

MR. SPURGEON'S WELCOME HOME.

The members of the church and congregation at the Metropolitan Tabernacle met on the 30th ult., to accord the pastor a hearty welcome after an enforced absence of three months. Twenty-one years of such labor as Mr. Spurgeon has undertaken would have killed any ordinary man outright, and it is no matter of surprise that the mental and physical strain incident to his work has told seriously upon his constitution. He said at the meeting that he had been accosted with suffering from the gout, but in reality he had suffered from nervous prostration and rheumatism. Those who were fortunate enough to be present at the meeting rejoiced to meet their pastor once again, and applauded to the echo his remark that there was "life in the old dog yet, and he meant to go on barking."—About 1500 sat down to tea in the Lecture Hall, and at least 5000 assembled in the Tabernacle. Mr. James Spurgeon took the chair, and humorously remarked that his brother's ministry had come of age, he having been a London pastor for twenty-one years.

Mr. Wm. Olney, the senior deacon, then delivered an address full of the most tender expressions of love for the pastor, and earnestly appealing to the people to support him in every good work, begged them not to be too exacting in their demands for his presence excepting on the occasions of the exercise of his regular ministry. Mr. Spurgeon has been wearied by his attention to a thousand-and-one things from which he must now be relieved. Mr. Blackshaw read an address on the occasion:

Mr. Spurgeon, on rising, to acknowledge his thanks, was greeted with several rounds of applause. He said he occupied a very unusual position in being the audience, and the people the preacher.

An intimation had been given that his friends wished to present him with a large sum of money, as an expression of their love and gratitude, but he declined to receive it, as so much was needed for the Orphanage and College. He could have been, he said, at this time one of the richest men in England, but he had never felt the slightest temptation to covet wealth, only in so far as he could consecrate it to the work of the Lord. When he first came to London, a good old deacon prayed that he might be kept from the bleating of the sheep, by which he meant that he might not be bored by the crochets of cantankerous deacons and church-members. The prayer had been answered in his case.—Unity, peace, and concord had been marked features of the church for twenty years.

During Mr. Spurgeon's absence, the Tabernacle has been thoroughly painted and redecorated, and as the prevailing colours are now a pale lavender and green, with embellishments of gold, the effect, especially when the many hundreds of gas burners are alight, is soft and harmonious, whilst the architectural qualities of the building are heightened considerably by this successful application of decorative art. The cost of beautifying and cleansing the edifice will be upwards of £900.

The Freeman describes

THE OPENING OF THE TABERNACLE.

and says:—"At the morning service there were fully 7,000 persons present, nearly one thousand more than are usually accommodated, and numbers sat in the class or lecture rooms adjacent, unable to see the preacher and only able to hear his words through casements that were opened specially for the supplementary congregation. After prayer, a hymn, "The festal morn, my God, has come," was sung, and then there was an exposition of Scripture, followed by another hymn, "My soul arise in joyful lays," and a prayer, in which Mr. Spurgeon asked for a special blessing upon God's servants at the Agricultural Hall, expressing a hope that there might be such an awakening in all the camps of Israel that Satan's power might be effectually shaken, and the throne of Christ set up for ever. A blessing was also invoked for all Sunday-school teachers, missionaries, street-preachers, and others working in the ways of the Lord. Advertising to a proposed meeting of the members of the church and the seat holders to celebrate his return amongst them, Mr. Spurgeon said he should attend as an invited guest, not to say much for himself, but rather listen to the words of others. He rejoiced and thanked God fervently for having permitted him to be present again, and more than that he need not say. Might God grant that it would be a long time before he was again brought under the great sorrow of being laid aside, and

rendered unable to preach the gospel. Mr. Spurgeon then delivered a fervid and practical discourse from the text, Psalm xlii. 11, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." At the conclusion there was a collection for the College, the funds of which, Mr. Spurgeon said, had been greatly reduced by his long absence from home. In the evening the congregation was equally large, hundreds being unable to gain admittance. The sermon was from the 6th verse of the 5th chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith, which worketh by love." In the course of his sermon, which was a masterly exposition of the doctrine of justification by faith, and in which he maintained that a true belief in Christ necessarily led to purification of morals and to holiness. Mr. Spurgeon referred to the revivalist services now in progress in terms showing that while he rejoiced in it, he was anxious that the effects of it should be of a permanent and not of a transient character. Some of his hearers, he remarked, had probably been converted within the last few weeks under the influence of the services conducted by his dear friends, Messrs. Moody and Sankey, at the Agricultural Hall, and people were asking were their conversions worth anything. He implored them, if they confessed to have found Christ, not to make a sham of it, and said their salvation, if it were worth anything, should be a salvation from sin. Salvation from hell was not the salvation they ought to cry after, but salvation from sin, and that would bring salvation from hell. A thief would like to get salvation from going to prison, but the only salvation for him that was worth having was salvation from thieving any more. They must ask God to give them a new heart and a right spirit, and though there were never truer words uttered than, "Believe in Christ and thou shalt be saved," yet, for all that, as his friends, Messrs. Moody and Sankey, would tell them, if their believing did not save them from sin, it was not that sort of belief that would save their souls.

BAPTISTS IN AUSTRALIA.

A correspondent of the London Freeman writes from Melbourne, January 25th:—

In Victoria alone, according to the last census returns, we number nearly 17,000 in a population of about 750,000. We have forty chapels scattered over the colony. Besides these some twenty-five buildings of the mechanics' institute and lecture hall description are hired for use in public worship. In the great centres our congregations are large, and the membership ranges from five hundred down to the little church with its ten or twelve members.

The annual meeting of our Baptist Association was held last November in Sandhurst, one of our great mining centres. A goodly muster of ministers and delegates met, and the meetings were of a most profitable and refreshing character. The Rev. W. C. Bunning, of Geelong, was elected chairman for the year.

A movement has been inaugurated to provide for our churches a colonially educated ministry. Our beginning has been very humble; our first ministerial student is prosecuting his studies under the tutors of the Congregational College, another is to be consigned to their care in February, and we venture to cherish the hope that before long many of our young men will be found willing to devote themselves to the work of the ministry, and necessity be laid on us to found a Baptist training institute in this young colony.

THE REVIVAL IN ENGLAND.

Our latest London papers say respecting Messrs. Moody and Sankey's mission, that despite all predictions to the contrary, the interest in these revival services has not decreased; indeed, the congregations seem to be more numerous than ever. The recent improvements made in the Agricultural Hall have resulted in a vast change for the better, and now there are no more complaints made of want of hearing. Other complaints are, however, rather freely made, it being thought that the Central Committee, or some of its more active members, are not too courteous to ministers and others requiring tickets. On "Good Friday" there was an afternoon meeting at the Agricultural Hall, when Mr. Moody addressed the large assemblage from the words, "What think ye of Christ?"

showing, in a very forcible manner, that friends and enemies alike testified to His truth and divinity. In the evening, at six o'clock, two hours before the appointed time for commencement, crowds were hurrying from all directions to the hall. The ushers, 200 in number, conspicuous by their wands, were at their appointed places, and by half-past seven not only were the 18,000 chairs taken possession of, but the seats in the galleries were filled, every available standing place occupied, and the place being crammed to overflowing, thousands had to be denied admission. At seven o'clock the whole of the choir, upwards of 200 in number, were in their places, and one hour preceding the service was occupied by them and the congregation in singing some of the most popular of Mr. Sankey's hymns. Amongst those present on the platform were the Earl of Shaftesbury and several members of his lordship's family, Mr. Arthur Mills, M. P., Mr. Frank Bevan, Mr. Haldane, and a large number of ministers. Mr. Moody's address was in continuation of that delivered in the afternoon. The rooms set aside for religious inquirers were again very largely attended. A great number of ministers and town missionaries are nightly engaged in religious conversation with those who repair there having troubles, or religious or Biblical difficulties on their minds. The inquiry meetings are scrupulously kept from the intrusion of any who would resort there for idle curiosity, and no one is permitted to enter but those seeking religious advice. Frequently the applicants are so numerous that persons are spoken to in small groups, and are afterwards invited to kneel and join in prayer. The prayers in all instances are in subdued tones. Many persons from time to time have lingered round the doors under the impression that probably there would be manifestations of strong religious excitement, but though some have been silently moved to tears the general aspect of the rooms differs very little from what may be seen at any time in a quiet orderly Sunday-school. A special prayer meeting presided over by the Hon. Captain Moreton was held after the service. Many young men related their experiences, and stated that they had formed branches in their warehouse of the Christian Association for daily special prayer. One reporter states that during this meeting a young man was apparently so absorbed in prayer as to be lost to all else around. His eyes were firmly closed, his lips moved as in great earnestness; every muscle of his face looked as though drawn up in a convulsive struggle. His hands were sometimes thrown up, and he could only be described as though engaged on his knees in a desperate wrestle. There were two other cases but not so marked.

Mr. Moody said he had made it a rule for many years past to speak to one person at least every day about his eternal welfare. Numerous illustrations were given of successes following the persistent efforts of Christians among their friends. In a workshop in Dublin seventy-five men were brought to Christ through the instrumentality of one young man. He urged each one present to strive to bring one sinner to Christ during the present week, and then requested all who would endeavour to do so to stand. About 8,000 responded.

Admiral Fishbourne said that at a church at Cleghaton, out of a congregation of 2,500 about 500 or 600 people had been under conviction of sin at the same time, and that was done quietly, with not the least excitement. It was delightful to see the real business-like manner in which people came about the transaction, as if they were really determined to find Christ. At another place, too, not far distant, a minister had sent to him for assistance, saying that for whole days, from early morning until eleven o'clock at night they were occupied in pointing of inquirers to Christ. Mr. Bradbury, of Weston-super-Mare, said he had come 140 miles to take part in the good work which was going on in London. At a church near Forest-hill, for the first time since it was built, twenty-six souls had just been into the school-room to make inquiries as to the way of salvation, and many of them went away rejoicing. That very morning as early as eight o'clock some more came, and at nine others came in, so that the work was continuing in full vigour.

On Tuesday evening, the Agricultural Hall presented a more than usually grand spectacle. More than an hour before the service commenced, the huge building was crowded, every available space being occupied. It is supposed that there could not have been fewer than 20,000 persons present, and a very large number seemed

to us to consist of young men and women. The service was begun by the singing of the 53rd hymn by Mr. Sankey and the congregation, and prayer was offered by a minister. As his manner is, before he sings, Mr. Sankey read a portion of Scripture appropriate to the hymn which he was about to render, selecting the parable of the barren fig-tree, which fitly introduced the hymn, which began with "Nothing but leaves." The text of Mr. Moody's sermon was "Son, remember." The subject was boldly announced to be that of Hell as a place of eternal punishment, and Mr. Moody prelaced his vivid descriptions, arguments, and illustrations by saying that he did not mean to terrify any one by speaking of Hell, as he did not wish to scare anyone into the Kingdom of God; but he was a messenger from God, and that if he spoke of the glory of Heaven he must tell of the horrors of Hell, even as our Lord himself. If he gave up hell as a reality he must also give up Heaven as a reality too. A picture of hell had been drawn by Christ himself, and a terrible picture it was. If he found himself believing there was no Hell, he would be off to-morrow to America, and would preach no more in this country. By a startling figure he declared that every one who went to Hell must do so by passing over the murdered body of the Lord Jesus. The congregation was greatly affected at the close, and Mr. Moody perceiving this, eagerly cried out for every one who wished to be prayed for to stand up. A great number of persons rose from their seats, and he broke into fervent prayer, in the course of which he was greatly affected. Hundreds of persons attended the inquiry-room.

Miss Bonar, daughter of the Rev. Andrew A. Bonar, of Glasgow, presides at the organ in Mr. Sankey's absence, and previous to his arrival at the meeting.

Mr. Spurgeon thus writes in the current number of the *Sword and Trowel*:—"Having often heard it questioned whether the work of Messrs. Moody and Sankey would stand the test of time, we requested an esteemed friend to get the opinion of one of the most calm and judicious of the Newcastle pastors. It will be remembered that in that town they laboured with great acceptance. We are right glad to give the reply publicly, and have all the more confidence in doing so because the writer is one of the last men to be carried away by popular enthusiasm, and is eminently one who thinks and judges for himself. He says, "I have no hesitation as to my answer to your question about Moody and Sankey. We here are all of us better, and our churches in many ways, for their visit; permanently the better. More living, more aggressive; quicker to devise and bolder to execute plans of usefulness; and the converts, as far as I can judge or hear, stand wonderfully. I do not mean that there are no disappointments, it were madness to expect that; but they are, to say the least, in every respect of stability and character, equal to the converts received at other times."

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

MISSION BANDS.

Some recent articles in the *Messenger* have recounted the individual efforts made by some children in procuring funds for Missionary purposes, and perhaps, Mr. Editor, you will permit a few suggestions to be offered through the same channel respecting united effort in the same good cause. There are doubtless many children in our Province denying themselves luxuries, or performing self-imposed duties, that something may be saved or earned to aid our beloved Missionaries in their work in distant Siam—some may be so fortunate as to have enlisted in the service a benevolently inclined hen or productive apple-tree. And while it is gratifying to know that a few of our young people are thus exerting themselves, the results would be quite wonderful could the majority of our Sunday School scholars be in like manner interested. In order to effect this it has been recommended by the Central Board that Mission Bands be established in connection with our Women's Missionary Aid Societies; and as the idea is new to many it may not be amiss to give a few hints about their organization and management. In most places the "Band" might be merely a juvenile sewing circle—the only officers necessary being a president, with perhaps assistants, to cut out and arrange the work; and a treasurer to receive the

funds of the society. To procure money to purchase working materials a membership fee would be required, say twenty or twenty-five cents, and the children encouraged to save what they can and make voluntary offerings, or to be more systematic quarterly payments might be made—besides there are plenty of kind uncles and aunts, and indulgent grandparents that would no doubt esteem it a privilege to help swell the treasury. As to the work to be performed it would be very pleasant to make articles especially for the Missionaries themselves and their pupils, or the heathen whom they wish to attract as has been done on one occasion by the Mayflower Mission Band of Halifax, but this is impracticable because expensive. So to obtain money, which of course is easily transmitted, the better plan is to make articles that are saleable here, such as we usually see at bazaars, children's clothing and all sorts of fancy work, which can be very neatly wrought by very little fingers with a little patience and painstaking. By the time one or two large baskets are filled with the dainty things it will quite likely be either strawberry or Christmas time, then a sale and festival would be in order; or a large Christmas tree covered with winter necessities, and a refreshment table provided by the older sisters would not appeal in vain to the well filled purses in the muffs and overcoats. This method seems to exclude the boys, but if they cannot be induced to give recitations, or read while the girls sew, then either have the Band meet where they can carve and whittle, or let them form a society by themselves for the manufacture of such things as brackets, flower ladders, doll's furniture, footstools, picture frames of soft wood to be covered with cork or cones, and various other things which they would enjoy making quite as much as playing ball. In a place where musical talent abounds there could be no easier or more agreeable way of procuring money than by having a children's concert, (for convenience sake the word "children" is used and it includes young people of all ages from our Sabbath Schools). The Band could then be transformed into a singing class, meeting one or two afternoons in a week under the superintendence of one or more capable young ladies. The music need not necessarily be sacred, but silly sentimental songs should be avoided, and pure, wholesome, noble sentiments, in keeping with the object in view, expressed in all the singing, with chorusses, vocal and instrumental solos and duets, and a "big brother" to assist with flute or violin, a programme might be prepared that could not fail to delight any audience that could appreciate sweet sounds and such a picture as a group of happy child-faces would present, bright with the consciousness of being able to help in a blessed work:

"And the night would be filled with music,  
And the cares that infest the day  
Would fold their tents like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away."

A repetition of such a pleasure would without doubt be called for as soon as preparations could be made.

In the city and large villages "readings" are much in vogue, and would pass away a winter's evening very pleasantly in any country place. They could be held once a fortnight, admission, say ten cents, (for the concert it should be more) the young people could furnish the music, recitations and dialogues, interspersed with selections from good authors read by some of their older friends.

Other methods may be employed, and these mentioned greatly improved upon, and modified to suit any circumstances—and while we hope to hear of the formation of many Mission Bands it would give equal pleasure to know that the number of "consecrated" apple trees, hens, and small garden patches, had not diminished.

M. E. K.

For the Christian Messenger.

TRANSLATION OF JOHN ix. 25.

"He answered and said, whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

According to this translation, with which most others substantially agree, the statements and remarks of the man who had been born blind were inconsistent. Though he is not represented as speaking by inspiration, yet he was evidently, while destitute of sight, a man of intelligence and discernment, as his conclusive reasoning (ver. 30-33.) evinces. He would not, therefore, admit, as this rendering represents that it was a matter of uncertainty