

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON.

RECOLLECTIONS BY AN OLD STUDENT.



AT Mentone, in the south of France, as midnight was merging into morning, on the last Sunday and the last day of January, one of the kingliest souls that ever lived fell asleep on the bosom of his Lord. I cannot write of Charles Haddon Spurgeon without a conflict of emotions.

There are days in every life that can never be forgotten. Days that stand out from all the rest like pillars on the plain of memory; days that have been made radiant with the light of a great joy, or shadowed with the gloom of a great sorrow. They are the memorable milestones in the pilgrimage of years. As long as I live I will not forget that fateful first of February, the day that saw flashed across the deep to this continent the intensely painful words, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon is dead!" No language can describe the thrill of pain these words contained to the English nation, but what to those who knew him! Instantly sorrow became queen, and ruled supreme. The Anglo-Saxon world put on mourning. Reverently do I lay my wreath on his grave.

Since the morning of the first of February many have been living under the oppression of a personal bereavement. Memory, too, has been busy carrying me back, hour by hour almost, to those happy years when as a student I used to sit at his feet and hear words that since I heard them I have not heard any like them from other lips. And now there comes over me, at times overwhelmingly, the sad, sad thought that the presence I loved so dearly is vanished from earth for ever, and that the great, sweet voice is hushed in the long silence! Ah! me, how remorseless is death. How true it is that those we love best die first.

But I must not seem to be selfish in my sorrow, although much, I hope, will be forgiven an old student. The grief over the departure of him who bulked so luminously in the generation's life is universal, sincere and deep. The sense of loss that came to every Christian heart upon the news of Mr. Spurgeon's death it would be hard to exaggerate. Every child of

God of every denomination who had been helped or cheered by his almost magic words (and who had not?) felt that he had lost a friend, a brother, a counsellor,—one who had been God's minister to him. How vast the vacancy his removal to the 'Father's house' has caused! The universal feeling is that a gap has been made in the Christian fellowships of earth and in the ranks of Christian workers which, to our present conception of it, it would be impossible to repair; that the loss to the sacramental host of God's elect is as great as if a commander-in-chief had fallen in the thick of the battle. Englishmen all the world over were proud of Spurgeon. He was a national institution. His name was a household word. In the backwoods of Canada, on ranches and sheep farms in the wild West, in African huts, in lonely Highland glens, where statesmen and kings are all unknown, Mr. Spurgeon's name was known and enshrined where no other name could dispute its claim. And it deserved so to be. Although a minister of a particular body (Baptist), with the distinct, unmistakable beliefs of that body held most firmly, his heart was as big as the whole "household of faith." There never breathed a broader or more catholic soul than Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Although grateful to God for him, the Baptists claimed no monopoly in Mr. Spurgeon; and, indeed, had they ventured to do so he would have repudiated the assumption. He regarded himself as the servant of the universal church, and in this sense he was so accepted with fervent gratitude to the giver for His gift. The news of his death tolls to-day like a knell through all the churches of Christ.

Charles H. Spurgeon's family was of Dutch descent. For two hundred years and more his ancestors in England were of God's noblemen. Many of them had the high honour of knowing what it was to suffer for Christ. One, Job Spurgeon, in 1677, proved his heroism when lying in jail for his fidelity to his conscience. A good ancestry is a priceless heritage, and Spurgeon valued his more than "Norman blood."