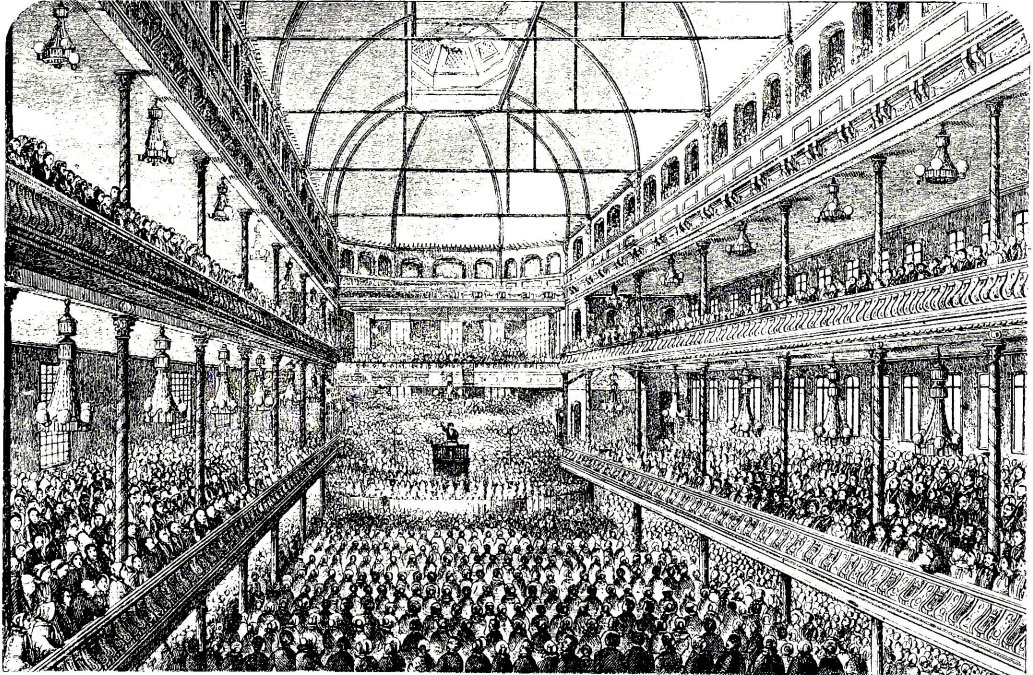


CHAPTER LI.

Later Services at the Music Hall.



C. H. SPURGEON PREACHING IN THE SURREY GARDENS MUSIC HALL.

Standing in this pulpit, this morning, I recall to myself that evening of sorrow when I saw my people scattered, like sheep without a shepherd, trodden upon, injured, and many of them killed. Do you recollect how you cried for your minister, that he might be restored to a reason that was then tottering? Can you recollect how you prayed that, out of evil, God would bring forth good, that all the curses of the wicked might be rolled back upon themselves, and that God would yet fill this place with His glory? And do you remember how long ago that is, and how God has been with us ever since, and how many of those, who were injured that night, are now members of our church, and are praising God that they ever entered this hall? Oh! shall we not love the Lord? There is not a church in London that has had such answers to prayer as we have had; there has not been a church that has had such cause to pray. We have had special work, special trial, special deliverance, and we ought pre-eminently to be a church, loving God, and spending and being spent in His service.—C. H. S., *in sermon preached at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, February 27, 1859.*

I cannot speak, as a grey-headed man, of the storms and troubles which many of you have endured; but I have had more joys and more sorrows, in the last few years, than any man in this place, for my life has been compressed as with a Bramah press,—a vast mass of emotion into one year. I have gone to the very bottoms of the mountains, as some of you know, in a night that never can be erased from my memory,—a night connected with this place. I have had also to pass through severe

suffering and trial from the calumny and scorn of man, while abuse hailed pitilessly on my head. And I have had to endure acute bodily pain; but, as far as my witness goes, I can say that the Lord is able to save unto the uttermost, and in the last extremity, and He has been a good God to me.—C. H. S., *in sermon at the Music Hall, May 22, 1859.*

In the best work for the Lord, we have no guarantee against accidents, and the losses which they occasion. The young prophet, in the days of Elisha, was most laudably engaged, yet the head of his axe flew off, and fell into the water. Those who conclude that every successful work has the smile of God upon it, should remember that Babylon was mistress among the nations, and none could stand against her, yet was she abhorred of the Lord. Those, on the other hand, who see, in every temporary calamity, a proof that an enterprise is not according to the Lord's mind, might condemn the preaching of the gospel itself, since in its very infancy it subjected so many to persecution and to cruel death. "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth;" and the works which He approves, He often renders difficult. When the preacher at the Surrey Music Hall saw his congregation scattered by the uproar of wicked men, and mourned over precious life which was so suddenly sacrificed, there were friends who read in that shocking disaster an omen that the work was not of God, and that the preacher must desist; but the young man did not believe in omens, but in duty; and, therefore, as soon as he could, he reappeared in his pulpit, and as the result of his after-ministry in that place, it is not too much to say that thousands found Christ by his direct teaching, while the preaching of the Word in cathedrals, abbeys, music-halls, and theatres, became a tolerated agency, and even a popular method of evangelization.—C. H. S., *in "The Sword and the Trowel," 1868.*



HE preaching in the Music Hall was resumed in the morning only, so that daylight prevented any further deed of darkness, although the evening would have been a time more favourable for the gathering of large congregations. Our first morning service there was held on November 23, 1856, and our last on December 11, 1859. In the providence of God, the great hall was ready exactly when it was needed, and it was available for use almost as long as it was required. The rent paid for its occupation, during the mornings only, was a respectable item in its accounts, but Sunday takings were preferred to this sure income. The Sabbath before the gardens were opened to the public on the Lord's-day, we cleared out of the place, and with our occupancy, there departed from the company its chief source of revenue. Its downward way to ruin was rapid enough from that hour; both morally and financially it sank hopelessly. We, that is, preacher and people, are bound to commemorate the kind providence which found us such a shelter at a time when we could not otherwise have obtained one for ourselves. All classes—from the Prime Minister downwards—heard the Word there; at no time have so many of the aristocracy made acquaintance with Nonconformist worship. The list of notable persons present on any one Sunday is a long one: statesmen, nobles, divines, great travellers, and all sorts of distinguished persons came to hear the preacher at the Surrey Gardens. Their presence and aid were hopeful signs that the building of our permanent house of prayer would be the provision of a necessity, and that we could accomplish the heavy task. As for the multitude, they were always there in force; and these, not only from the religious section of society, but largely from those who never went to public worship. The reading of newspapers before the commencement of service, though in itself objectionable enough, was the proof that

those were present for whom the effort was designed. The best of all is, that God was with us. Conversions were numerous, and some of them were of a very striking kind; they were mainly from that stratum of society which is not touched by ordinary religious services. Though the hall is completely swept away, it will never cease to hold a place in the memory of those to whom it was their spiritual birthplace. All along through the years in which we worshipped in it, there were continual additions to the church, perpetual discoveries of fresh workers, and constant initiations of new enterprises. The College, Orphanage, Colportage, Evangelists, College Missions, and our various branch mission-stations, have all benefited through the advance made by the church during those services. We have seen good brought out of evil; and in our case we have been made to say with the psalmist, "Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads: we went through fire and through water; but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place."

When I began to preach at the Surrey Gardens, I had such a diversified congregation as few men have ever had to address from Sabbath to Sabbath. God alone knows what anxiety I experienced in selecting my subjects and arranging my appeals for such a vast fluctuating assembly. There was a time when my brain was all in a whirl at the very thought of ascending that pulpit, while for all the services among my own people I enjoyed the greatest liberty. With the confidence of one who felt his heart at ease amidst the home-circle of his own family, I spoke as if my perfect love to the brotherhood had cast out all fear of missing the mark, or failing in the true work of a Pastor. There was all the difference between preaching in the hall, and in the chapel, that might be expected from the contrast between the neutral ground occupied in the one case and the sacred prestige enjoyed in the other.

(After a time, in addition to the great numbers of strangers who always flocked to the Music Hall, so large a part of the assembly consisted of Mr. Spurgeon's regular hearers that he felt almost as much at home there as in New Park Street Chapel, and he adapted his preaching to the altered condition of affairs. In a discourse delivered on Lord's-day morning, February 28, 1858, he said:—"When first I preached in this hall, my congregation assumed the appearance of an irregular mass of persons collected from all parts of this city to listen to the Word. I was then simply an evangelist, preaching to many who had not heard the gospel before. By the grace of God, the most blessed change has taken place; and now, instead of having an irregular multitude gathered together, my congregation is as fixed as that of any minister in the whole of London. I can, from this pulpit, observe the countenances of my friends, who have occupied the same places, as nearly as possible, for these many months; and I have the privilege and the

pleasure of knowing that a very large proportion, certainly three-fourths of the people who meet together here, are not persons who stray hither from curiosity, but are my regular and constant hearers. And, observe, that my character also has been changed. From being an evangelist, it is now my business to become your Pastor in this place, as well as in the chapel where I labour in the evening. I think, then, it will strike the judgment of every person that, as both the congregation and myself have now changed, the teaching itself should in some measure show a difference. It has been my wont to address you from the simple truths of the gospel; I have very seldom, in this place, attempted to dive into the deep things of God. A text, which I have thought suitable for my congregation in the evening, I should not have made the subject of discussion in this hall in the morning. There are many high and mysterious doctrines which I have often taken the opportunity of handling in my own place, but which I have not felt at liberty to introduce here, regarding you as a company of people casually gathered together to hear the Word. But now, since the circumstances are changed, the teaching will be changed also. I shall not now simply confine myself to the doctrine of faith, or the teaching of believers' baptism; I shall not stay upon the surface of truth, but shall venture, as God shall guide me, to enter into those things that lie at the basis of the religion that we hold so dear. I shall not blush to preach before you the doctrine of God's Divine Sovereignty; I shall not hesitate to proclaim, in the most unreserved and unguarded manner, the doctrine of election. I shall not be afraid to propound the great truth of the final perseverance of the saints; I shall not withhold that undoubted teaching of Scripture, the effectual calling of God's elect; I shall endeavour, as God shall help me, to keep back nothing from you who have become my flock. Seeing that many of you have now 'tasted that the Lord is gracious,' we will endeavour to go through the whole system of the doctrines of grace, that saints may be edified and built up in their most holy faith."

The following Sabbath, the Pastor preached on "Human Inability," from our Lord's words, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." A little later, he discoursed upon "Human Responsibility," taking for his text another of Christ's most weighty sayings: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin." Not long afterwards, he sought to set forth both sides of Divine truth in a sermon entitled, "Sovereign Grace and Man's Responsibility," in which he avoided the errors of Arminianism on the one hand, and those of Hyper-Calvinism on the other. In course of time, either at the Surrey Gardens or at New Park Street Chapel, Mr. Spurgeon had expounded all the doctrines of grace; and one result of that method of teaching the truth was thus described by him:—

"Among the many candidates for baptism and church-membership, who

came forward every month, there were great numbers of young people, and others of riper years who had but recently found the Saviour; and I was delighted to hear them, one after another, not only express themselves clearly upon the great fundamental truth of justification by faith, but also give clear evidence that they were well instructed in the doctrines that cluster around the covenant of grace. I believe that one reason why our church has been, for these many years, so signally blessed of God, is that the great majority of those who have been added to our ranks have been well established in the old-fashioned faith of the Puritans and the Covenanters, and therefore have not been turned aside or drawn away from us. It used to be said, in those early days, that we were taking into the church 'a parcel of girls and boys.' I remember, long afterwards, at one of our great gatherings in the Tabernacle, reminding our friends of this contemptuous remark, whereat they laughed, and then I added, 'I am happy to have around me, still, those very same girls and boys,—they are a good deal older now,—and many of *their* sons and daughters have followed their parents' example, while some even of the grandchildren of my early converts are already united with us.'")

So far as the general public was concerned, the Music Hall services were a great evangelistic campaign, in which "the slain of the Lord" were many. I determined that, whether my hearers would receive the gospel, or reject it, they should at least understand it; and therefore I preached it in plain, homely Saxon that a child could comprehend, and with all the earnestness of which I was capable. I recollect a friend saying to me, one Sabbath, as we went down the stairs from the hall, "There are eight thousand people, this morning, who will be without excuse at the day of judgment;" and I hope that was the case many another time as the vast multitude dispersed from the Surrey Gardens. I did not please everybody even then; and some found fault who ought to have been my best friends. I recollect great complaint being made against my sermon on the words, "Compel them to come in," in which I was enabled to speak with much tenderness and compassion for souls. The violent, rigid school of Hyper-Calvinists said that the discourse was Arminian and unsound; but it was a small matter to me to be condemned by the judgment of men, for my Master set His seal very clearly upon that message. I think I never preached another sermon by which so many souls were won to God, as our church-meetings long continued to testify; and all over the world, wherever the printed discourse has been scattered, sinners have been saved through its instrumentality; and, therefore, if it be vile to exhort sinners to come to Christ, I purpose to be viler still. I am as firm a believer in the doctrines of grace as any man living, and a true Calvinist after the order of John Calvin himself; and probably I have read more of his works than any one of my accusers ever did; but if it be thought

an evil thing to bid sinners "lay hold on eternal life," I will be yet more evil in this respect, and herein imitate not only Calvin, but also my Lord and His apostles, who, though they taught that salvation is of grace, and grace alone, feared not to speak to men as rational beings and responsible agents, and to bid them "strive to enter in at the strait gate," and "labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life."

Among the sermons preached in the Music Hall, another which was very greatly blessed was the one entitled, "Looking unto Jesus." It was often mentioned by converts who were brought to the Lord through hearing it delivered; and when it was published, and scattered abroad, I received many testimonies that the reading of it had been attended with a like unction from on high. This fact I do not wonder at, for it is but another proof of the Sovereignty of God, since the discourse is one of the most simple of the series, and would probably be overlooked by those who were seeking for anything original and striking. The Master is in the sermon; and, therefore, it has rejoiced the hearts of His people, when applied by the Holy Spirit. I value a discourse, not by the approbation of men, nor by the ability manifest in it; but by the effect produced in comforting the saint, and awakening the sinner. The sermon on "The Shameful Sufferer" was the means of a great blessing to very many. Christ bleeding always makes the heart bleed, and His shame makes men ashamed of sin. Let but the Holy Spirit open the eyes of men to behold a sorrowing Saviour, and they will at once sorrow for sin.

There were many instances of remarkable conversions at the Music Hall; one especially was so singular that I have often related it as a proof that God sometimes guides His servants to say what they would themselves never have thought of uttering, in order that He may bless the hearer for whom the message is personally intended. While preaching in the hall, on one occasion, I deliberately pointed to a man in the midst of the crowd, and said, "There is a man sitting there, who is a shoemaker; he keeps his shop open on Sundays, it was open last Sabbath morning, he took ninepence, and there was fourpence profit out of it; his soul is sold to Satan for fourpence!" A city missionary, when going his rounds, met with this man, and seeing that he was reading one of my sermons, he asked the question, "Do you know Mr. Spurgeon?" "Yes," replied the man, "I have every reason to know him, I have been to hear him; and, under his preaching, by God's grace I have become a new creature in Christ Jesus. Shall I tell you how it happened? I went to the Music Hall, and took my seat in the middle of the place; Mr. Spurgeon looked at me as if he knew me, and in his sermon he pointed to me, and told the congregation that I was a shoemaker, and that I kept my shop open on Sundays; and I did, sir. I should not have minded that; but he also said that I took ninepence the Sunday

before, and that there was fourpence profit out of it. I did take ninepence that day, and fourpence was just the profit ; but how he should know that, I could not tell. Then it struck me that it was God who had spoken to my soul through him, so I shut up my shop the next Sunday. At first, I was afraid to go again to hear him, lest he should tell the people more about me ; but afterwards I went, and the Lord met with me, and saved my soul."

I could tell as many as a dozen similar cases in which I pointed at somebody in the hall without having the slightest knowledge of the person, or any idea that what I said was right, except that I believed I was moved by the Spirit to say it ; and so striking has been my description, that the persons have gone away, and said to their friends, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did ; beyond a doubt, he must have been sent of God to my soul, or else he could not have described me so exactly." And not only so, but I have known many instances in which the thoughts of men have been revealed from the pulpit. I have sometimes seen persons nudge their neighbours with their elbow, because they had got a smart hit, and they have been heard to say, when they were going out, "The preacher told us just what we said to one another when we went in at the door."

Several persons who joined the church at New Park Street, traced their conversion to the ministry in the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, but they said it was not the preaching alone, but another agency co-operating with it that was the means of bringing them to decision. They were fresh from the country, and one of our friends, who is in Heaven now, met them at the gate, spoke to them, said he hoped they had enjoyed what they had heard, asked them if they were coming to the chapel in the evening, and told them he would be glad if they would be at his house to tea ; they went, he had a word with them about the Master, and then brought them again to our service. The next Sunday the same thing occurred ; and, at last, those whom the sermons had not much impressed, were brought to hear with other ears, till, through the good old man's persuasive words, and the good Lord's gracious work, they were converted to God.

While I was preaching at the Music Hall, an unknown censor, of great ability, used to send me a weekly list of my mispronunciations and other slips of speech. He never signed his name, and that was my only cause of complaint against him, for he left me with a debt which I could not discharge. With genial temper, and an evident desire to benefit me, he marked down most relentlessly everything which he supposed me to have said incorrectly. Concerning some of his criticisms, he was himself in error ; but, for the most part, he was right, and his remarks enabled me to perceive many mistakes, and to avoid them in the future. I looked for his weekly memoranda with much interest, and I trust I am all the better for them. If I repeated a sentence which I had used two or three Sundays before, he would write,

"See the same expression in such-and-such a sermon," mentioning the number and page. He remarked, on one occasion, that I too often quoted the line,—

"Nothing in my hand I bring,"—

and he added, "we are sufficiently informed of the vacuity of your hand." He demanded my authority for calling a man *covechus*; and so on. Possibly, some young men might have been discouraged, if not irritated, by such severe criticisms; but they would have been very foolish, for, in resenting such correction, they would have been throwing away a valuable aid to progress.

(The last service at the Surrey Gardens was held on Lord's-day morning, December 11, 1859. Mr. Spurgeon preached, on that occasion, from Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders: "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." That discourse so well summarizes his three years' ministry in the Music Hall that an extract from it may be appropriately inserted here:—

"If any of us would clear our conscience by delivering all the counsel of God, we must take care that we preach, in the first place, *the doctrines of the gospel*. We ought to declare that grand doctrine of the Father's love towards His people from before all worlds. His sovereign choice of them, His covenant purposes concerning them, and His immutable promises to them, must all be uttered with trumpet tongue. Coupled with this, the true evangelist must never fail to set forth the beauties of the person of Christ, the glory of His offices, the completeness of His work, and, above all, the efficacy of His blood. Whatever we omit, this must be in the most forcible manner proclaimed again and again. That is no gospel which has not Christ in it; and the modern idea of preaching THE TRUTH instead of Christ, is a wicked device of Satan. Nor is this all, for as there are three Persons in the Godhead, we must be careful that They all have due honour in our ministry. The Holy Spirit's work in regeneration, in sanctification, and in preservation, must be always magnified from our pulpit. Without His power, our ministry is a dead letter, and we cannot expect His arm to be made bare unless we honour Him day by day.

"Upon all these matters we are agreed, and I therefore turn to points upon which there is more dispute, and consequently more need of honest avowal, because more temptation to concealment. To proceed then:—I question whether we have preached all the counsel of God, unless predestination, with all its solemnity and sureness, be continually declared,—unless election be boldly and nakedly taught as being one of the truths revealed of God. It is the minister's duty, beginning from the fountain-head, to trace all the other streams; dwelling on effectual calling,

maintaining justification by faith, insisting upon the certain perseverance of the believer, and delighting to proclaim that gracious covenant in which all these things are contained, and which is sure to all the chosen, blood-bought seed. There is a tendency in this age to throw doctrinal truth into the shade. Too many preachers are offended with that stern truth which the Covenanters held, and to which the Puritans testified in the midst of a licentious age. We are told that the times have changed, that we are to modify these old (so-called) Calvinistic doctrines, and bring them down to the tone of the times ; that, in fact, they need dilution, that men have become so intelligent that we must pare off the angles of our religion, and make the square into a circle by rounding off the most prominent edges. Any man who does this, so far as my judgment goes, does not declare all the counsel of God. The faithful minister must be plain, simple, pointed, with regard to these doctrines. There must be no dispute about whether he believes them or not. He must so preach them that his hearers will know whether he preaches a scheme of free-will, or a covenant of grace,—whether he teaches salvation by works, or salvation by the power and grace of God.

“But, beloved, a man might preach all these doctrines to the full, and yet not declare all the counsel of God. It is not enough to preach doctrine ; we must preach *duty*, we must faithfully and firmly insist upon *practice*. So long as you will preach nothing but bare doctrine, there is a certain class of men, of perverted intellect, who will admire you ; but once begin to preach responsibility,—say outright, once for all, that if the sinner perish, it is his own fault, that if any man sinks to hell, his damnation will lie at his own door, and at once there is a cry of ‘Inconsistency ; how can these two things stand together?’ Even good Christian men are found who cannot endure the whole truth, and who will oppose the servant of the Lord who will not be content with a fragment, but will honestly present the whole gospel of Christ. This is one of the troubles that the faithful minister has to endure ; but he is not faithful to God,—I say it solemnly, I do not believe that any man is even faithful to his own conscience, who can preach simply the doctrine of Sovereignty, and neglect to insist upon the doctrine of responsibility. I do assuredly believe that every man who sinks into hell shall have himself alone to curse for it. The apostle Paul knew how to dare public opinion, and on one hand to preach the duty of man, and on the other the Sovereignty of God. I would borrow the wings of an eagle, and fly to the utmost height of high doctrine when I am preaching Divine Sovereignty. God hath absolute and unlimited power over men to do with them as He pleases, even as the potter doeth with the clay. Let not the creature question the Creator, for He hath given no account of His matters. But when I preach concerning man, and look at the other aspect of truth, I dive to the utmost depth. I am, if you will so call me, a low doctrine man in that, for as an honest

messenger of Christ I must use His own language, and cry, 'He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God.'

"Moreover, if a man would declare all the counsel of God, and not shun to do so, he must be very outspoken concerning the crying sins of the times. The honest minister does not merely condemn sin in the mass, he singles out separate sins in his hearers; and without drawing the bow at a venture, he puts an arrow on the string, and the Holy Spirit sends it right home to the individual conscience. He who is true to his God looks to his congregation as separate individuals; and he endeavours to adapt his discourse to men's consciences, so that they will perceive he speaks of them. If there be a vice that you should shun, if there be an error that you should avoid, if there be a duty that you ought to fulfil, if all these things be not mentioned in the discourses from the pulpit, the minister has shunned to declare all the counsel of God. If there be one sin that is rife in the neighbourhood, and especially in the congregation, should the minister avoid that particular vice in order to avoid offending you, he has been untrue to his calling, dishonest to his God.

"But, then, let me remark further, the true minister of Christ feels impelled to preach the whole truth, because it and it alone can meet the wants of man. The believer in Christ, if he is to be kept pure, simple, holy, charitable, Christ-like, is only to be kept so by the preaching of the whole truth as it is in Jesus. And as for the salvation of sinners, ah! my hearers, we can never expect God to bless our ministry to the conversion of sinners, unless we preach the gospel as a whole. Let me get but one part of the truth, and always dwell upon it, to the exclusion of every other, and I cannot expect my Master's blessing; but if I preach as He would have me preach, He will certainly own the Word; He will never leave it without His own living witness. But let me imagine that I can improve the gospel, that I can make it consistent, that I can dress it up and make it look finer, I shall find that my Master has departed, and that 'Ichabod' is written on the walls of the sanctuary. How many there are kept in bondage through neglect of gospel invitations! They go up to the house of God, longing to be saved, and there is nothing but predestination for them. On the other hand, what multitudes are kept in darkness through practical preaching! It is, 'Do! Do! Do!' and nothing but 'Do!' and the poor soul comes away, and says, 'Of what use is that command to me? I can do nothing. Oh, that I had the way of salvation pointed out as available for me!'

"I must now address to you a VERY FEW EARNEST, SINCERE, AND AFFECTIONATE WORDS BY WAY OF FAREWELL. I wish not to say anything in self-commendation; I will not be my own witness as to my faithfulness; but I appeal to you, I take you to witness this day, that 'I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.' Often have I come into this pulpit in great weakness, and I have far more often

gone away in great sorrow, because I have not preached to you as earnestly as I desired. I confess to many errors and failings, and more especially to a want of earnestness when engaged in prayer for your souls; but there is one charge of which my conscience acquits me, this morning, and I think you will acquit me, too, 'for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.' If in anything I have erred, it has been an error of judgment. I may have been mistaken; but, so far as I have learned the truth, I can say that no fear of public opinion, nor of private opinion, has ever turned me aside from that which I hold to be the truth of my Lord and Master. I have preached to you the precious things of the gospel. I have endeavoured, to the utmost of my ability, to preach grace in all its fulness, I know the preciousness of that doctrine in my own experience; God forbid that I should preach any other! If we are not saved by grace, we can never be saved at all. If, from first to last, the work of salvation be not in God's hands, none of us can ever see His face with acceptance. I preach this doctrine, not from choice, but from absolute necessity; for if this doctrine be not true, then are we lost souls; your faith is vain, our preaching is vain, and we are still in our sins, and there we must continue to the end. But, on the other hand, I can also say, I have not shunned to exhort, to invite, to entreat; I have bidden the sinner come to Christ. I have been urged not to do so, but I could not resist it. With bowels yearning over perishing souls, I could not conclude without crying, 'Come to Jesus, sinner, come.' With eyes weeping for sinners, I am compelled to bid them come to Jesus. It is not possible for me to dwell upon doctrine without invitation. If you come not to Christ, it is not for want of calling, or because I have not wept over your sins, and travailed in birth for the souls of men. The one thing I have to ask of you is this,—Bear me witness, my hearers, bear me witness that, in this respect, I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have preached all that I know of the whole counsel of God. Have I known a single sin which I have not rebuked? Has there been a doctrine that I have believed which I have kept back? Has there been a part of the Word, doctrinal or experimental, which I have wilfully concealed? I am very far from perfect, again with weeping I confess my unworthiness, I have not served God as I ought to have done, I have not been so earnest with you as I could have desired to be. Now that my three years' ministry here is over, I could wish that I might begin again, that I might fall on my knees before you, and beseech you to regard the things that make for your peace; but here, again, I do repeat it that, while as to earnestness I plead guilty, yet as to truth and honesty I can challenge the bar of God, I can challenge the elect angels, I can call you all to witness, that I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

“In a little time, some of you may be frequenting places where the gospel is not preached, you may embrace another and a false gospel; I only ask this thing of you,

—Bear me witness that it was not my fault, that I have been faithful, and have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Possibly, some here, who have been restrained from evil by the fact of having attended a place of worship, seeing the chosen minister has gone, may not go anywhere else afterwards. You may become careless. Perhaps, next Sabbath-day you may be at home, lolling about, and wasting the day; but there is one thing I should like to say before you make up your mind not to attend the house of God again,—Bear me witness that I have been faithful with you. It may be that some here, who have professedly run well for a time while they have been hearing the Word, may go back; some of you may go right into the world again, you may become drunkards, swearers, and the like. God forbid that it should be so! But I charge you, if you plunge into sin, do at least say this one thing for him who desired nothing so much as to see you saved, say I have been honest to you; that I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. O my hearers, some of you in a little time will be on your dying beds! When your pulse is feeble, when the terrors of grim death are round about you, if you are still unconverted to Christ, there is one thing I shall want you to add to your last will and testament, it is this,—the exclusion of the poor minister, who stands before you this day, from any share in that desperate folly of yours which has led you to neglect your own soul. Have I not implored you to repent? Have I not bidden you look to Christ ere death surprises you? Have I not exhorted you, my hearers, to lay hold upon the hope set before you in the gospel? O sinner, when thou art wading through the black river, cast back no taunt on me as though I was thy murderer, for in this thing I can say, ‘I wash my hands in innocency; I am clear of thy blood.’ But the day is coming when we shall all meet again; this great assembly shall be merged into a greater one, as the drop loses itself in the ocean; and, in that day, if I have not warned you, if I have been an unfaithful watchman, your blood will be required at my hands; if I have not preached Christ to you, and bidden you flee to Him for refuge, then, though you perish, your soul shall be required of me. I beseech you, if you laugh at me, if you reject my message, if you despise Christ, if you hate His gospel, if you will be damned, yet at least give me an acquittal of your blood. I see some before me who do not often hear me; and yet I can say concerning them that they have been the subject of my private prayers; and often, too, of my tears, when I have seen them going on in their iniquities. Well, I do ask this one thing, and as honest men you cannot deny it me; if you will have your sins, if you will be lost, if you will not come to Christ, at least, amid the thunders of the last great day, acquit me of having helped to destroy your souls.

“What can I say more? How shall I plead with you? Had I an angel's tongue, and the heart of the Saviour, then would I plead; but I cannot say more

than I have often done. In God's name, I beseech you, flee to Christ for refuge. If all hath not sufficed before, let this suffice thee now. Come, guilty soul, and flee away to Him whose wide-open arms are willing to receive every soul that fleeth to Him in penitence and faith. In a little time, the preacher himself will lie stretched upon his bed. A few more days of solemn meeting, a few more sermons, a few more prayers, and I think I see myself in yon upper chamber, with friends watching around me. He who has preached to thousands now needs consolation for himself; he who has cheered many in the article of death is now passing through the river himself. My hearers, shall there be any of you, whom I shall see upon my death-bed, who shall charge me with being unfaithful? Shall these eyes be haunted with the visions of men whom I have amused, and interested, but into whose hearts I have never sought to convey the truth? Shall I lie there, and shall these mighty congregations pass in dreary panorama before me; and as they subside before my eyes, one after the other, shall each one curse me as being unfaithful? God forbid! I trust you will do me this favour that, when I lie a-dying, you will allow that I am clear of the blood of all men, and have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Thunders such as have never been heard before must roll over this poor head, and lightnings more terrific than have ever scathed the fiend shall blast this heart, if I have been unfaithful to you. My position—if I had but once preached the Word to these crowds, not to speak of many hundreds of times,—my position were the most awful in the whole universe if I were unfaithful. Oh, may God avert that worst of ills—unfaithfulness—from my head! Now, as here I stand, I make this my last appeal: 'I pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.' But if ye will not be, I ask you this single favour,—and I think you will not deny it me,—take the blame of your own ruin, for I am pure from the blood of all men, since I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

On page 222, Mr. Spurgeon states that, after the preaching at the Surrey Music Hall was discontinued, "both morally and financially it sank hopelessly." A remarkable confirmation of this assertion came to hand while this volume was in course of preparation. It was contained in a letter written by a Christian man who was baptized in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, in November, 1897, but who had long before been employed at the hall under the circumstances which he describes. In his communication, the names of all the persons mentioned are given in full; he writes:—

"Having spent my last sovereign of compensation for the loss of the sight of my right eye while in the 'nigger' business, I was given to understand that Mr. ———, the manager of the Alhambra, Leicester Square, was going to re-open

the Music Hall as a theatre with a capital of £63,000; no expense was to be spared to make the venture a brilliant financial speculation. The opera (a burlesque) was entitled *Eurydice*, and was a shameful travesty on Holy Writ, some of the characters portrayed lost souls in hell. Knowing the principal manager, Mr. ———, at Norwood, I applied to him for something to do; he engaged me, and suggested that I should go, under ———, the decorator and property-master, at sixpence an hour, and two shillings for the evening, attending to the female Blondin. When the rehearsals were on, the performers were constantly enquiring, 'What will Spurgeon think about it? What will Spurgeon say about it? What will Spurgeon do about it?' We had not long to wait before we heard what Mr. Spurgeon was doing; it came in this wise. On learning that the tenants of the houses overlooking the Gardens were nearly all members of Mr. Spurgeon's flock, and that they were going to petition against what they considered an intolerable nuisance, Mr. ——— tried to mollify them by sending free passes of admission for themselves and their lodgers. He received the passes back by post, with tracts and letters urging him not to attempt to wage war against Christ; the writers, in many instances, adding these significant words, '*We are praying for you.*' This all leaked out through the manager's confidants when drinking at the theatre bars.

"Well, from the opening, everything connected with the venture of converting that place from a temporary hospital to a theatre and pleasure gardens, went wrong. The performers played to paper (admission free by ticket); the money lavished on the speculation to reproduce the gods and goddesses of heathen mythology went out of Mr. ———'s pocket, never to be returned, and failure upon failure came thick and fast. The very elements assisted in keeping the people away, the violent thunderstorms (almost phenomenal while they lasted) caused the visitors to exclaim, 'There is a judgment on this place; it will never pay,' while every fresh financial disaster was met by the usual cynical phrase, '*They're praying again,*'—meaning Mr. Spurgeon and his congregation. As I write this true account, it seems but last week that it all happened. Poor ———, who died of a broken heart, always put his failure down to the prayers of C. H. Spurgeon and his flock. We rallied round him, and got what scenery, etc., we could away from the Surrey Gardens, and tried the Satanic venture again at the Royal Amphitheatre, Holborn, but with the same result, nothing but disaster.

"Perhaps you wonder why I never mentioned all this to you before; it was because I had gone back to the 'nigger' business, and being a servant of the devil, I did not wish to furnish you with anything in the shape of testimony which would only make you more importunate in urging me to come to the Saviour. But now, being a child of God, through the blood of Jesus, I do what I can to show forth His power over sin and Satan."

After this chapter was in the hands of the printer, the following interesting letter was received. The writer of it was evidently a most appreciative member of the great congregations that assembled at the Music Hall, and it contains such a graphic description of the Surrey Gardens services, that a place is gladly found for it here, with heartiest thanks to the unknown correspondent :—

“ Dear Mrs. Spurgeon,

“ As I believe there will shortly be issued a second volume of Mr. Spurgeon's *Autobiography*, I thought I would venture to send you some of the impressions I had concerning him at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens. I have always been of opinion that his ministry there was the most wonderful and the most romantic that ever fell to the lot of any Christian minister. The vast concourse of people, the almost-dramatic excitement experienced by them when expecting to see the youthful preacher appear, the sudden hush and impressive silence of the great throng (composed of all classes, from the aristocracy to the very humblest,) as he was seen to approach the pulpit stairs, the solemn and pale face contrasting with the black hair, and the beautiful voice that charmed every ear as he said, ‘ Let us commence the worship of God by prayer,’—all this, though it occurred forty years ago, is as vivid in my recollection as if it had only happened recently.

“ I am sorry that I cannot recall *the first time* I heard Mr. Spurgeon. I know I had done so before a certain Sunday, in April, 1857, when my father came home full of admiration for the sermon entitled, ‘ David's Dying Prayer,’ which, for its matchless preface, and the stirring character of the whole discourse, must have been one of the most notable ever delivered. But the first sermon of which I have a distinct recollection is No. 133, ‘ Heavenly Rest,’ preached in the following month. How well I remember enjoying that sermon, and his reference to the ‘ Stitch, stitch,’ of the poor needlewoman! I believe Mr. John Ruskin was present on that occasion.

“ I attended a Sunday-school in Camberwell, but I had such a passionate enthusiasm for C. H. Spurgeon that I obtained permission to leave a few minutes after ten, which enabled me to reach the Gardens in time for service. I only missed one Sunday morning, and that was through ill-health. I remember how solemn was the sermon entitled, ‘ The Warning Neglected,’ preached November 29; and how happy he was on December 20, when he preached on ‘ The First Christmas Carol,’ and wound up his sermon by wishing all his hearers the happiest Christmas they had ever had in their lives. It made me wonder whether the assembled thousands would not verbally reciprocate the kind wish. Nor can I ever forget the discourse, ‘ What have I done?’ delivered on the last Sabbath of the year 1857. With what burning eloquence he condemned the sin of men who were

leading others astray, and warned them that they would have a double hell unless they repented. He seemed to speak like one of the old prophets or apostles, and several persons in the galleries, and other parts of the building where they were not able to see him when seated, rose to look at the preacher who was uttering such wondrous words. In the sermon about Felix trembling, Mr. Spurgeon made some remarks about the workings of the Holy Spirit which received strong censure from a preacher at Kennington. He said that, if the Holy Spirit acted in the way Mr. S. said He did, he would shut up his Bible, and never read it again. I know, however, that, in after years, the same minister had the highest opinion of C. H. S., just as a good many others subsequently gravitated towards him whom they had originally opposed.

“During the months of February and March, 1858, I thought he seemed sad. It was about this time that he told his audience that he looked upon them as a fixed congregation, and that he would shape his discourses accordingly. Still, he seemed troubled; and, one Sunday morning, he commenced his sermon by saying that the prophets in the olden times spoke of the message they had to deliver as ‘the burden of the Lord;’ and I thought to myself, ‘You seem to have the burden of the Lord resting upon you also.’ I shall never forget the way in which, about this period, he quoted those words of our Lord, ‘My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?’ The piercing, wailing, almost shrieking cry, and the sorrowful tones of his voice, must have gone to many another heart as they did to mine. Very enjoyable was it to notice how grateful Mr. Spurgeon was for having escaped a serious accident, mentioned in the discourse entitled, ‘Providence.’ It was in April, 1858, that he preached from John xvii. 24; and, coming from the hall, I told a friend my opinion of the sermon; and an old man, a stranger to me, hearing what I said, remarked, ‘Ah, my lad! does it not make one wish to go to Heaven?’ I was very much impressed by the discourse on ‘The Wicked Man’s Life, Funeral, and Epitaph;’ there was something specially solemn about it. In the introduction, the preacher spoke of children playing among the graves in a churchyard, and recalled some of his early memories of Stambourne. But how happy he was when he preached, in the month of August, from that text, ‘As thy days, so shall thy strength be.’ He had been unwell a few days previously, and I well remember two lines of a hymn we sang then,—

“‘Tis He that heals thy sicknesses,
And makes thee young again.’

“In September, the sermon entitled, ‘His Name—Wonderful!’ was listened to by a lady-relative of mine who, for years after, whenever I saw her, always referred to it in terms of admiration; and the following month, as you are aware, Mr. Spurgeon was laid aside by severe suffering, which necessitated his being absent

from the Music Hall for three Sundays. I recollect his coming back, the first Sabbath after his illness, and being almost carried up the pulpit stairs; the preliminary part of the service was conducted very efficiently by Mr. Probert, of Bristol. The sermon about Samson, delivered in November, I did not hear, as I was unwell; and you may smile when I tell you how I endeavoured to sing to myself, during the Sunday morning, such hymns as 'Grace, 'tis a charming sound,' and 'Blow ye the trumpet, blow,'—both being great favourites with C. H. S.

“On December 19, 1858, the congregation at the Surrey Gardens suddenly dwindled down to very small dimensions; the weather was not bad, but the platform was only half-full, there was scarcely anyone in the third gallery, and the area was only three-parts filled. Mr. Spurgeon preached a delightful discourse on God's love, and I so wondered what effect the reduced audience would have on his mind that I went to New Park Street in the evening. He certainly appeared sad, but his spirits rose as he went on with his sermon. I was rather anxious, during the week, as to how the Music Hall would look on the following Sabbath; and when that day came, and with it rain, I was still more concerned. However, my sister and I walked to the service all in the wet, and I remember that she said, 'Well, there will be two of us present, at any rate.' But I had been only meeting trouble half-way, for, on arriving, I found that the congregation was much larger than on the previous Sunday, and, in a short time, it reverted to its original dimensions. Early in the New Year (1859), it was rumoured that Mr. Spurgeon was going to America, and he confirmed the truth of the report by telling his hearers that he might be away for some time. However, we know he never went there. About this time, he preached a very able sermon, which was entitled, 'Reform,' parts of which were aimed at some of the amusements of the people, such as dancing and the theatre. Were any in his audience offended, I wonder?

“A month or two later, during the singing of a hymn, he suddenly stopped, and said, 'A little while ago, when I was worshipping in a Jewish synagogue, I kept on my hat in accordance with the custom of the friends meeting there; I notice two gentlemen, probably of the Jewish persuasion, who have their hats on; will they kindly take them off as we do when we meet for worship?' I could not see the parties referred to; but, doubtless, they did as the preacher requested, for, after a moment's pause, the service was resumed. Not many could have conveyed a reproof in such a kind manner to the irreverent individuals who, possibly out of bravado, had kept on their hats after the service had commenced.

“On the first Sabbath in July, Mr. Spurgeon delivered a very pathetic sermon from the text, 'Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,' &c. On the following Sunday afternoon, he preached on Clapham Common, under a tree where a man had been killed

by lightning a fortnight previously. I shall never forget the sermon on July 17, 1859, 'The Story of God's Mighty Acts.' I believe the Music Hall authorities had proposed to open the place for concerts on Sunday evening; but Mr. S.'s threat to leave prevented them doing so. How he revelled in preaching that morning! It was very hot, and he kept on wiping the perspiration from his forehead; but his discomfort did not affect his discourse, his words flowed on like a torrent of sacred eloquence.

"As you are aware, in August was laid the foundation stone of the Tabernacle, the ruins of which can now be regarded with feelings similar to those experienced by the old Jew when he thought of the destruction of the first Temple, for the new Tabernacle can never be quite the same as the old one. I was present at the last service held in the Music Hall, on December 11, 1859. It was very foggy, but the place was crowded, as much indeed as it could be. I had a front seat in the second gallery, and therefore enjoyed a splendid view of the people. Mr. S. preached an earnest sermon on declaring the whole counsel of God. There is always something sad about last things; and, as I came away, I felt that one of the happiest experiences of my youth belonged to the past. So also—in my opinion—passed away the most romantic stage even in Mr. Spurgeon's wonderful life.

"I have thus finished conveying to you some of my impressions of your dear husband's ministry at the Royal Surrey Gardens. You may ask what useful purpose has been served by my writing about those facts with which you, of course, were well acquainted; but when I read that the second volume of *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography* would cover his experience at the Music Hall, I felt an irresistible desire to send you these recollections. The other day, I stood opposite what used to be the entrance to the old Gardens. I could not help thinking of more than forty years since, when the carriages, like a stream, used to roll up and down the neighbourhood with their fashionable occupants, and the thousands of people coming away from the hall when the service was over; also of the number who used to wait to see the young minister take his departure; and when he was seen to approach, with head uncovered, a section of the crowd, kindly and respectfully, would call out, 'Put on your hat, sir; put on your hat, sir.' All is now changed; and where there was once life, excitement, and curiosity, nothing but dulness, and apathy, and lifelessness reign.

"Were not C. H. Spurgeon in his *youth*, and W. E. Gladstone in his *old age*, the two most wonderful phenomena of the nineteenth century? Both are gone; but I shall always count it a great privilege, as well as a high honour, to have lived under the influence of those good and noble men. I am aware of the general objection there is to anonymous communications; but, for several reasons, I prefer to abstain from giving my name and address, which I trust you will excuse. I may

mention that I am a perfect stranger to you, although, on one occasion, shortly after the Tabernacle was opened, I had the pleasure of conversing with you.

“With every expression of respect,

“Believe me,

“Yours very faithfully,

“S. J. C.”)

THE FAST-DAY SERVICE AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE.

During the time of our sojourn at the Surrey Gardens, it was my privilege to conduct one service which deserves special mention, for it was the occasion on which I addressed the largest congregation to which I ever preached in any building. This was on Wednesday, October 7, 1857, when 23,654 persons assembled in the Crystal Palace to join in the observance of the day appointed by proclamation “for a solemn fast, humiliation, and prayer before Almighty God : in order to obtain pardon of our sins, and for imploring His blessing and assistance on our arms for the restoration of tranquillity in India.” About a month previously, in my sermon at the Music Hall on “India’s Ills and England’s Sorrows,” I had referred at length to the Mutiny, and its terrible consequences to our fellow-countrymen and women in the East. The Fast-day had not then been proclaimed ; but when it was announced, I was glad to accept the offer of the Crystal Palace directors to hold a service in the centre transept of the building, and to make a collection on behalf of the national fund for the sufferers through the Mutiny.

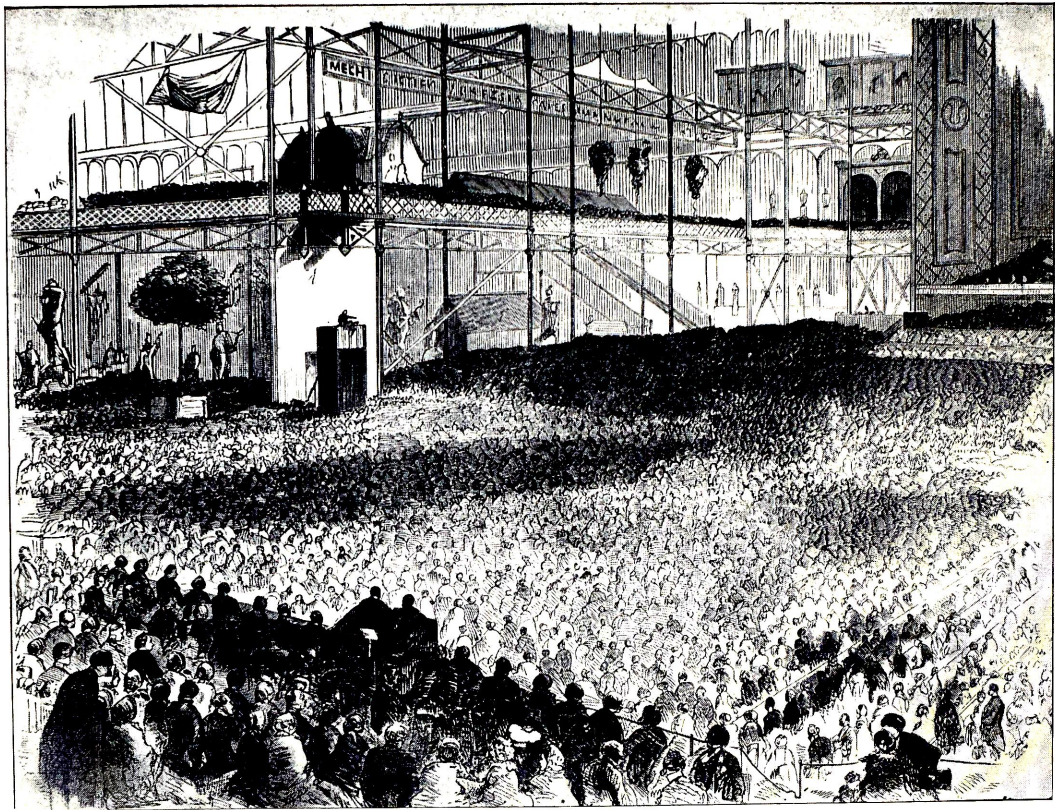
The Lord set His seal upon the effort even before the great crowd gathered, though I did not know of that instance of blessing until long afterwards. It was arranged that I should use the Surrey Gardens pulpit, so, a day or two before preaching at the Palace, I went to decide where it should be fixed ; and, in order to test the acoustic properties of the building, cried in a loud voice, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” In one of the galleries, a workman, who knew nothing of what was being done, heard the words, and they came like a message from Heaven to his soul. He was smitten with conviction on account of sin, put down his tools, went home, and there, after a season of spiritual struggling, found peace and life by beholding the Lamb of God. Years after, he told this story to one who visited him on his death-bed.

A complete record of the service is preserved in Nos. 154-5 of *The New Park Street Pulpit*, so I need not give details here, but simply mention that the text was, “Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.” The collection amounted to nearly £500, to which the Crystal Palace Company added £200, beside contributing £50 to the Tabernacle Building Fund, as I declined to accept any fee for preaching. It

was a service that I was not likely ever to forget, and one result upon my physical frame was certainly very remarkable. I was not conscious, at the close of the service, of any extraordinary exhaustion, yet I must have been very weary, for after I went to sleep that Wednesday night, I did not wake again until the Friday morning. All through the Thursday, my dear wife came at intervals to look at me, and every time she found me sleeping peacefully, so she just let me slumber on until—

“Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep,”

had done its work. I was greatly surprised, on waking, to find that it was Friday morning; but it was the only time in my life that I had such an experience. Eternity alone will reveal the full results of the Fast-day service at the Crystal Palace.



C. H. SPURGEON PREACHING AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE