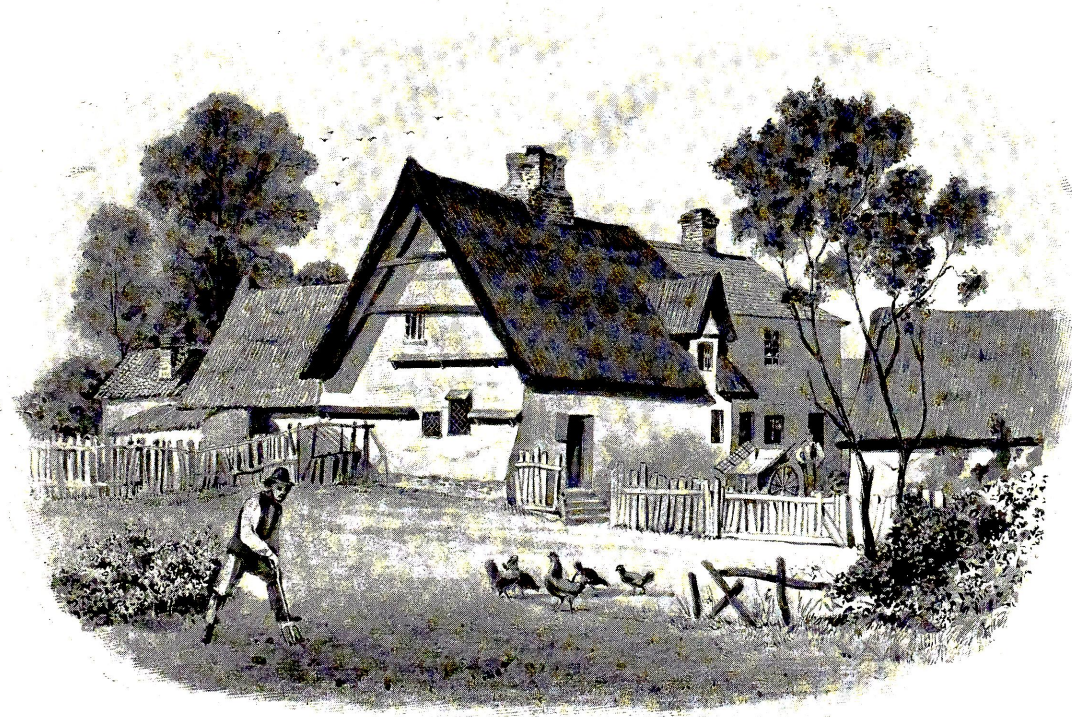


CHAPTER XIX.

"The Boy-Preacher of the Fens."



EXTERIOR OF COTTAGE AT TEVERSHAM, WHERE I FIRST PREACHED.

MY FIRST SERMON.



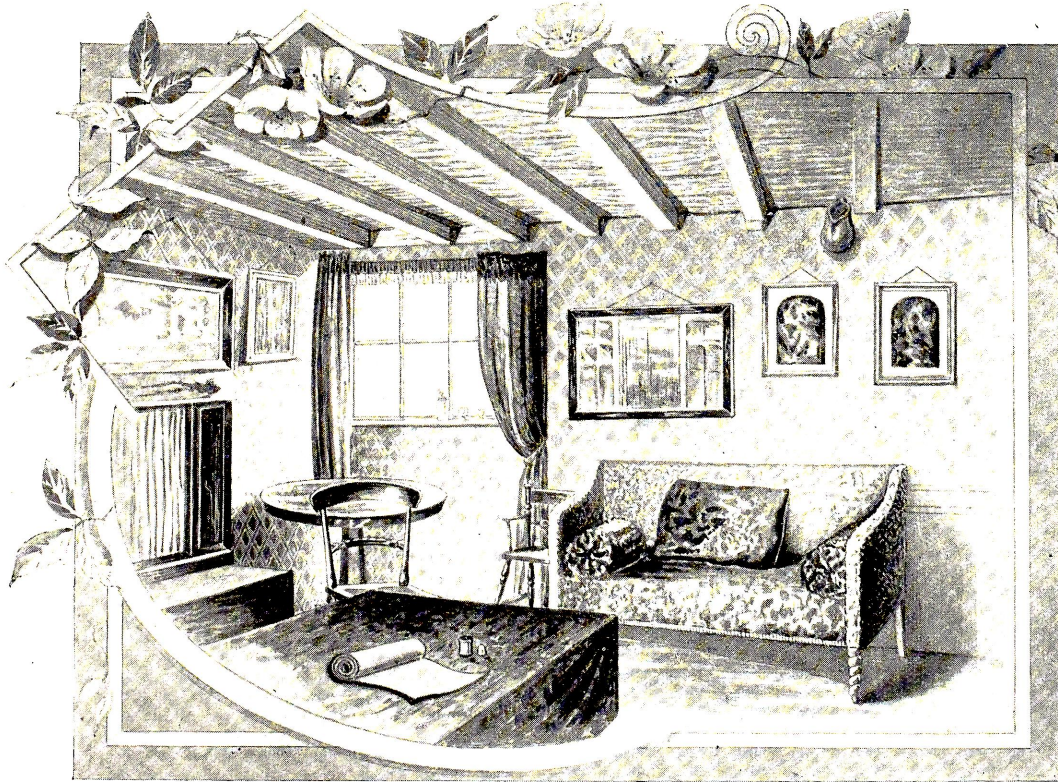
REMEMBER well the first place in which I addressed a congregation of adults, and the illustration above sets it clearly before my mind's eye. It was not my first public address by a great many, for at Newmarket, and Cambridge, and elsewhere, the Sabbath-school had afforded me ample scope for speaking the gospel ; but no regular set discourse to a congregation met for Divine worship had I delivered till one eventful Sabbath evening, which found me in a cottage at Teversham, holding forth before a little assembly of humble villagers. The tale is not a new one, but it is worth telling again.

There is a Preachers' Association in Cambridge, connected with St. Andrew's Street Chapel, once the scene of the ministry of Robert Robinson and Robert Hall. A number of worthy brethren preach the gospel in the various villages surrounding Cambridge, taking each one his turn according to plan. In my day, the presiding genius was the venerable Mr. James Vinter, whom we were wont to address as Bishop Vinter. His genial soul, warm heart, and kindly manner were enough to keep a whole fraternity stocked with love; and, accordingly, a goodly company of zealous workers belonged to the Association, and laboured as true yoke-fellows. My suspicion is, that he not only preached himself, and helped his brethren, but that he was a sort of recruiting sergeant, and drew in young men to keep up the number of the host; at least, I can speak from personal experience as to one case.

I had, one Saturday, finished morning school, and the boys were all going home for the half-holiday, when in came the aforesaid "Bishop" to ask me to go over to Teversham, the next evening, for a young man was to preach there who was not much used to services, and very likely would be glad of company. That was a cunningly-devised sentence, if I remember it rightly, and I think I do, for, at the time, in the light of that Sunday evening's revelation, I turned it over, and vastly admired its ingenuity. A request to go and preach, would have met with a decided negative; but merely to act as company to a good brother who did not like to be lonely, and perhaps might ask me to give out a hymn or to pray, was not at all a difficult matter, and the request, understood in that fashion, was cheerfully complied with. Little did the lad know what Jonathan and David were doing when he was made to run for the arrow, and as little did I know when I was cajoled into accompanying a young man to Teversham.

My Sunday-school work was over, tea had been taken, and I set off through Barnwell, and away along the Newmarket Road, with a gentleman some few years my senior. We talked of good things, and at last I expressed my hope that he would feel the presence of God while preaching. He seemed to start, and assured me that he had never preached in his life, and could not attempt such a thing; he was looking to his young friend, Mr. Spurgeon, for that. This was a new view of the situation, and I could only reply that I was no minister; and that, even if I had been, I was quite unprepared. My companion only repeated that *he*, in a still more emphatic sense, was not a preacher, that he would help *me* in any other part of the service, but that there would be no sermon unless I delivered one. He told me that, if I repeated one of my Sunday-school addresses, it would just suit the poor people, and would probably give them more satisfaction than the studied sermon of a learned divine. I felt that I was fairly committed to do my best. I walked along quietly, lifting up my soul to God, and it seemed to me that I could

surely tell a few poor cottagers of the sweetness and love of Jesus, for I felt them in my own soul. Praying for Divine help, I resolved to make the attempt. My text should be, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious," and I would trust the Lord to open my mouth in honour of His dear Son. It seemed a great risk and a serious trial; but depending upon the power of the Holy Ghost, I would at least tell out the story of the cross, and not allow the people to go home without a word.



INTERIOR OF COTTAGE AT TEVERSHAM, WHERE MR. SPURGEON FIRST PREACHED.

We entered the low-pitched room of the thatched cottage, where a few simple-minded farm-labourers and their wives were gathered together; we sang, and prayed, and read the Scriptures, and then came my first sermon. How long, or how short it was, I cannot now remember. It was not half such a task as I had feared it would be, but I was glad to see my way to a fair conclusion, and to the giving out of the last hymn. To my own delight, I had not broken down, nor stopped short in the middle, nor been destitute of ideas, and the desired haven was in view. I made a finish, and took up the hymn-book; but, to my astonishment, an aged voice cried out, "Bless your dear heart, how old are you?" My very solemn reply was, "You must wait till the service is over before making any such enquiries. Let us now sing." We did sing, the young preacher pronounced the benediction,

and then there began a dialogue which enlarged into a warm, friendly talk, in which everybody appeared to take part. "How old are you?" was the leading question. "I am under sixty," was the reply. "Yes, and under sixteen," was the old lady's rejoinder. "Never mind my age, think of the Lord Jesus and His preciousness," was all that I could say, after promising to come again, if the gentlemen at Cambridge thought me fit to do so. Very great and profound was my awe of "the gentlemen at Cambridge" in those days.

Are there not other young men who might begin to speak for Jesus in some such lowly fashion,—young men who hitherto have been as mute as fishes? Our villages and hamlets offer fine opportunities for youthful speakers. Let them not wait till they are invited to a chapel, or have prepared a fine essay, or have secured an intelligent audience. If they will go and tell out from their hearts what the Lord Jesus has done for them, they will find ready listeners. Many of our young folks want to commence their service for Christ by doing great things, and therefore do nothing at all; let none of my readers become the victims of such an unreasonable ambition. He who is willing to teach infants, or to give away tracts, and so to begin at the beginning, is far more likely to be useful than the youth who is full of affectations, and sleeps in a white necktie, who is aspiring to the ministry, and is touching up certain superior manuscripts which he hopes ere long to read from the pastor's pulpit. He who talks upon plain gospel themes in a farmer's kitchen, and is able to interest the carter's boy and the dairymaid, has more of the minister in him than the prim little man who keeps prating about being cultured, and means by that—being taught to use words which nobody can understand. To make the very poorest listen with pleasure and profit, is in itself an achievement; and beyond this, it is the best possible promise and preparation for an influential ministry. Let our younger brethren go in for cottage preaching, and plenty of it. If there is no Lay Preachers' Association, let them work by themselves. The expense is not very great for rent, candles, and a few forms: many a young man's own pocket-money would cover it all. No isolated group of houses should be left without its preaching-room, no hamlet without its evening service. This is the lesson of the thatched cottage at Teversham.

(Preaching at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens, on Lord's-day morning, March 13th, 1859, upon the words, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious," Mr. Spurgeon said:—This text calls to my recollection the opening of my ministry. It is about eight years since, as a lad of sixteen, I stood up for the first time in my life to preach the gospel in a cottage to a handful of poor people, who had come together for worship. I felt my own inability to preach, but I ventured to take this text, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious." I do not think I

could have said anything upon any other text, but Christ was precious to my soul, and I was in the flush of my youthful love, and I could not be silent when a precious Jesus was the subject. I had but just escaped from the bondage of Egypt, I had not forgotten the broken fetter ; still did I recollect those flames which seemed to burn about my path, and that devouring gulf which opened its mouth as if ready to swallow me up. With all these things fresh in my youthful heart, I could speak of His preciousness who had been my Saviour, and had plucked me as a brand from the burning, and set me upon a rock, and put a new song in my mouth, and established my goings. And now, at this time, what shall I say ? “What hath God wrought !” How hath the little one become a thousand, and the small one a great people ! And what shall I say concerning this text but that, if the Lord Jesus was precious then, He is as precious now ? And if I could declare, then, that Jesus was the object of my soul's desire, that for Him I hoped to live, and for Him I would be prepared to die, can I not say, God being my witness, that He is more precious to me this day than ever He was ? In the recollection of His unparalleled mercy towards the chief of sinners, I must anew devote myself to Him, and afresh surrender my heart to Him who is my Lord and King. This remark is uttered by way of introduction, it may seem egotistical, but that I cannot help. I must give glory to God in the midst of the great congregation, and pay my vows to the Lord now in the midst of all His saints, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem !)

Considerable weight is to be given to the judgment of men and women who live near to God, and in most instances their verdict will not be a mistaken one. Yet this appeal is not final nor infallible, and is only to be estimated in proportion to the intelligence and piety of those consulted. I remember well how earnestly I was dissuaded from preaching by as godly a Christian matron as ever breathed ; I endeavoured to estimate, with candour and patience, the value of her opinion ; but it was outweighed by the judgment of persons of wider experience. If a man be truly called of God to the ministry, I will defy him to withhold himself from it. A man who has really within him the inspiration of the Holy Ghost calling him to preach, cannot help it,—he must preach. As fire within the bones, so will that influence be until it blazes forth. Friends may check him, foes criticise him, despisers sneer at him, the man is indomitable ; he must preach if he has the call of Heaven. All earth might forsake him ; but he would preach to the barren mountain-tops. If he has the call of Heaven, if he had no congregation, he would preach to the rippling waterfalls, and let the brooks hear his voice. He could not be silent. He would become a voice crying in the wilderness, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord.” I no more believe it possible to stop ministers than to stop the stars of heaven. I think it no more possible to make a man cease from preaching, if he

is really called, than to stay some mighty cataract, by seeking, in an infant's cup, to catch the rushing torrent. The man has been moved of Heaven, who shall stop him? He has been touched of God, who shall impede him? With an eagle's wing, he must fly; who shall chain him to the earth? With a seraph's voice, he must speak; who shall seal his lips? And when a man does speak as the Spirit gives him utterance, he will feel a holy joy akin to that of Heaven; and when it is over, he wishes to be at his work again, he longs to be once more preaching. Is not the Lord's Word like a fire within *me*? Must I not speak if God has placed it there? .

I was for three years a Cambridge man, though I never entered the University. I could not have obtained a degree, because I was a Nonconformist; and, moreover, it was a better thing for me to pursue my studies under an admirable scholar and tender friend, and to preach at the same time. I was, by my tutor's own expressed verdict, considered to be sufficiently proficient in my studies to have taken a good place on the list had the way been open. "You could win in a canter," said he to me. I had, however, a better College course, for, when I first began to preach, this was my usual way of working. I was up in the morning early, praying and reading the Word; all the day, I was either teaching my scholars or studying theology as much as I could; then, at five in the evening, I became a travelling preacher, and went into the villages around Cambridge, to tell out what I had learned. My quiet meditation during the walk helped me to digest what I had read, and the rehearsal of my lesson in public, by preaching it to the people, fixed it on my memory. I do not mean that I ever repeated a single sentence from memory, but I thought my reading over again while on my legs, and thus worked it into my very soul; and I can bear my testimony that I never learned so much, or learned it so thoroughly, as when I used to tell out, simply and earnestly, what I had first received into my own mind and heart. I found that I derived greater benefit by proclaiming to others what I had learned than if I had kept it all to myself.

I must have been a singular-looking youth on wet evenings, for I walked three, five, or even eight miles out and back again on my preaching work; and when it rained, I dressed myself in waterproof leggings and a mackintosh coat, and a hat with a waterproof covering, and I carried a dark lantern to show me the way across the fields. I am sure that I was greatly profited by those early services for my Lord. How many times I enjoyed preaching the gospel in a farmer's kitchen, or in a cottage, or in a barn! Perhaps many people came to hear me because I was then only a boy. In my young days, I fear that I said many odd things, and made many blunders; but my audience was not hypercritical, and no newspaper writers dogged my heels; so I had a happy training-school, in which, by continual practice, I attained such a degree of ready speech as I now possess.

I had many adventures, and a great variety of experiences in this itinerating

work. I recollect one summer's evening, when I had engaged to preach at a village not far from Waterbeach ; but, before I could reach my destination, the sky darkened, and a severe thunderstorm burst over the district. Some people are terrified at lightning ; but ever since I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, I have had no fear in a storm, however severe it might be. I distinctly remember, while quite a lad, being in my uncle's house one night during a tremendous tempest. The older folks were all afraid ; but I had really trusted myself with the Lord Jesus, and I did not dare to fear. The baby was upstairs, and nobody was brave enough to fetch it down because of a big window on the stairs. I went up to the bedroom, and brought the child to its mother, and then read a Psalm, and prayed with my relatives, who were trembling in terror. There was real danger, for a stack was set on fire a short distance away ; but I was as calm as in the sunshine of a summer's day, not because I was naturally courageous, but because I had unshaken confidence in my Lord. I love the lightnings, God's thunder is my delight ; I never feel so well as when there is a great thunder and lightning storm. Then I feel as if I could mount up as with the wings of eagles, and my whole heart loves then to sing,—

"The God that rules on high,
And thunders when He please,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And manages the seas.

"This awful God is ours,
Our Father and our love ;
He shall send down His Heavenly powers
To carry us above."

Men are by nature afraid of the heavens ; the superstitious dread the signs in the sky, and even the bravest spirit is sometimes made to tremble when the firmament is ablaze with lightning, and the pealing thunder seems to make the vast concave of heaven to tremble and to reverberate ; but I always feel ashamed to keep indoors when the thunder shakes the solid earth, and the lightnings flash like arrows from the sky. Then God is abroad, and I love to walk out in some wide space, and to look up and mark the opening gates of heaven, as the lightning reveals far beyond, and enables me to gaze into the unseen. I like to hear my Heavenly Father's voice in the thunder.

On this particular occasion, while walking to the place where I was to preach, I was enjoying the storm ; but as I was passing a cottage on the road, I noticed a woman who seemed to be greatly alarmed and in sore distress because of the tempest. I did not like to pass by, and leave a fellow-creature in trouble, so I entered the house, read a few verses of Scripture, and prayed, and so comforted the woman. I then proceeded to my destination, to fulfil my engagement. On entering the village, I took off my waterproof coat, because the smooth surface appeared to reflect the vivid flashes of lightning in a way that might alarm the timid. I found

that, because of the severity of the tempest, the people were not expecting that there would be a service ; so I went round from house to house, and invited them to come to the regular meeting-place. This unusual method of gathering a congregation brought me many hearers ; the service was held, and, at its close, I walked back to my Cambridge home.

One night, having been preaching the Word in a country village, I was walking home, all by myself, along a lonely footpath. I do not know what it was that ailed me, but I was prepared to be alarmed ; when, of a surety, I saw something standing in the hedge,—ghastly, giant-like, and with outstretched arms. Surely, I thought, for once I have come across the supernatural ; here is some restless spirit performing its midnight march beneath the moon, or some demon of the pit wandering abroad. I deliberated with myself a moment, and having no faith in ghosts, I plucked up courage, and determined to solve the mystery. The monster stood on the other side of a ditch, right in the hedge. I jumped the ditch, and found myself grasping an old tree, which some waggish body had taken pains to cover with whitewash, with a view to frighten simpletons. That old tree has served me a good turn full often, for I have learned from it to leap at difficulties, and find them vanish or turn to triumphs.

Frequently, in those country places, when preaching in a low-pitched building crowded with people, I have seen the candles burn dimly for want of air,—a clear indication that we were killing ourselves by inhaling an atmosphere from which the vitalizing principle had almost all gone. I have been afraid of the lights going out, and have thought it better to let the congregation depart rather sooner than usual. On one occasion, having a candle on each side of me in a small pulpit, I was somewhat vigorous, and dashed one of my luminaries from its place. It fell upon the bald head of a friend below, who looked up with an expression which I can see at this moment, and it makes me smile still. I took no more notice of the accident than to weave it into what I was saying ; and I believe most of my hearers considered it to have been a striking practical illustration of the remark which accompanied it, “How soon is the glory of life dashed down !”

In my earlier days, I read, somewhere or other, in a volume of Lectures upon Homiletics, a statement which considerably alarmed me at the time ; it was something to this effect :—“If any man shall find a difficulty in selecting a text, he had better at once go back to the grocer's shop, or to the plough, for he evidently has not the capacity required for a minister.” Now, as such had been very frequently my cross and burden, I enquired within myself whether I should resort to some form of secular labour, and leave the ministry ; but I have not done so, for I still have the conviction that, although condemned by the sweeping judgment of the lecturer, I

follow a call to which God has manifestly set His seal. I was so much in trouble of conscience through the aforesaid severe remark, that I asked my grandfather, who had been in the ministry some fifty years, whether he was ever perplexed in choosing his theme. He told me frankly that this had always been his greatest trouble, compared with which, preaching in itself was no anxiety at all. I remember the venerable man's remark, "The difficulty is not because there are not enough texts, but because there are so many, that I am in a strait betwixt them." We are something like the lover of choice flowers, who finds himself surrounded by all the beauties of the garden, with permission to select but one. How long he lingers between the rose and the lily, and how great the difficulty to prefer one among ten thousand lovely blooms! To me, still, I must admit, my text-selection is a very great embarrassment,—*embarras de richesse*, as the French say,—an embarrassment of riches, very different from the bewilderment of poverty,—the anxiety of attending to the most pressing of so many truths, all clamouring for a hearing, so many duties all needing enforcing, and so many spiritual needs of the people all demanding supply. I confess that I frequently sit hour after hour praying and waiting for a subject, and that this is the main part of my study; much hard labour have I spent in manipulating topics, ruminating upon points of doctrine, making skeletons out of verses, and then burying every bone of them in the catacombs of oblivion, drifting on and on over leagues of broken water, till I see the red lights, and make sail direct to the desired haven. I believe that, almost any Saturday in my life, I prepare enough outlines of Sermons, if I felt at liberty to preach them, to last me for a month, but I no more dare to use them than an honest mariner would run to shore a cargo of contraband goods.

I am always sure to have the most happy day when I get a good text in the morning from my Master. When I have had to preach two or three sermons in a day, I have asked Him for the morning subject, and preached from it; and I have asked Him for the afternoon's topic or the evening's portion, and preached from it, after meditating on it for my own soul's comfort,—not in the professional style of a regular sermon-maker, but feasting upon it for myself. Such simple food has done the people far more good than if I had been a week in manufacturing a sermon, for it has come warm from the heart just after it has been received in my own soul; and therefore it has been well spoken, because well known, well tasted, and well felt. Sometimes, my texts have come to me in a very remarkable way. While I was living at Cambridge, I had, as usual, to preach in the evening at a neighbouring village, to which I had to walk. After reading and meditating all day, I could not meet with the right text. Do what I would, no response came from the sacred oracle, no light flashed from the Urim and Thummim; I prayed, I searched the Scriptures, I turned from one verse to another, but my mind would not take

hold of a text ; I was, as Bunyan would say, "much tumbled up and down in my thoughts." Just then, I walked to the window, and looked out. On the other side of the narrow street in which I lived, I saw a poor solitary canary bird upon the slates, surrounded by a crowd of sparrows, who were all pecking at it as if they would tear it to pieces. At that moment the verse came to my mind, "Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her." I walked off with the greatest possible composure, considered the passage during my long and lonely walk, and preached upon the peculiar people, and the persecutions of their enemies, with freedom and ease to myself, and I believe with comfort to my rustic audience. The text was sent to me, and if the ravens did not bring it, certainly the sparrows did.

While I was living at Cambridge, I once heard Mr. Jay, of Bath, preach. His text was, "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." I remember with what dignity he preached, and yet how simply. He made one remark which deeply impressed my youthful mind, and which I have never forgotten ; it was this, "You do need a Mediator between yourselves and God, but you do not need a Mediator between yourselves and Christ ; you may come to Him just as you are." Another of his striking sayings was this, "Popery is a lie, Puseyism is a lie, baptismal regeneration is a lie." I recollect also that, in the course of his sermon, Mr. Jay said that ladies were sometimes charged with dressing in too costly a fashion. He told us that he did not himself know much about that matter ; but, if they would let him hear what their income was, he would tell them how many yards of silk, satin, lace, or ribbon, they could afford. My recollections of Mr. Jay were such as I would not like to lose. It usually happens that, when we listen to a venerable patriarch, such as he then was, there is all the greater weight in his words because of his age. I fancy that, if I had heard the same sermon preached by a young man, I should not have thought much of it ; but there appeared all the greater depth in it because it came from an old man standing almost on the borders of the grave.

In an early part of my ministry, while but a lad, I was seized with an intense desire to hear Mr. John Angell James ; and, though my finances were somewhat meagre, I performed a pilgrimage to Birmingham, solely with that object in view. I heard him deliver a week-evening lecture, in his large vestry, on that precious text, "Ye are complete in Him." The savour of that very sweet discourse abides with me to this day, and I shall never read the passage without associating therewith the quiet but earnest utterances of that eminent man of God. Years afterwards, on being in Mr. James's company, I told him that I went all the way from Cambridge to Birmingham to hear him preach. On my mentioning the text, he replied, "Ah ! that was a Calvinistic sermon. You would enjoy that ; but you would not get on with me always." I was glad also to have the opportunity of thanking him for that

precious book of his, *The Anxious Enquirer*, which has been the means of bringing so many sinners to the Saviour, and which I had found exceedingly helpful when I was seeking the Lord.

* * * *

A CRITICAL JUNCTURE IN THE YOUNG PREACHER'S HISTORY.

“Cambridge,

“May 15/51.

“My Dear Father,

“ My choice of return home is easily made. I hope very much you will be so kind as to let me go to the Exhibition. Mr. C——, who was at Mr. Lewis's, has just called to see me. . . . I am going to his house to tea, he lodges with Mr. R——. I guess I feel no mercy for him ; I mean, Mr. R—— ; a cap and gown are poor things to sell one's principles for. *You have not written to Mr. Leeding*. Where is Mr. Walker ? I cannot write, for I know nothing of his whereabouts. We have no minister yet. We have had some excellent supplies. I am very comfortable, and I may say, happy. Were it not for my vile heart, I might rejoice. I am the least of God's people, I am sure I am the worst. But yet I *am* one ; I believe in Jesus and trust in Him, and this, I take it, is the evidence of life. I can fall into His arms, though I cannot rest on my own merits, for I have none. Jesus and Jesus alone is my defence. I know you pray for me. I think I have felt the answer to your earnest entreaties. Sometimes, I pour my heart out sweetly, freely ; at another time, I can hardly bring up a petition. What a contrast, mixture, paradox I am ! I hope you and dear Mother are well. Love to all.

“Your affectionate son,

“CHARLES.”

(The sentence in the above letter—“*You have not written to Mr. Leeding*,”—implies that an important communication from Mr. John Spurgeon was anxiously awaited at Cambridge by both tutor and pupil. When it arrived, Mr. Leeding wrote the following reply, which was the means of retaining C. H. Spurgeon at Cambridge, and so, indirectly, affected the whole of his future life :—)

“Union Road,

“Cambridge,

“June 11th, 1851.

“My Dear Sir,

“I hasten to reply to your note, which I should have been glad to have received earlier. I did not expect to part with Charles before the end of next week,

but a few days are of little consequence, and you may rest assured of his leaving Cambridge by the first train on Monday next.

“As I conceive you have written with candour, I shall think myself criminal if I do not reply in the same spirit upon the subject of your son's future career. I have been thankful unceasingly for that merciful Providential arrangement that first brought him under my roof, as well for the assistance he renders me, as for the wholesome influence of his piety and general character ; it will be a severe blow to me to lose him, on the latter account especially. I will gladly give him £5 per half-year for the next two half-years, when he shall have a fair addition in proportion to the increase of the school ; that increase is slow at present, but I have still good hope of all the success I desire ; I have had most malignant foes to contend with, but their violence has fallen on their own heads.

“With regard to Charles's improvement, I can speak with confidence as to those points which are directed to his future life as a minister or a teacher. He has read a great deal, and has made excellent progress in his facility in reading Latin authors ; he has done well in Greek, but he had much more to do in that department, and appeared to have done nothing of service in that since he left Mr. Lewis's. You may rely on my word, as a Christian man, that he is in the clear path of mental improvement and eminence. I am positive he is in as fair a way of preparation for the ministry as he would be were he in a College with that view.

“You may make up your minds that he is safe for the ministry, and in a very few years ; he has first-rate abilities, a head adequate to the investigation of the deepest points, accompanied with a fluency of utterance. He is considered a most valuable help in the Sabbath-school, and is treated with the greatest kindness by one gentleman connected with it, who often expresses the highest esteem for him, and indeed makes him his most intimate friend. That gentleman is a man of sound judgment and genuine piety, in affluent circumstances, and the father of a family ; whatever lack of honour Charles may experience ‘in his own country,’ I can tell you he is not without honour here. He has also regularly served at preaching-stations connected with our church, and is universally acceptable. One of the lay preachers, in whom I place the greatest confidence, has expressed to me a high opinion of him, and has authorized me to say that he has no doubt, at seasonable time, the church will properly estimate his talents for the ministry.

“I might add to this ; but I judge this is sufficient to convince you that you will consult his interests by allowing him to remain here at least another year. I lay some claim to disinterestedness in this matter ; if I considered his interests would be best served by his seeking for a larger salary elsewhere, I should feel it my duty to advise it. He might get a little more money, but he would have far less opportunity for self-improvement. The thought has several times occurred to me that, as he is

young, and has some years before him ere he could enter the ministry, he might be able to pass through the Cambridge University course. This would be of great advantage to him as a student, and a good recommendation to him. He might pursue the same work that I did, and pay his own expenses without costing you a shilling; if my school increases pretty well, it can be done;—a year hence will be early enough to decide this.

“I am, as you must perceive, anxious to retain him, as much for his sake as my own; but if you are desirous of more money than I offer for the next year, I must yield to the painful alternative of parting with him; at the same time, I am sure you will be taking a wrong step.

“Hoping yourself, Mrs. S., and your family are well,

“I remain,

“Dear Sir,

“Yours most faithfully,

“E. S. LEEDING.”

“Mr. Spurgeon.”

* * * *

(The following letter shows that Mr. Spurgeon had his request concerning going to the Great Exhibition granted, and it also expresses his gratitude that he was shortly to return to Cambridge, though probably even he scarcely realized then how much was involved in his father's decision :—)

“Colchester,

“June 25 (1851).

“My Dear Aunt,

“I enclose this in Uncle's note. Is he better? I have much enjoyed my three days in London, and am now happy at home. I am very thankful that, if spared, I am going back to Cambridge. Of my progress there, I am not ashamed; it should and might have been greater, but still it is somewhat. My faults I have not learned there, I had the same at Maidstone, and I am not at all fond of having blame thrown on the place where Providence has placed me. I am all fault, but what God's grace has made right. I am content to be evil spoken of, if I can but grow in grace and serve God. Where I have most opportunity of telling sinners the way of salvation, and of preparation for a future course of labour, I trust I shall always feel most happy. Human wisdom I desire to gain, but only in subservience and as handmaid to spiritual knowledge and Divine instruction.

“Grandfather is now with us; he preached last night on ‘Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be

moved.' A blessed thing it must be for the new-born sons of God to have such a stay in the hour of trouble; and he who, having left his own righteousness, trusts alone on Jesus, has a perfect right to this promise.

"Mother is gone to old Mr. Merchant's 51st anniversary at Layer Breton. He is almost past preaching, and stands a monument of the unchanging love of God, who, having once loved a person, will always love him. The motto over his pulpit is, 'We preach Christ, and Him crucified.' I am sure you need all the comforts of the gospel now, and I wish I knew enough to be able to give them faithfully and successfully; that is reserved for future lessons of experience. None who rely on Jesus Christ will ever find their troubles too heavy; for all those who take Him as their whole Saviour, He is a supporter. May God deal kindly with you, and support you!

"Love to self and Uncle from all.

"I am,

"Your affectionate nephew,

"C. H. SPURGEON."