

Our Contributors.

A CALL TO SPURGEON.

BY KNOXONIAN.

The congregation of Smith's Corners met lately for the purpose of extending a call to a minister. There was a fair attendance, and a considerable amount of interest was taken in the proceedings, as it had been rumoured for some time that the Corners people would probably ask the great London preacher to become their pastor. The meeting having been duly opened, the chairman, after a few remarks on the importance of the work before them, asked those present to proceed to business.

Mr. Diotrephes Highflyer then rose, and said he had a motion to make which he felt sure would secure the support of all present. They had now been vacant for over two years, and had heard about fifty candidates. Some of these were good enough men, but none of them came up to the standard required at Smith's Corners. They needed a first-class man in their church, and there was no use in calling any other. The Methodists were getting a good man, and they must have the best possible talent in their church or they might as well close it. Their people demanded the best pulpit ability in the country, and they were willing to pay for it. They could raise, at least, three hundred dollars a year and no doubt they could get a supplement. He had been carefully looking over a list of those who had preached and of the most effective men in the Church, and he was persuaded none of them was suitable. They wanted a man of peculiar qualities to fill the Corners pulpit, and he was convinced they would have to go to another country for him. He had been looking into the record of a few of the best men in the British cities, and, on the whole, he thought Spurgeon had made about as good a mark as any of them. He moved that they call Spurgeon.

Mr. Aminadab Stuckup seconded the motion. He wished to direct the attention of the meeting to the financial aspect of the question. Spurgeon, if he accepted their call, would no doubt draw, and the more people the more money. Spurgeon would draw on the other churches and bring their people in, and a considerable amount of the funds now going into the other churches would flow into the Corners treasury. His opinion always was that the minister should raise the money. Two things had to be kept in view—*tone* and *money*. A minister coming from London would give tone to the Corners Church and the money would come in. He had great pleasure in seconding the motion.

Mr. Straightlace said he was opposed to calling Spurgeon. It was well-known that Spurgeon *smokes*, and no man who uses tobacco would stand in the Corners pulpit with his consent. No Christian would smoke. Smoking produces idiotcy, insanity, and crime, and sends thousands to the gaol, the gallows, and an early grave. Spurgeon might be a good preacher, but what does a man's preaching amount to if he smokes. If Spurgeon were called, he and his family would leave the Corners Church.

Mr. Smallbore made the same objection. If they called Spurgeon he would stop his subscription. He had never paid less than two dollars a year; but if they called Spurgeon, or any other smoker, he would withdraw his subscription and then where would they be?

Mr. Humdrum said he had another objection. Spurgeon was sensational. He published his sermons in the *Globe* every week. He would have nothing to do with sensational preachers.

Mr. Dry-as-dust said his objection was of another kind. Spurgeon often said humorous, racy things in the pulpit. He could give any number of illustrations of this fault from his published sermons. In a sermon on Jonah ii. 9, he said Jonah was a Calvinist, and added that he hoped none of his Arminian friends would have to learn Calvinism where Jonah learned his. It was not in good taste to make such allusions. He believed in pulpit dignity. He was opposed to putting a man in the Corners pulpit that said such things in his sermons. He liked to see a stiff, dignified, ecclesiastical-looking man with a proper amount of clerical starch in his composition. Spurgeon looked like a business man, and never talked in "pulpit tone." He would never sign a call to such a man.

Mr. Theophilus Pedant, B.A., said Spurgeon was not a graduate of any University, and, for his part, he never wished to hear a man that was not a graduate.

He admired "culchaw" and had reason to believe that Spurgeon was not a scientist. He would not vote for Spurgeon.

Mr. John Talkative said his objection was of a more practical kind. It is well-known that Spurgeon does not visit his congregation. He had lately read some remarks of Spurgeon's that made light of visiting and tea-drinking in the congregation. Now, he (Mr. Talkative) believed in visiting. He liked the minister to come often and bring his family and spend the whole afternoon. He would not press too heavily on a minister and ask him to read and pray when he visited. Nor did he believe that a minister should catechize families and speak to them on matters of personal religion. That was tedious and laborious and could not be expected. What he wanted was that the minister should spend half-a-day occasionally talking about *current events*. That was the way to build up a cause. If Spurgeon had spent the time going round among the people that he spent in writing books, and editing his magazine, and working at his orphanage and Pastors' College, how much better it would have been! If there was any reason to hope that Spurgeon would improve his methods and do more visiting, he would not oppose the call, but Spurgeon was too old now to reform. He would not sign the call.

Mr. Veal said he was opposed to Spurgeon on account of his age. He had already passed the dead line of fifty, and a man over fifty was not capable of filling the Corners pulpit. Spurgeon might have experience and piety and a fair amount of pulpit ability, but he could not be magnetic at fifty. What they wanted was a magnetic young man. A young man was always better at getting up socials, helping at tea-meetings, and all that sort of thing. Spurgeon had the rheumatism in his toes and could not get around lively for dishes and things when the Corners people were getting up their annual tea-meeting. What they wanted was a young, active man.

Mr. Gusher said he had a more serious objection to Spurgeon than any that had yet been urged. Spurgeon was combative. He gave the Ritualists, Rationalists, and other people of various kinds some fearful knocks. Now, he did not like a minister of that kind. He liked a minister that said, "Dear brother," or "Dear sister," to everybody. There was nothing he liked so much as to speak at a "Union meetin'." He had no sympathy with these men that were always exposing errors and denouncing abuses. For his part he was ready to join hands with Ritualists and all other men, and sing: "Blest be the tie that binds." That was the hymn he liked. This business of contending for the truth was behind the age. Spurgeon would be sure to make trouble with somebody if he came, and therefore he would not sign his call.

At the close of Mr. Gusher's remarks, the meeting adjourned.

Moral.—Objections can be made to calling even Spurgeon.

THE FORMATION AND INSTRUCTION OF HIGHER CLASSES IN SABBATH SCHOOLS.

BY REV. PRINCIPAL M'VICAR, D.D., LL.D.

(Continued.)

(3) The following four courses of higher studies should be systematically pursued in the Senior or Bible Class. I can here only indicate in the most general manner what these courses should embrace. They may be made to extend over as many years as the teacher may judge necessary, and when thoroughly taught, I am persuaded that students will not, as a rule, abandon them until they have seen the end; for I must say, once for all, that the chief reason why advanced pupils, and especially the best of them, leave our classes is that there is not sufficient intellectual and spiritual nourishment furnished to retain them.

The first course should be devoted to instruction in the true method of reading the Bible, the object being not only to make the students familiar with its contents, but also independent investigators of the sacred record. This is what is needed to quicken the interest of young people in the Word, to enable them to see that it is not dull, disorderly, and unattractive, to fortify them against the danger of being carried away by every wind of doctrine, and to give them courage to become teachers of others. But how is the art of thus reading the Bible to be attained? To read any book intelligently we must proceed analytically, and we must guard against the common error of seeking

to be very profound and trying to discover occult and mysterious meanings. A vast amount of precious and unobserved truth lies upon the surface of the Word, and what young and old require to do is to open their eyes and look at it. Hence the analysis of every passage of Scripture should embrace the naming of the persons, the actions, the doctrines, and the practical lessons of which it speaks, which will enable the student to discover the scope of the whole, or what the writer really intends to convey. This is all very simple, but the doing of it requires close observation and involves going over the lesson on at least four times, which exercise is fitted to impress upon the mind what God says, rather than any talk, brilliant or otherwise, in which the teacher may indulge. Chrysostom, the celebrated Greek Father, strongly commends the lecture as a vehicle of public instruction because God speaks much in it and man little—precisely what is secured by the method which I am now inculcating. And to make this clear let me take a recent lesson, and deal with it accordingly. I read it, Acts xxiii. 1-11.

Keeping our Bibles in hand, according to our methods of analysis, we are first to name the persons mentioned in the passage. Who are they? Taken in the order in which they occur, they are: Paul, the members of the Council, Ananias, God, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Scribes, Angels, the Chief Captain, the Soldiers, Jesus.

Now, observe that this very simple analysis, this first easy process of running over the lesson, which any intelligent child could do, stimulates thought, cultivates the power of observation, fixes attention upon the chief actors in the scene and gives great scope for teaching. Who could not, even impromptu, tell much that would be instructive about Paul, the Council, the High Priest, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Scribes etc. The richness of the lesson is so far disclosed, but not fully. We have now to go over it a second time, naming the actions stated or implied therein. What are these? 1. Paul surveys the Council—an old familiar scene to his eye. 2. Paul speaks. 3. Ananias gives a command. 4. Paul is smitten. 5. Paul denounces Ananias. 6. The bystanders speak. 7. Paul answers. 8. Paul addresses the whole audience. 9. A dissension between Sadducees and Pharisees. 10. A division among the multitude. 11. The Chief Captain gives a command. 12. The soldiers bring Paul into the Castle. 13. The Lord speaks to him.

These are the chief actions referred to in the lesson. How provocative of reflection. How teeming with interest and matter for practical instruction, and yet how simple and easily understood. Even a child could talk to some purpose about these things. But, according to my method, we have to go over the same ground a third time and to undertake a higher and more difficult task. We are now to formulate the doctrines which the passage contains. This is a work of synthesis rather than analysis. The chief doctrines are:

1. Man's supreme responsibility to God. "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."

2. Christians have legal rights which they should not weakly forego. "Sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?"

3. Rulers are to be respected and obeyed as representing Divine authority. "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." (Rom. xiii. 1, et. seq.)

4. The resurrection of the dead, of the righteous and the wicked. "Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question."

5. The existence of spirits and the ministry of angels. "If a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God."

6. The doctrine of a general and special Providence, or God's universal care of His servants—"And the night following, the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul."

7. The duty and privilege of being witnesses for Christ—"As thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so thou must bear witness also at Rome."

We have thus analyzed the passage, keeping in view the persons, the actions, and the doctrines to which it refers. We have to examine it still a fourth time in search of practical lessons. And let me say in passing that it is well in this case to take the most obvious and avoid straining the words of the Holy Ghost to