

delightful and healthful residential suburbs. The most conspicuous feature of this great church is not, however, its numerical force, but the prominence here given for forty years to the preaching of the pure Gospel of Christ, and to the advocacy and illustration of a simple and apostolic form of worship and Christian life. There is noticeable also an absence of all attempt at worldly art. There is no magnifying of the æsthetic accessories ; the only beauty cultivated is the beauty of holiness.

The building is almost excessively, though not repulsively, plain ; there has certainly been no constructing of ornament, and but little ornamenting of construction. The main objects in view have evidently been commodiousness, convenience, and comfort. The building has been so planned that every one in the vast audience may both see and hear the preacher, and probably no other building in the world combines such large accommodations with such freedom from acoustic defects. When all available sittings are occupied, in the aisles as well as pews, five thousand persons may be seated ; and on a few occasions it is said that more than seven thousand have been crowded into the house.

The area or ground floor furnishes the main seating capacity, but two galleries run entirely around, elliptical in effect, and very convenient and capacious. A portion of the lower gallery, extending forward, provides the platform for the preacher. The actual point where the speaker stands is near to one of the foci of the ellipse formed by the gallery front, and is therefore the best point from which to be well heard. Immediately below this is the baptistery platform, elevated about four feet, and extending still further toward the centre of the area ; and here on ordinary occasions are seated children from the orphanage and elderly women from the almshouses, those whose hearing is imperfect, etc.

Mr. Spurgeon's great law in preaching was to combine simplicity with evangelicity. He believed thoroughly in the inexhaustible beauty and power of the old Gospel, when its native Divine attractiveness and effectiveness are unhindered by the vain trimmings and trappings of this world ; and he honestly and persistently sought to make every sermon not only a means of edification to saints, but of conversion to sinners. Lest anything should divert attention from Christ as the centre of the message, and God as the centre of worship, he gave no encouragement to organ or choir, and the vast assemblage has always been led by a precentor. The service opens with prayer and song ; the Scripture reading and exposition are followed by another hymn and prayer, and the benediction immediately succeeds the sermon. So great was Mr. Spurgeon's dependence on the power of the simple Word, accompanied by the Holy Spirit, that he was not wont to hold "after meetings," except for prayer ; nor did he use the methods so common with modern evangelists of "bringing hearers to an immediate decision." Yet, to the honor of God he it noted that the *average accession of members* for the last thirty-eight years has been *three hundred and ninety per year*, and in 1874 and 1875 exceeded five hundred.