CHAPTER LXXXVII.

"Westwood."

We have often been advised to rise from Nightingale Lane to higher ground, to escape a portion of the fogs and dampers which hang almost always over our smoky city. In the good providence of God, we have been led to do so, and we are now upon the Southern heights. We did not seek out the place, but it came into our hands in a very remarkable manner, and we were bound to accept it. We have left the room which has been so long our study, and the delightful garden where we were wont to walk and meditate. Not without many a regret have we transferred our nest from our dear old home to the Hill of Beulah.

What a type of our departure out of this world is a removal from an abode in which we have lived for years! Many thoughts have thronged our mind while we have been on the wing from the spot where we have dwelt for more than twenty years—C. H. S., in "Spurgeon's Illustrated Almanack" for 1881.

CONCERNING the removal from "Helensburgh House" to "Westwood," Mr. Spurgeon often said:—"I did not arrange it myself; the Lord just put a spade underneath me, and transplanted me to Norwood." The change came to pass in the following way. In the year 1880, a great trouble arose through what was intended to be only a joy and a help. Mrs. Tyson, who had long been a generous donor to all the Tabernacle Institutions, made a will by which she meant to leave to the College and Orphanage the greater part of her estate, subject to the payment of certain annuities to a number of aged pensioners upon her bounty. The kind testatrix appointed, as her executors, Mr. Spurgeon and a clerical friend, explaining that she did so on purpose to ensure that there should be no question about the carrying out of her intentions; but, unhappily, the bequests included her real as well as personal property, and therefore came within the scope of the Law of Mortmain. The whole affair was complicated in so many ways that the executors were obliged to arrange with the Trustees of the College and Orphanage to institute a friendly suit in the Court of Chancery in order to have an authoritative decision upon the points about which there was uncertainty. This involved a heavy addition to the dear Pastor's work, and necessitated many journeys to "White Lodge," Biggin Hill, Upper Norwood, where Mrs. Tyson had lived.

After the executors had paid one of their periodical visits, Mr. Spurgeon suggested that, before returning home, they should drive as far as the front of the Crystal Palace. Proceeding along Beulah Hill, the notice of a house and estate for sale caught his eye as he passed a gateway which was afterwards to become very familiar to him. He had long felt the need of removing to higher ground, and to a more secluded spot than the once rural Nightingale Lane had become, and he had
been making enquiries in various directions; but, so far, he had not heard of any place which was sufficiently near the Tabernacle, and, at the same time, fairly clear of the smoke and fog of London. On reaching the Palace, the return journey was commenced; and, soon, the carriage was back in Beulah Hill, and nearing the gate where the board had been seen. Bidding the coachman stop, the Pastor asked his secretary to find out what the notice said. It appeared that cards to view the property were required; but, on asking at the house, permission was at once given for Mr. Spurgeon to see all he wished, and then, for the first time, he passed down the drive, and beheld his future home.
As soon as he caught sight of "Westwood," he exclaimed, "Oh, that place is far too grand for me!" and, after a very brief inspection, he left without having any anticipation of becoming its owner. So completely did he give up all thought of living there, that he did not even send anyone to the sale; but, a few days afterwards, he received a note telling him that the reserve price had not been reached, and asking if he would make an offer for the estate. Then came what Mr. Spurgeon always regarded as the providential interposition of God in the matter. That very day, the builder, whom he always employed for all work needed at "Helensburgh House," called to enquire if he wanted to sell his home; because, if so, one of his neighbours wished to buy it as a residence for his son-in-law who was returning from abroad. The Pastor then mentioned the house he had seen at Norwood, and added, "If I could get for this place anything like what is needed to purchase the other, I should be glad to make the exchange." A consultation was held as to the price to be asked, a sum was stated, and duly reported to the neighbour, who at once said, "I should not think of offering Mr. Spurgeon any less, for I am sure he would only fix a fair value; I will give you a deposit to seal the bargain." The builder soon returned with the message and cheque; but Mr. Spurgeon said, "I must wait to see if I can buy ‘Westwood,’ or I shall be out of house and home." He drove again to Beulah Hill, found that he could, without difficulty, meet the difference in the price of the two places, and, within a few hours, the old home was sold, and the new one secured, as he always believed, by Divine arrangement.

The incoming residents at "Helensburgh House" desired to have some permanent memorial of their predecessor's occupancy of the house, so Mr. Spurgeon wrote the following inscription, and had it engraved, and fixed underneath the large painted window at the end of the study:—

"Farewell, fair room, I leave thee to a friend:
Peace dwell with him and all his kin!
May angels evermore the house defend!
Their Lord hath often been within."

In August, the removal took place, and in the next number of The Sword and the Trowel, the Editor wrote:—"Simple as the matter of change of residence may be, it has sufficed to create all sorts of stories, among which is the statement that 'Mr. Spurgeon's people have given him a house.' My ever-generous friends would give me whatever was needful; but, as I had only to sell one house and buy another, there was no necessity for their doing so. Having once accepted a noble presentation from them, and having there and then handed it over to the Almshouses, it would by no means be according to my mind to receive a second public testimonial. One friend who heard of my change of residence right generously sent help towards the expense of removal; but, beyond this, it is entirely my own
concern, and a matter about which I should have said nothing if it had not been for this gossip."

Though Mr. Spurgeon had described "Westwood" as being far too grand for him, he was very vexed when an American visitor published a grossly-exaggerated account of "its park, and meadows, and lakes, and streams, and statuary, and stables," which were supposed to rival those of the Queen at Windsor Castle! It would be difficult to find the "park", for the whole estate comprised less than nine acres,—three of which were leasehold;—and the numerous "lakes and streams" which the imaginative D.D. fancied that he saw, were all contained in the modest piece of water across which the prettiest view of the house can be obtained.

A PEEP ACROSS THE LAKE.
Mr. Spurgeon hoped that one effect of his removal to "Westwood" would be that he might enjoy better health than he had at Clapham; he even cherished the notion that the change would be so beneficial that he would not need to go to Mentone in the winter. But overwork exacted the same penalties in the new home as in the old one. For a time, the hydropathic appliances at the Beulah Spa seemed to afford relief; but, by-and-by, they also failed, and the Pastor, in his own expressive way, said that he had resolved to go to Heaven as the Israelites crossed the Jordan, dryshod. The friendly connection with the hydropathic establishment was, however, still maintained, for its proprietor was permitted to have a pipe running from his house to the well in Mr. Spurgeon's garden, so that any of the guests who desired to drink the Beulah Spa water might have a supply of it. The prospectus, issued at the time that "Westwood" was offered for sale, contained a very elaborate description of the virtues of the water, and its medicinal value as compared with that of other springs in England and on the Continent; but Mr. Spurgeon never concerned himself much about it, though he occasionally drank it himself, and gave others the opportunity of following his example.

Apart from its private uses, perhaps "Westwood" was never more thoroughly utilized than on the occasions when tutors and students gathered there, to spend a long and delightful day with their beloved President.* The rosary was the usual

* This happy custom has been continued annually by Mrs. C. H. Spurgeon.
place of meeting; and here, after partaking of refreshments, a brief devotional service was held, followed by the introduction of the new students. The name of nearly every one of them, or something about his previous calling, or the place from which he had come, furnished material for that ready wit with which Mr. Spurgeon brightened all parts of his service; and the freshmen were always warned that the festive proceedings of the opening day were not to be regarded as representative of the rest of their College career, which must be one of real hard work, so that they might derive all possible benefit from the season of preparation for the ministry.

As the brethren dispersed to their various forms of recreation, a number of them always chose the Puritan game of bowls; and in the summerhouse overlooking the lawn, the President and tutors watched them, and, at the same time, talked over any matters on which they might need to consult. Thus, on one occasion, a brother was called from his play to receive a commission to go to the Falkland Islands; another was summoned to go to the mission-field; while to others was entrusted
the honour of reviving some decaying church in an English village, or starting a new one amidst the dense population of London or some provincial town.

The top of the round tower, visible from the lawn, is the place from which a wide extent of country can be seen; and many of the students, in days past, sought and secured permission to "view the landscape o'er." The grand stand at Epsom is plainly discernible from the grounds; but, from the greater height, the tower on Leith Hill, and, in a peculiarly favourable state of the atmosphere, Windsor Castle also, can be descried.

The steps leading down to the lawn often formed a convenient rallying-point for the evening meeting, though sometimes the brethren were grouped around the upper summerhouse. Far away across Thornton Heath rolled the great volume of sound as the male choir of eighty to a hundred voices sang the sweet songs of Zion, of which the College anthem—"Hallelujah for the Cross!"—was certain to be one. The words spoken by the President, at those gatherings, are gratefully remembered by brethren now labouring for the Lord in various parts of the world.
During the day, informal meetings were held under "The Question Oak," which gained that name because, beneath its widely-spreading branches, Mr. Spurgeon allowed the students to put to him any enquiry that they pleased, and he answered them all without a moment's hesitation, and often interspersed his replies with the narration of striking incidents in his own experience, such as those recorded in Vol. III., pages 192-6.

The lake is not likely to be forgotten by some of the Pastors' College brethren who are now in the ministry. On the first visit of the students to "Westwood," the President told them to go wherever they pleased, and to explore the whole place. It was not very long before some of them discovered that there was a boat on the lake, and not many minutes more before the boat and all its crew had gone down into the mud!

Happily, the coachman's cottage was close by, so it became a place of
refuge for the shipwrecked collegians, who received the sympathetic attentions of
their brethren while their garments were being restored to a wearable condition;
and they were themselves temporarily clothed from the wardrobe of Mr. Spurgeon
and the coachman. As the students were not so stout as the former, nor so tall as
the latter, they were not very comfortable in their borrowed raiment; but, later in
the day, they appeared in their proper garb, and the President then turned the
adventure to practical account by warning them to keep clear of the muddy waters
of doubt, and not to trust themselves off terra firma unless they were sure of the
trustworthiness of their boat and the skill of the oarsman.

In addition to the students of the Pastors’ College, many other visitors have,
from time to time, been welcomed at “Westwood.” On one occasion, a party of
American friends, who had been worshipping at the Tabernacle on the Sabbath,
asked Mr. Thomas Cook, of Leicester, by whom they were being “personally
conducted” through London, to seek permission for them to see the preacher at his
home. This was readily accorded; and one of their number, Dr. J. G. Walker,
wrote, after Mr. Spurgeon’s home-going, a long and interesting account of their
reception. The following extract will convey a good idea of the impressions made
upon the Transatlantic visitors that day, and also on many others who, at different
times, saw the dear Pastor in his own house and garden:—

“Turning into the open gateway, a short drive along the thickly-shaded
carriage-way brings us to the house itself, now and ever to be known by the familiar
name of ‘Westwood.’ Mr. Spurgeon is at the carriage before we alight, and gives
us such a cordial greeting that we immediately feel at home ourselves. We spend a
few moments, in the rosary, in further social intercourse. Then, with cheerful,
though somewhat laboured, steps, our genial host leads us along the grass-bordered
walks around the house, down a winding pathway sheltered by overhanging trees,
over a little rustic bridge, and along the edge of a miniature lake; then out upon a
sloping stretch of open ground, from the summit of which the ‘Westwood’ dwelling
sends down its sunny glances, and beyond which the widening expanse of a
picturesque English landscape suggests to heart and voice alike the familiar
melody ‘Sweet Beulah Land.’

“At every step, we find ourselves drawn closer and closer to the man himself,
as, with unaffected simplicity, and with easy, brilliant, entertaining conversation, he
makes the moments pass too quickly by. Recalling these glimpses of the social
and domestic life of the great preacher, leads me to indicate a few of the impressions
that are most tenderly cherished. I was especially struck with his love of nature.
He lived in loving acquaintance with his beautiful surroundings. He seemed to be
on terms of closest intimacy with every leaf, and plant, and flower; and, without
question, this may very largely account for his own marked naturalness in speech and movement, both in the pulpit and out of it. Like the leaves, and plants, and flowers, he loved to be just what God made him.

"'Come into my picture gallery,' said he, 'and let me show you some pictures painted by God Himself.' Again we found ourselves at the entrance to the rosary, where our attention was directed to certain openings which had been made in the dense foliage. Placing us in the proper positions before these open spaces, he invited us to look through them; and, as we did so, we found ourselves gazing upon natural pictures that were all the more beautiful because they enabled us, as well as the owner of the gallery, to 'look through nature up to nature's God.' In all these methods of expression, there was not the least show of affectation, or any assumption of sanctimoniousness. The entire conduct and conversation of the man, both in his private walks and public ways, breathed out the fervour and the frankness of a soul who knows and loves God, and who lives and communes with his Saviour."

A visitor at "Westwood," who professed to have come from the United States, was received by Mr. Spurgeon with considerable cordiality because he announced himself as "Captain Beecher, the son of Henry Ward Beecher." He was conducted through the grounds, and had the special attractions of the place pointed out to him; and he, on his part, managed very well to sustain the rôle he had assumed until, just before leaving, he said, "Oh, Mr. Spurgeon! excuse me for making such a request, but could you change a cheque for me? Unfortunately, I waited until after the bank was closed, and I want some money very particularly to-night." The dear Pastor's suspicions were at once aroused, and he said, with pardonable severity, "I do not think you ought to make such a request to me. If you are really Mr. Beecher's son, you must be able, through the American consul, or some friend, to get your cheque cashed, without coming to a complete stranger;" and, foiled in his attempt, the young man departed. A few days afterwards, a gentleman was murdered in a carriage on the Brighton railway; and when the portrait of the criminal, Lefroy, was published in the papers, Mr. Spurgeon immediately recognized the features of his recent visitor, though he never understood the reason for the man's strange call at "Westwood."

One place to which "Westwood" visitors were sure to be taken was the fernery; and among the many treasures to which their attention was directed, the mother-fern was never forgotten, and most of them received from the dear owner, as living mementos of their visit, some of the baby-ferns growing on the parent-plant. At one of the Tabernacle prayer-meetings, Mr. Spurgeon gave an address upon the
mother-fern, in which he urged his hearers to seek to be spiritually what it was naturally, and, by the grace of God, to be the means of reproducing themselves in their converts, in whom the same blessed process might be repeated by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.

At one time, bees were kept at "Westwood," and Mr. Spurgeon was intensely interested in watching them whenever he had a few minutes to spare, or any visitors who could explain their various movements. The scientific lecturer at the Pastors' College, at that period, was Professor Frank Cheshire,—a great authority on bees and bee-culture; and he was delighted to place his wide knowledge of the subject at the dear President's disposal. One day, he brought with him a Ligurian queen, which he had procured on purpose to add to the value of the Pastor's busy bees, and he was delighted to see how quickly her majesty made herself at home among her English subjects.

After a while, Mr. Spurgeon noticed that the little creatures appeared to have to fly so far afield, to "gather honey all the day," that they seemed quite tired out
when they reached the hives, or fell exhausted before they could get back to their homes. There was also much difficulty in keeping them alive through the winter; so he, reluctantly, parted with them. Before he did so, however, he had one experience, connected with them, which he never forgot. On a calm summer's evening, he was standing to watch them, when, without giving him any warning, hundreds of them settled on his clothes, and began crawling all over him. He rushed upstairs, stripped off all his garments, threw them quickly out of the bedroom window, and, marvellous to relate, he escaped without a single sting.

One Monday morning, not long after removing to "Westwood," the whole household was in a state of consternation because there had been a burglary during the night. On the Sabbath evening, a service had been held in the study, and a small window had been opened for ventilation. It was not noticed at the time for locking up, so it remained open, and made it a comparatively easy matter for a thief to enter. He did not get much for his pains, and his principal plunder almost led to his arrest. Mr. John B. Gough had given to Mr. Spurgeon a valuable stick as a token of his affection; this was amongst the burglar's booty, and, after hammering out of shape the gold with which it was adorned, he offered it for sale at a pawnbroker's in the Borough. It was possible still to read the name, C. H. Spurgeon, in the precious metal, so an assistant was despatched for the police; but, before they arrived, the man decamped, and was not seen again.

Annoying as the incident was, the Pastor always said that he was decidedly a gainer by the transaction. With the amount he received for the battered gold, he bought some books which were of more use to him than the handsome stick would ever have been. Then the Trustees of the Orphanage felt that, as he was the Treasurer of the various Institutions, and often had money, and documents of value, belonging to them, in his possession, he ought to have a safe in which to keep them, so they presented one to him. The burglar had thrown down, in the study, a number of lighted matches, and the loose papers in various parts of the room were set on fire, so that a great conflagration might easily have resulted, if the Lord had not graciously prevented such a calamity. Thankfulness for this providential escape was followed by the recollection that, since the transfer of the property from the former owner, the premises had not been insured, so that the loss, in case of fire, would have been serious. That neglect was speedily remedied; and, by means of electric bells, and other arrangements, special protection was provided for the future.

News of the burglary was published, in various papers, with considerable exaggeration; and, perhaps as the result of the publicity thus given, Mr. Spurgeon received a letter, purporting to have been written by the thief; and it bore so many marks of being a genuine epistle that it was really believed that it came from the
man himself. Among other things, he said that he didn't know it was "the horlings' Spurgin" who lived there, for he would not have robbed him, and he put the very pertinent question, "Why don't you shut your windows and keep a dog?" From that time, dates the entry to "Westwood" of "Punch"—the pug concerning whom his master testified that he knew more than any dog ever ought to know!

"PUNCH" AND "GYP."

One Thursday evening, when preaching at the Tabernacle, Mr. Spurgeon introduced his canine friend into the sermon, and turned to good account his pugnacious propensities:—"I think that I have heard preachers who have seemed to me to bring out a doctrine on purpose to fight over it. I have a dog, that has a rug in which he sleeps; and when I go home to-night, he will bring it out, and shake it before me,—not that he particularly cares for his rug, but because he knows that I shall say, 'I'll have it,' and then he will bark at me, and in his language say, 'No, you won't.' There are some people who fetch out the doctrines of grace just in that way. I can see them trotting along with the doctrine of election just in order that some Arminian brother may dispute with them about it, and that then they may bark at him. Do not act so, beloved."

In many of his letters from Mentone, Mr. Spurgeon mentioned his dog; a few extracts will show how fond he was of the intelligent creature:—"I wonder whether Punchie thinks of his master. When we drove from the station here, a certain doggie barked at the horses in true Punchistic style, and reminded me of my old friend. . . . Punchie sending me his love pleased me very much. Poor doggie, pat him for me, and give him a tit-bit for my sake. . . . I dreamed of old Punch; I hope the poor dog is better. . . . Kind memories to all, including Punch. How is he getting on? I rejoice that his life is prolonged, and hope he will live till my return. May his afflictions be a blessing to him in the sweetening of his temper! . . . Tell Punchie, 'Master is coming!'"

"Punchie," on his part, was very much attached to his dear owner, except when
Mr. Spurgeon had the gout, and then the old dog would not go near the poor sufferer. The faithful friend in the time of affliction was "Punch's" son, "Gyp." He was not as wise as his father; indeed, he was often called a stupid creature, and his master made a telling illustration out of his folly in barking at thunder. The paragraph may fittingly end the present chapter, for it shows how Mr. Spurgeon employed in his Lord's service even the slightest incidents that occurred in his own home.

On that occasion, he wrote:—"The first time our young dog heard the thunder, it startled him. He leaped up, gazed around in anger, and then began to bark at the disturber of his peace. When the next crash came, he grew furious, and flew round the room, seeking to tear in pieces the intruder who dared thus to defy him. It was an odd scene. The yelping of a dog pitted against the artillery of heaven! Poor foolish creature, to think that his bark could silence the thunder-clap, or intimidate the tempest! What was he like? His imitators are not far to seek. Among us, at this particular juncture, there are men of an exceedingly doggish breed, who go about howling at their Maker. They endeavour to bark the Almighty out of existence, to silence the voice of His gospel, and to let Him know that their rest is not to be disturbed by His warnings. We need not particularize; the creatures are often heard, and are very fond of public note, even when it takes an unfriendly form. Let them alone. They present a pitiful spectacle. We could smile at them if we did not feel much more compelled to weep. The elements of a tragedy are wrapt up in this comedy. To day, they defy their Maker; but, to-morrow, they may be crushed beneath His righteous indignation. At any rate, the idea of fearing them must never occur to us; their loudest noise is vocalized folly; their malice is impotent, their fury is mere fume. 'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.'"