

Some Great Preachers.

SURGEON, PARKER, AND JOHN McNEILL.

WHILE in London, last February, on my tour around the globe, I had the opportunity of hearing these three pulpit celebrities of world-wide fame. There are many other distinguished preachers of the Gospel at the present day in the great metropolis of the British Empire. Among them in our own church we point with a pardonable pride to Dr. Donald Fraser, Dr. Munro Gibson, and the Rev. R. M. Thornton, all of whom by a remarkable coincidence once occupied pulpits in the commercial metropolis of our Dominion. These and other metropolitan brethren have won honourable distinction as preachers of the everlasting Gospel. Howbeit they have not attained to the three of whom I now briefly write.

I heard Spurgeon preach his first sermon in his Tabernacle after ten weeks' absence in Mentone on account of indisposition. His appearance as he rose up to address the five thousand eager listeners who assembled to hear him that day was not by any means prepossessing. And all throughout the service he did not leave on my mind the impression of anything like remarkable oratorical ability. For commanding appearance and the graces of oratory he would compare unfavourably with Henry Ward Beecher, or Dr. Storrs, or our own Dr. Ormiston, as I heard these famous preachers when they were in the zenith of their popularity. And yet I must say, for simple child-like faith in God, and reverence for the Bible as the revelation of His will, for the use of such plain Anglo-Saxon speech as the common people hear gladly, for clear silvery tones of voice that fall like melodious music on the listening ear, for capacity to bring out the mind of the Spirit from the words of the text, for pathos, for heart power, I never heard the equal of Mr. Spurgeon. During his ten weeks' absence in Mentone several members of his congregation had passed away from earth to heaven, and surviving friends expected him to say something in regard to the departed ones as well as to the listening multitudes before him. To meet this two-fold re-

quirement of the situation he selected two texts as the groundwork of his sermon: Rev. vii. 13-17, and Isa. xlix. 10. From the first of these passages he drew a graphic picture of the life of the redeemed in heaven. From the other he drew an equally graphic picture of the heavenly life on earth. As he spoke in simple, earnest tones, now of the life of the redeemed in heaven, and now of the life of ripening believers on earth, I fancy that many of his hearers were ready to say of themselves and of the preacher: "whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell, God knoweth."

To pass from Spurgeon's Tabernacle to Dr. Parker's City Temple brings you into an entirely different atmosphere. Unlike Spurgeon, Dr. Parker evidently enjoys robust, vigorous health, and unlike him again he speaks largely to the natural man, and makes very small account of those deeper religious experiences with which the Tabernacle preacher is so thoroughly acquainted. It was at one of his famous Thursday-Noon services that I heard Dr. Parker. Even at that seemingly unfavourable hour in busy London the spacious church was well filled with an audience evidently of far more than ordinary intelligence. Among those present I saw quite a number of clergymen from different parts of the world, who, like myself, wanted to hear this brilliant pulpit orator. None who heard him that day could, I think, be disappointed, unless they were disappointed in hearing what seemed to be the utterances of a ruddy-faced judge on the bench, rather than the message which you expect to hear from a pale-faced preacher of the Gospel. Dr. Parker's text was Ps. cxv. 8, and the sermon which he preached from it was very suggestive and stimulating. With perfect self-control, and with great clearness and vigour, he demonstrated by irresistible logic that the character of the religion, true or false, will show itself in the life of those who believe it. The creeds and catechisms of the churches found very little sympathy with this celebrated preacher that day. He was particularly severe and sarcastic on the Episcopal church, and also on the celebrated John Henry Newman, who has since that time gone to join the great majority on the other side of the shady valley. As I listened