

THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE AND ITS WORK.

THE STORY AS TOLD BY REV. JAS. A. SPURGEON—SOME INTERESTING INFORMATION ENLIVENED WITH SPRIGHTLY STORIES.

From The Christian Helper.

Mr. Spurgeon began his address by telling of a little child who was found on a door step in London weeping and sobbing its little heart out, and who, when asked the occasion of its grief, sobbed out: "What I want to know is, where I be?" That was a little like the lecturer's predicament. He did not feel at all like crying but he wanted really to know where he was, where he could be in such a magnificent place as this. He believed, however, that he had the honor to stand on British soil, and to address the audience as his fellow countrymen. (Applause.) Far be it from him to say a word against the great nation across the border. An old English proverb—which he had no doubt had been imported here duty free (Laughter)—said: "My son is my son till he takes a wife; my daughter is my daughter all her life." (Great applause and laughter). Well America entered into the united state, and like England's first-born son, set up housekeeping, and a magnificent family is growing up there; but Canada is England's fairest daughter and he hoped the remainder of the proverb would prove true of her: "My daughter's my daughter all her life. The bond that binds the Old Country to this great part of the Empire is a bond that is growing stronger and stronger every day. The eyes of England are being directed towards this great Dominion; and he hoped there were some wise men in England who would come to reside here. He had been asked to try to lecture to-night. Well

SERMONIZING WAS RATHER IN HIS LINE

than lecturing, still he would try a little in the lecture line,—not that he should, perhaps, keep clear of sermonizing, for he should be, probably a little like that man who came to a meeting expecting to be called upon to speak. Tim ran away so swiftly that he was asked to close with prayer and he said: "I did expect to address a few remarks to you, but I see there is no time except to pray, so I will throw my few remarks into my prayer." (Laughter.) In like manner Mr. Spurgeon said he might throw a bit of sermon into his lecture, for one cannot get out of an old habit any more than the old sign painter who had become very skilful in painting sign-boards. His great piece of art was a red lion. Being asked by some publican to paint his sign he suggested a red lion. The publican objected that there was already a red lion in the street and another on the next street; what he wanted was a white cow. "Well," said the painter, if I must I must, but I warn you, if I paint a white cow it will be marvellously like a red lion!" (Great laughter.) So if he attempted to make a lecture it was possible it might somehow turn out to be

MARVELLOUSLY LIKE A SERMON.

One thing however he would try to do; he would try to give a wide awake sermon. He saw constantly advertised in these parts a "live" business, sometimes a "live" news paper; he would see if he could give a "live" sermon, acting on the suggestion of the old lady, who having been scolded by her minister for sleeping while he was preaching, explained that she was drowsy; and when the minister suggested that she should take a pinch of snuff, she very wisely retorted: "Haden't you better put the snuff into the sermon?" (Laughter.)

The Metropolitan Tabernacle is situated at Newington Butts, London, England,—a spot not very far from the old Tabor Inn, where Chaucer makes his pilgrims start from when they are going to Canterbury. He had seen in years past some of the remains of that Inn. The Butts were outside the borough of Southwark, and there the young men of the olden time went to practice archery, as our young men go out to have their rifle shooting. On that piece of ground in olden times they burned the martyrs, and the records show that one of the earliest martyrs in the time of Queen Mary was put to death for being an Anabaptist. On the very spot where stands the Tabernacle—the largest place of worship for Baptists in the world—witnessing for those truths so dear to us, our forefathers perished for that truth which we now maintain. Is not that another proof that truth will triumph? Did not he who sought to crush out Christianity in its infancy, the Apostate Julian, cry upon his death bed, "O, Nazarene thou hast triumphed"? Did not Voltaire's press that he used for printing his works, after

wards print the Bible? Close by this Tabor Inn is the very church where Bonner sat to try the early martyrs, and in the room where he condemned so many of them to the stake and the rack, for months the Bible Society held its Committee meetings whilst they were rebuilding and enlarging their premises. That is a lesson of encouragement to us all who who have to suffer for the truth. Hold on. Christ shall triumph, and it will be seen that greater is he that is for us than he that is against us.

The Tabernacle was reared some twenty years ago on a piece of ground secured in direct answer to prayer from a company that never had sold a piece of ground before and has never sold a piece since and whose most prominent feature seemed great dinners. He was reminded of a story told by a Primitive Methodist minister. The people wanted a piece of land belonging to a butcher who was very opposed to the Baptists, declaring they should never have the ground. They met and prayed. A deputation visited him, and he said you shall never have that piece of ground as long as I live." "Then you will die," they said. He asked "Why?" "Well," was the reply, "whatever we pray for we get; we pray God to give us that piece of ground; you stand in the way; the Lord will

TAKE YOU OUT OF IT.

(Great laughter.) The man was then really frightened, and having some respect for the length of his days he really let them have the ground. The friends of the Tabernacle did not have to pray for anybody to be removed in that way, but there was an obstacle and it was removed by a special act of Parliament, passed very rapidly indeed, at the expense of a brother who belonged to the Independent body. The Tabernacle cost £25,000. The contract was signed under peculiar circumstances. Some \$25,000 had been promised or collected, and there still remained \$100,000 and the brethren, who are not so progressive as the people of this country, hesitated to take the risk. A meeting was called to decide what was to be done. Just before the meeting a good brother who had been in business some years and saved some money, came to the lecturer's brother and said: There's a difficulty isn't there about signing the contract? "Yes," was the reply. "Well," said he "don't you mind, now look here"—and

HE BROUGHT OUT £20,000

and said, "There it is if you want it; now if they don't like to sign the contract you sign it and go on."

My brother went to the meeting, added the lecturer, and he said, "I have faith that this money will be forthcoming, and I am therefore quite prepared to sign the contract if you are not." Well they thought him remarkably strong in faith. The money never had to be used because the public furnished it all. That is only one of many instances in which God has come to our assistance. The Tabernacle was opened free from debt. It accommodates some 6,000 people who meet regularly for worship; and on one occasion, when Mr. Bright came to preside at a meeting 9000 tickets were issued and 8000 were returned by persons who got some where inside the building. They sat on each other's laps, they stood before each other, they were packed like herrings in a barrel.

The lecturer then passed on to speak of

THE GREAT PREACHER,

who is, after all, the centre of the Tabernacle; for to speak of it without speaking of Charles Haddon Spurgeon would be something like a lecture on the solar system leaving out the sun. (Laughter.) It never would have existed unless my brother had come to London. He being there makes that place what it is to the whole world. The lecturer could not speak from memory as to when his brother was born, because he was three years older than himself, and his memory failed him, (great laughter)—but those who ought to know say that he was born in 1834, and consequently he is something like 45 years old. He comes of a stock that first lived in the Netherlands, but fled for refuge from persecution to the eastern counties of England. But they jumped out of the church of Rome's frying-pan into the church of England's fire, for the tender mercies of the latter were cruel, and again and again they suffered persecution because, as one of them said, he would not go and worship God in a steepled house. They were then Quakers, and one of them sat up in his chair—too ill to lie down—fourteen weeks in a cell, without a fire, through a severe winter, because he would

not go to church in a steepled house. The first one of the name the lecturer remembered, was Rev. James Spurgeon, an Independent preacher who labored in a small country village for 54 years, in a chapel which was erected in the time of the ejection, now some 207 years past—an old fashioned place where people used to go to hear the word—and sometimes to sleep. One good brother who was remonstrated with by his pastor that he was always asleep except when strangers preached, replied: "Well, you see, I am obliged to look after them but I am very sure of you." (Laughter.) A story was told about a preacher who watched the whole congregation go to sleep, and thinking to try an experiment, he went on preaching as he went down the aisle preaching as he went and left the whole congregation asleep and not one of them discovered he was gone. (Renewed laughter.) The lecturer's father still lives to preach with all but his accustomed vigor; his brother's older son, who, though a twin, lays great stress on the "older"—has just settled in the ministry, while the younger one, somewhat feeble in health, cannot stand the English climate and has had to go to Australia. He had often heard about minister's families being worse than any other. He did not believe a word of it. His experience was that if grace does not run in the blood

IT FOLLOWS DOWN THE LINE.

The promise is, "to you and to your children." Some of our best right-hand men were brought up under the roof where the head of the family preached the word. The lecturer's brother had just completed his silver wedding, having labored at the Tabernacle for 25 years. They gave him £6,000 odd to celebrate the event and he at once handed it over to the institutions of the Tabernacle—notably £5,000 to the maintenance of the poor in the Widows' Almshouse. (Applause.) He first began to preach some three years before that in a little place called Waterbeach—he residing then in the adjacent city of Cambridge. He was engaged at that time in tuition. All his life long he has been a scholar and his old tutor testifies that he never had a more promising young man as a scholar than Charles Spurgeon, who, though he has never been to any regular college, the lecturer made bold to say, is one of the best mathematical and classical scholars of his age. People talk about Mr. Spurgeon and ever and anon wonder how a man who has had no college education should do what he does. Well it does not follow that because a man has gone through a college he therefore must be a scholar, for there is such a thing as going in at the front door and being bowed out at the back. (Laughter.) A young man may go and waste all his time at college. Many fathers have spent a good deal of money in sending their boys to college and have to say with Aaron, "I put gold into the furnace and there came out this calf!" (Loud laughter.) A man may waste his time anywhere or he may make use of it anywhere. Waterbeach is a funny little place with one of the funniest and most antiquated of chapels. Mr. Spurgeon could not possibly live on the small stipend the people there were able to offer him, and he resolved that he would go and have his meals on Sunday in every house in the village, and he made his way steadily through every house one the Lord's day to have his dinner and tea. If they would not have him he would

GO ON TO THE NEXT PLACE.

He tells some funny stories about the entertainment he got in some of the houses and about how he worked his way through the public house. The man was getting tolerably frightened. He did not like to have it said that he shut the door against the young parson, and yet whatever should he do when he came to see him? He never had been in a place of worship that he could remember, and what should he talk about? He was obliged to go chapel to get something to talk about when the parson came. Well in that very service the Lord met with him and when the preacher went there to dine he found one there who was loving the Lord in that strange place. The lecturer said he often urged his students when they settled in a place to do something of this sort. He told of one who is now one of the most successful pastors, and a recognized leader, who in working his way around in this fashion, found a man who said: "Never come to my house I never have parsons here." He said he would get there some day. Passing along one day he saw this man looking over his gate into the street. He said to him: you seem to be anxious, what is the matter?" "Well," said he "we got the water

hot and everything ready, and the man was to come and kill my pig." Well this young minister—a man of great resources—said: "I WILL KILL IT FOR YOU."

(laughter). It was an extraordinary thing to do, and the lecturer would not advise young men to repeat it; but this one took off his coat and did it, and when all was done and the old man was satisfied, he said: "Now let us go in and have a little prayer together;" (renewed laughter) he did get into the man's house. The lecturer told this story, not because of the funny side of it, but because he heard that man tell that story himself, and while preaching in that place, he found him one of the most active members and deacons of that same church. (applause.)

There is a sure way of getting to the front if you want to; and if you wish to serve the Master. "Where there's a will, there's a way." That which led Mr. Spurgeon to do his work so thoroughly in the small place, speedily prepared him for the greater work, and having been there a year or two, he was called to the church of which he is pastor. The church is 200 years old. One of the first pastors was Benjamin Keetch, the author of the book on "Parables and Scriptural Methods." Because he would go about and preach the truth he was more than once in the pillory—an iron cage, where the passer by was invited to pelt the prisoner with rotten eggs or whatever missile might come to hand. They tried to stop him from preaching, but it was impossible. They try to stop us sometimes to-day. Not long ago some Established Church clergymen tried to stop a good Methodist local preacher as he was going into his village. He said: "You have no business to come preaching here, sir; I will let you know that this is my parish, and by law I am the person appointed to preach the word of God here!" "Indeed," he said, "It is much easier to stop you than to stop me. There are three ways to stop you, and only one to stop me." "How is that?" "Well, he said, "look here; if I took away your book you couldn't preach;" (great laughter) "if I took away your pay you wouldn't preach;" (renewed laughter) "If I took away your gown,

YOU DAREN'T PREACH."

(great laughter.) "Now," he continued, "you have got to cut out my tongue before you stop me from preaching, because as long as I have got it I will wag it for the truth as it is in Jesus." (applause). That was the spirit of one of the first pastors of this church, and he labored for 36 years. The lecturer then spoke of Dr. Gill's pastorate of 21 years, and Dr. Rippon, who preached for 63 years, remarking that it was a capital thing for a man to be pastor of that church, the fair inference being that he lives on to a good old age. He hoped the Lord would give his brother 25 years more. (great applause.) When he took the church the membership was under 200; now there are at least 5150 enrolled communicants. Concerning certainly 5000 he could tell from his books where they are, whether they were baptised or came from other churches, where their residences have been ever since they have been in fellowship, and he could give information concerning any one of the 5000. The discipline of the huge church is enforced most rigidly—perhaps more so than in small churches. These have all been gathered together, not to hear the word preached in some ornate, attractive manner, that should be fireworks and display and parade, but because the gospel has been preached in love and earnestness and force by, as has been said, "the first preacher of the day, and there is no second," and because of that gospel and it alone he believed multitudes would be gathered together in Christian union and activity for many years to come. The mode of worship was exceedingly simple, not unlike our mode here, with the exception that his brother didn't like organs. The lecturer did not object to them, because he had some little experience about the difficulty of getting music for a congregation apart from something to lead. Once, in a country place after giving out a hymn, he asked in vain that some one should pitch a tune, when up jumped a boy and said:

"PLEASE, SIR, I CAN WHISTLE ONE!"

(great laughter). Well, there was no help for it, so he replied, "If you begin, I shall take it up" and the both struck up beautifully; and he heard no singing better than the music they had that day. But he would sooner have a "kist of whistles" than just that one whistle—(laughter)—and he was glad of anything that help us

worship God as long as it is real worship. Mr. Spurgeon closed his lecture, after giving some details about the Pastors' College, Colportage work, the Home for Orphans, etc., by urging Canadians to have a care that the growth which marks the rapid progress of the Dominion should characterize our spiritual life. On resuming his seat the audience expressed their gratification by repeated plaudits.

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