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## Spurgeon's First Sermon

(Extract from Autobiography published by Revell Co.)

Of his first sermon Mr. Spurgeon says:—

I remember well the first place in which I addressed a congregation of adults, and the illustration below, sets it clearly before my mind's eye. It was not my first public address by a great many, for at Newmarket and Cambridge and elsewhere the Sabbath-school had afforded me ample scope for speaking the Gospel; but no regular set discourse to a congregation met for Divine worship had I delivered till one eventful Sabbath evening, which found me in a cottage at Teversham, holding forth before a little assembly of humble villagers. The tale is not a new one, but it is worth telling again.

There is a Preachers' Association in Cambridge, connected with St. Andrew's Street Chapel, once the scene of the ministry of Robert Robinson and Robert Hall. A number of worthy brethren preached the Gospel in the various villages surrounding Cambridge, taking each one his turn according to plan. In my day, the presiding genius was the venerable Mr. James Vinter, whom we were wont to address as Bishop Vinter. His genial soul, warm heart and kindly manner were enough to keep a whole family stocked with love, and, accordingly, a goodly company of zealous workers belonged to the Association, and labored as true yoke-fellows. My suspicion is that he not only preached himself, and helped his brethren, but that he was a sort of recruiting sergeant, and drew in young men to keep up the number of the host; at least, I can speak from personal experience as to one case.

I had, one Saturday finished morning school, and the boys were all going home for the half-holiday, when in came the aforesaid 'Bishop' to ask me to go over to Teversham, the next evening, for a young man was to preach there who was not much used to the services, and very likely would be glad of company. That was a cunningly-devised sentence, if I remember it rightly, and I think I do; for, at the time, in the light of that Sunday evening's revelation, I turned it over and vastly admired its ingenuity. A request to go and preach would have met with a decided negative; but merely to act as company to a good brother who did not like to be lonely, and perhaps might ask me to give out a hymn or to pray, was not at all a difficult matter, and the request understood in that fashion, was cheerfully complied with. Little did the lad know what David and Jonathan were doing when he was made to run for the arrow, and as little did I know, when I was cajoled into accompanying a young man to Teversham.

My Sunday-school work was over, tea had been taken, and I set off through Barnwell, and away along the Newmarket Road, with a gentleman some few years my senior. We talked of good things, and at last I expressed my hope that he would feel the presence of God while preaching. He seemed to start, and assured me that he had never preached in his life, and could not attempt such a thing; he was looking to his young friend Mr. Spurgeon for that. This was a new view of the situation, and I could only reply that I was no minister; and that, even if I



THE HOUSE AT KELVEDON, ESSEX, WHERE C.H. SPURGEON WAS BORN

had been, I was quite unprepared. My companion repeated that he, in a still more emphatic sense, was not a preacher, that he would help me in any other part of the service, but that there would be no sermon unless I delivered one. He told me that if I repeated one of my Sunday-school addresses, it would just suit the poor people, and would probably give them more satisfaction than the studied sermon of a learned divine. I felt that I was fairly committed to do my best. I walked along quietly, lifting up my soul to God, and it seemed to me that I could surely tell a few poor cottagers of the sweetness and love of Jesus, for I felt them in my own soul. Praying for Divine help, I resolved to make the attempt. My text should be, 'Unto you therefore which believe

giving out of the last hymn. To my own delight I had not broken down, nor stopped short in the middle, nor been destitute of ideas, and the desired haven was in view. I made a finish and took up a hymnbook; but to my astonishment, an aged voice cried out: 'Bless your dear heart; how old are you?' My very solemn reply was: 'You must wait till the service is over before making such inquiries. Let us now sing.' We did sing, the young preacher pronounced the benediction, and then there began a dialogue which enlarged into a warm, friendly talk, in which everybody appeared to take part. 'How old are you?' was the leading question. 'I am under sixty,' was the reply. 'Yes, and under sixteen,' was the old lady's rejoinder. 'Never mind my age; think of



EXTERIOR OF COTTAGE AT TEVERSHAM, WHERE I FIRST PREACHED

He is precious,' and I would trust the Lord to open my mouth in honor of His dear Son. It seemed a great risk and a serious trial; but depending upon the power of the Holy Ghost, I would at least tell out the story of the Cross, and not allow the people to go home without a word.

We entered the low-pitched room of the thatched cottage, where a few simple-minded farm laborers and their wives were gathered together; we sang and prayed, and read the Scriptures, and then came my first sermon. How long or how short it was, I cannot now remember. It was not half such a task as I feared it would be, but I was glad to see my way to a fair conclusion, and to the

the Lord Jesus and His preciousness,' was all that I could say, after promising to come again, if the gentlemen at Cambridge thought me fit to do so. Very great and profound was my awe of 'the gentlemen' at Cambridge' in those days.

Are there not other young men who might begin to speak for Jesus in some such lowly fashion; young men who hitherto have been as mute as fishes? Our villages and hamlets offer fine opportunities for youthful speakers. Let them not wait until they are invited to a chapel, or have prepared a fine essay, or have secured an intelligent audience. If they will go and tell from their hearts what the Lord Jesus has done for