part of a shilling booklet, published by Mr. James Wade, of 18, Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, under the title, "The Dream of Paul, the Parish Clerk." The Pastor had no cause to find fault with

the directions inscribed on the sign-post above which his portrait appeared, and he regarded others in the group as being ingeniously pictured with remarkable accuracy.

When *The Great Eastern* was launched, many suggestions were made as to the best way of utilizing the huge vessel; the cartoon on page 338 humorously contains several of them, including the proposal that Mr. Spurgeon should preach on board every three hours!

This chapter cannot be better concluded than by inserting a selection of
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ANECDOTES,
related in Mr. Spurgeon's own words.

Soon after I came to London, an eccentric individual called to see me, with the view of setting me right on various points in which he did not agree with the doctrine I preached. When he failed to convince me that my teaching was unscriptural, he rose and said, "Then I will shake off the dust of my feet against you." "Please don't do that," I answered, "you might make the carpet dirty; you will find a scraper and a mat at the front door, they will answer the purpose quite as well!"

A man who had made a special study of "the number of the beast" mentioned in the Book of Revelation, wrote to me and said that he could make the names of Mr. Gladstone and the Emperor Napoleon III. agree with the mystic number, 666; but he could not make the numerical value of the letters in my name fit in with it, and he wanted me to explain how I accounted for that fact. "Why," I replied, "I suppose it must be because I am not the beast, and that, therefore, 666 is not the number of my name!"

Dean Stanley once invited me to dine with him; and when I arrived, I found Mr. Rogers, of Bishopsgate ("Hang Theology" Rogers), was also a guest. We had a merry time, especially when the question of Disestablishment was under discussion. The Dean jocularly said to me, "When that time comes, would you like to have the Abbey?" "No, thank you," I replied, "I have not horses enough to fill it." "Well," said the genial ecclesiastic, "I did not think you would have made that objection, but really the place is more adapted for stables than for preaching the gospel to such crowds as gather around you. But, seriously, Mr. Spurgeon, if the Church is disestablished, what will become of friend Rogers and myself?" "Why," I answered, "you will have to do as I do, live upon what your people give you." "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" cried both gentlemen at once, "if we only had what our people gave us, it would be a poor living." I encouraged them to do all they could to

educate their congregations in the Scriptural system of giving before the day of their emancipation arrived.

A young man, who had been "in fellowship with the brethren," wished to join the church at the Tabernacle. I knew that they would not grant him a transfer to us, so I wrote to ask if there was anything in his moral character which should prevent us from receiving him. The reply they sent was laconic, but not particularly lucid:—"The man ——— has too much of the flesh." When he called to hear the result of his application, I sent for a yard or two of string, and asked one of our friends to take my measure, and then to take his. As I found that I had much more "flesh" than he had, and as his former associates had nothing else to allege against him, I proposed him for church-membership, and he was in due course accepted.

I went, on several occasions, to The Cottage, Virginia Water, to visit Captain Welch, R.N., the former commander of the Queen's yacht. He was on board the *Alberta* when the *Mistletoe* was run down, but I believe he was free from all responsibility for the sad disaster. As we were walking towards his house, I noticed that he had a number of dragons all along the eaves. Pointing to one of them, I said, "Ah, captain! that is what you ought to have had when the *Mistletoe* was sunk by the royal yacht." "What do you mean, Mr. Spurgeon?" he enquired. "Oh!" I replied, "only that you ought to have had the *drag on*!"

Once when I was going through a gentleman's garden, in company with the owner, we suddenly came to a rosemary bush, and I playfully said to him,—not dreaming that my words could have any personal application,—“Oh, rosemary! you know what people say about it, I suppose? ‘Where the rosemary grows, the missus is the master.’” The next time I went there, I saw that the bush had been cut down! Then I knew who was the master!

A gentleman said to me, one day, "Ah! Mr. Spurgeon, I don't agree with you about religion; I am an agnostic." "Yes!" I replied, "that is a Greek word, and the exact equivalent is *ignoramus*; if you like to claim that title, you are quite welcome to it." I do not think he cared to accept that designation, for he thought himself anything but an *ignoramus*!

I have greatly admired Mr. George Tinworth's work, and have been much pleased with many of his original interpretations of Scripture. On one occasion, when I called at Messrs. Doulton's, he said to me, "I wanted your help, the other day, Mr. Spurgeon. Someone was here, looking at this panel,—‘The enemy sowing

tares.' You see that I have depicted 'the enemy' sowing with his left hand; the gentleman said that was not correct, and I did not know what reply to give to him." "Why, you should have told him that he never saw Satan sowing tares with his right hand!" Mr. Tinworth thought that would have been a most conclusive answer, and was sorry it had not occurred to him at the time.

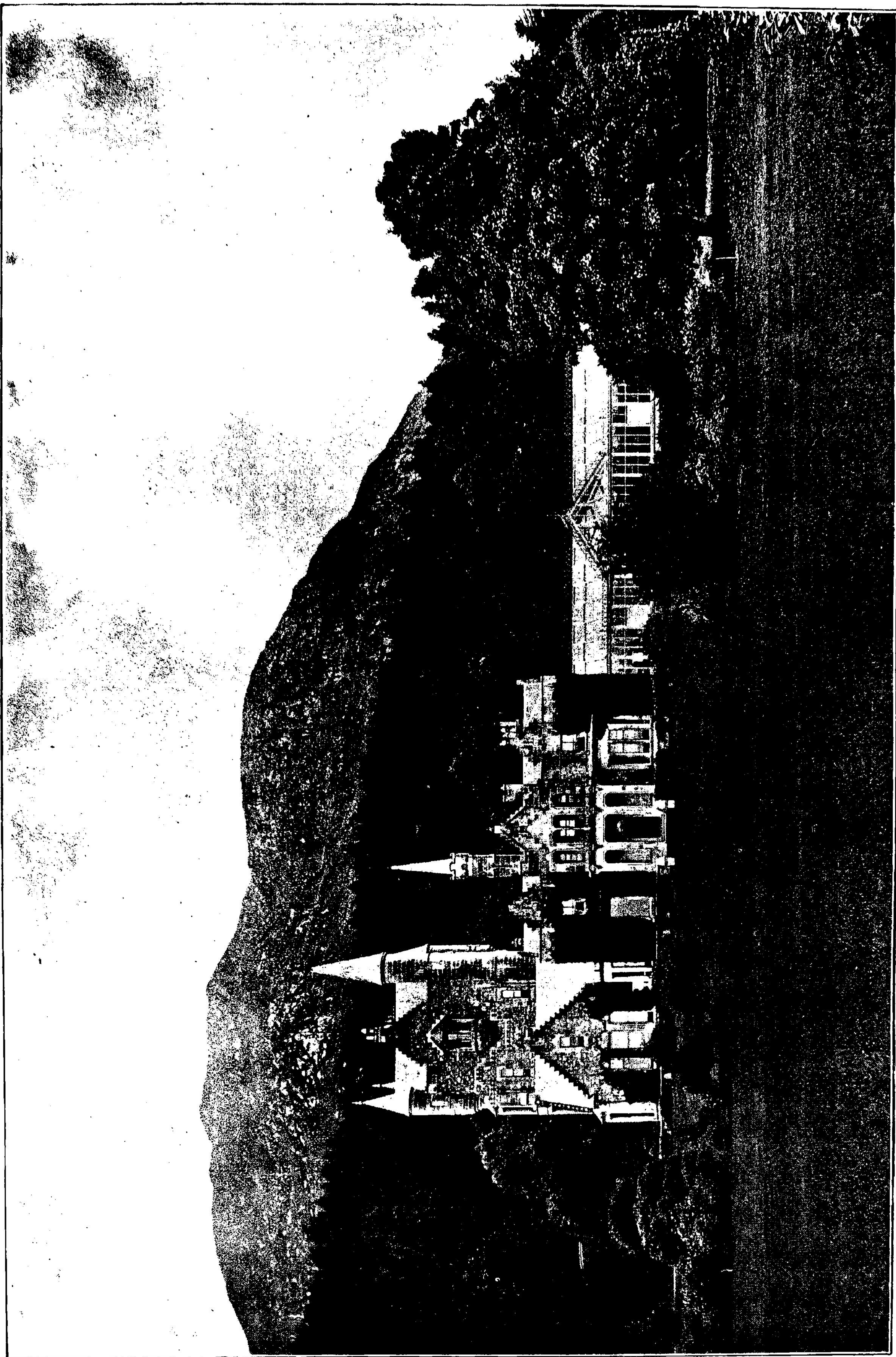
(After that particular panel was sold, the artist made another upon the same subject; but in that one he reversed the position of the sower's hands, so that his critic would be satisfied—at least upon that point,—if he could see the quaint yet suggestive work here represented.)



MR. GEORGE TINWORTH'S PANEL, "THE ENEMY SOWING TARES."

The compilers of Mr. Spurgeon's "Life" are regretfully aware that the chapter on "Pure Fun" does not adequately set forth the vivacity of his wit, or the geniality of his humour. They cannot reproduce the soft rich tones of his voice, the merry twinkle in his eye, or the grace of gesture which accompanied all his utterances. His fun was so natural, so spontaneous, and so hearty, that any description of it fails to do justice to the effect it produced at the time. The *esprit* of his jests and repartee cannot be written down; it was as fugitive as the colours of those iridescent fish of which we read that, the moment they are drawn up in the nets, the rainbow hues vanish, and their singular beauty has faded away.

Perhaps it is better so. We prefer to recall Mr. Spurgeon's solidity of thought, steadfastness of purpose, and unflinching faith in God as the chief characteristics of his life,—the firmament across which the flashes of his wit would sometimes play, like the harmless lightning of a summer's eve.



" BENMORE."