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**LIFE AND WORKS
OF REV. CHARLES H. SPURGEON**

By
HENRY DAVENPORT NORTHROP, D. D.

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Rev. C. H. Spurgeon: The Story of His Life and Labors.

CHAPTER VII.
Stockwell Orphanage.

A Large Gift.-- New Home for Children.-- Process of Building.-- Laying the Corner-Stone.-- The Little Ones Happy.-- Generous Givers.-- Daily Life in the Orphanage.-- What Becomes of the Boys.-- Rules of Admission.-- Not a Sectarian Institution.-- Successful Anniversary.

IT is the Lord's own work to care for the fatherless. Those who have faith in God never need be without success in undertaking the care of the orphan. God helps the helpless; but he uses man as his agent in arranging details. Soon after "The Sword and the Trowel" was commenced Mr. Spurgeon indicated in one of his articles published in its pages several forms of Christian usefulness, and amongst them the care of the orphan.

Shortly afterwards, in September, 1866, Mr. Spurgeon received a letter from a lady, offering to place at his command the sum of \$100,000, with which to commence an orphanage for fatherless boys. At first he felt disposed to avoid the onerous responsibilities of such a work; and, calling at the address given by the lady, tried to prevail upon her to give the money to Mr. Müller, of Bristol. The claims of London for such an institution were urged; and, unable to refuse the request of the generous donor, the money was accepted on trust for the purpose named. Mrs. Hillyard, the widow of a clergyman of the Church of England, was the lady whose benevolence thus originated the Orphanage. The money was in railway debentures, which were not at that time available for use otherwise than as an investment.

Birth of the Orphanage.

After consulting with the leading friends at the Tabernacle, a body of twelve trustees was chosen, in whose names the money was invested, and a resolution was agreed upon to purchase a suitable plot of land at Stockwell, on which to erect an orphanage. In March, 1867, the deed of incorporation was signed by the trustees, and in May the claims of the projected buildings were urged with so much force and urgency that the people belonging to the Tabernacle took up the case with loving zeal and energy. By the month of August \$5,350 were in hand, and the whole church at the Tabernacle was engaged in collecting on this behalf. Prayer, faith, and prompt, energetic action were all combined in the efforts made, and pastors, trustees, and congregation were of one mind in their purpose to make the work a success.

Friends of the Children.

Within the space of a year the plan of the Orphanage was matured, the foundations laid, the work was making rapid progress, and a large amount of money was in hand for the purpose. Donations from \$5 to \$1,250 had been generously forwarded to help on the work, and a great meeting was held in September, 1867, when the public generally had an opportunity of showing their sympathy with the proceedings. Previously to that large meeting the foundation-stones of three of the houses were laid under circumstances of more than usual interest.

Mrs. Tyson, a lady who had often aided Mr. Spurgeon in the work of the College, and in other enterprises, had been spared to see the twenty-fifth anniversary of her marriage day, on which occasion her beloved husband, a wealthy merchant, presented her with \$2,500. This money the lady at once took to Mr. Spurgeon to be dedicated to God for the erection of one of the orphan houses, to be called Silver Wedding House. About the same time a merchant in the city called upon the pastor at the Tabernacle, and, after transacting some business with him, left with Mr. Spurgeon's secretary a sealed envelope, in which was \$3,000, to be used in building another house which, it was afterwards determined, should be called Merchant's House, as the donor refused to have his name given.

Noble-hearted Workmen.

The way in which God was answering the prayers of His people was further shown by an offer made by the workmen who had built the Tabernacle to give the labor necessary for erecting a third house, whilst their employer volunteered to give the necessary material: this to be called the Workmen's House.

Such manifest tokens of the divine favor attending the work greatly encouraged the pastor and the trustees and on Monday afternoon, August 9, 1867, the foundation-stones of the three houses named were laid-- one by Mrs. Hillyard, one by Mr. Spurgeon, and one by Mr. Higgs. The scene presented at Stockwell on that day was exceedingly picturesque and intensely interesting. At the monster tea-meeting which followed, the tables extended three hundred and thirty feet in length, and the bright sunshine made the scene one of joy and delight which will long be remembered, though the rain, which came down so bountifully just as tea was over, caused much discomfort.

The subscriptions brought in that day reached \$12,000. In "The Sword and the Trowel" for October the names of 1,120 collectors are printed, with the amounts on their cards, stated to be \$14,010. Amongst the collectors were members of the Church of England, Congregationalists, Methodists, Baptists, and others, so general had been the sympathy which was felt in the work.

The Work Grows.

The faith of the pastor and trustees of the Orphanage was greatly strengthened by the wonderful manner in which God had answered their prayers and rewarded their efforts. It was announced that eight houses were contemplated, to provide for not less than one hundred and fifty orphans, requiring an outlay of \$15,000 per annum. Messrs. Olney & Sons gave \$2,500 to erect a fourth house, to be called, after the sainted and venerable Mrs. Olney, Unity House.

By the end of the year 1867 the trustees had no less than two hundred names of orphans from whom to select fifty in the following April. The pressing need of providing for these children made the way more easy for extending the work. Accordingly, at the meeting of the Baptist Union, early in 1868, it was resolved that an effort should be made to raise the funds necessary for erecting two houses, at a cost of \$3,000 each.

Whilst these efforts were being made amongst the Baptists, Mr. Thomas Olney, as the Superintendent of the Tabernacle Sunday-school, aided by the teachers and scholars, was collecting the funds necessary for erecting a house to represent the young children. Simultaneously with that effort was another amongst the students at the college, who had resolved to show their affection for their pastor by raising money sufficient to erect a house on their behalf, and to perpetuate their institution by having it named the College House.

Laying a Corner-Stone.

Two meetings were held at the Orphanage in June, 1868-- one on the 1st of June, when the venerable Thomas Olney, Sr., laid the foundation-stone of the building which was to form the lecture and dining-hall, the master's house, and the entrance gateway. It was a gladsome sight to witness the joy of the venerable man, who had for nearly threescore years been connected with the Church worshipping at the Tabernacle as he performed the pleasing duty assigned to him.

On the same day the Rev. John Aldis, of Reading, and Alexander B. Goodall, Esq., each laid one of the foundation-stones of the two Testimonial Houses, subscribed for by the Baptist churches as a token of regard to Mr. Spurgeon. A monster tea-meeting followed the proceedings, after which addresses were delivered by the Revs. Thomas Binney, Dr. Raleigh, J. T. Wigner, W. Brock, D. D., W. Howieson, A. Mursell, Henry Varley, W. Scott, S. H. Booth, G. Gould, J. Raven, J. H. Millard, John Spurgeon, Sr., C. H. Spurgeon, and James A. Spurgeon. Mr. Wigner presented to the pastor an address of affectionate sympathy from the Baptist churches, which was signed by Mr. Goodall and himself on behalf of the subscribers to the fund, and with the address was the sum of \$6,000. That sum was

afterwards increased to \$8,720, so as to include the furniture and fittings for the two houses, that the offering might be in every respect complete in all its parts.

Happy Children.

The meeting held on June 19th, thirty-fourth birthday of Mr. Spurgeon, was, if possible, a more joyous and enthusiastic one than any of the preceding. On that day Mr. Thomas Olney, Jr., surrounded by a huge mass of children forming the Tabernacle Sunday schools, laid the foundation-stone of the Sunday-school house, amidst the enthusiastic applause of the delighted children. It was a time of joy they will all long remember. Dear Mrs. Spurgeon, so long a suffering invalid, was there to witness the happiness of the assembly, and by request from the students at the college, and the ministers who had gone from it, she was induced to lay the foundation-stone of the College House. She was graciously upheld on the occasion, although the surpassing kindness displayed was enough to overcome one of a stronger frame. After the stone-laying was over, twenty-six sweet little girls in white advanced one by one, and presented Mrs. Spurgeon with purses which their parents had subscribed as a token of their affectionate rejoicing at her temporary restoration. It was a touching, beautiful, and unexpected sight, which deserves to be recorded. A large sum of money was presented to Mr. Spurgeon as a birthday offering, which he put into the Orphanage treasury.

Funds Flow In.

Another incident occurred at that period which deserves to be placed on record. The Baptist church at Liverpool, over which the Rev. Hugh Stowell Brown presides, was about to be reopened, and Mr. Spurgeon consented to preach the sermon. He did so; but the church and congregation resolved to defray the cost of the repairs, and gave to Mr. Spurgeon for the Orphanage the whole of the collection, which amounted to \$1,250.

The manner in which the funds have been contributed, first to erect the Orphanage buildings, and since then to maintain the children and officers, and keep the whole establishment in continuous operation, most clearly indicates that from the commencement of the work, up to the present time, the hand of God has been directing the whole.

Each house was occupied as soon as it was finished; but unable to wait until the first was ready, so soon as the plan of the Orphanage was matured and trustees appointed, four orphans were selected and placed under the charge of a sister in her own house. As money came in others were added to them. To manifest still further the interest which Mrs. Hillyard took in the work, when she found several orphans already in charge of a matron, she sold some household plate to give the money for their support.

Thousands of Dollars for Charity.

Thus encouraged, by the month of July, 1867, before the foundation stones were actually laid, seven

boys were chosen by the trustees as a commencement. It was wonderful how the money was sent in. One day, just as Mr. Spurgeon finished his sermon in the open air, a lady put into his hand an envelope containing \$100 for the Orphanage and \$100 for the College. In January, 1868, Mr. Spurgeon announced in his magazine that an unknown gentleman had given him \$5,000 towards two of the houses. In March another sum of \$5,000 was announced, and in June the Baptist churches sent in \$6,000. In September, a year after the work began, a great bazaar was held, which brought in a net profit of \$7,000.

How many loving hearts and willing hands were employed to bring about such a result, it would be impossible to tell, though there were but few of the eleven hundred collectors, who so nobly came forward at the first meeting a year before, who did not lend a helping hand to the bazaar. By the end of the year the president announced in his magazine that only \$5,000 more was required to complete the eight houses. "And this," says he, "will surely be sent in; for the Lord will provide." And so it came to pass. **The Right Man in the Right Place.**

In January, 1869, fifty children had been chosen to occupy the houses as soon as they should be ready, but up to the month of June only twenty-nine orphans were in residence. The chief difficulty which for some time had given anxiety to the trustees was to find a suitable superintendent. Several persons had presented themselves, but not one had satisfied the claims of the institution. When the difficulty seemed to be the greatest, Divine Providence sent the right man.

Vernon J. Charlesworth, who had been for seven years co-pastor at Surrey Chapel with Newman Hall, offered his services and they were accepted. Mr. Charlesworth was at once appointed: and the ability which he has manifested in managing the affairs of the institution is very satisfactory evidence that he is the right man in the right place. By his influence within the Orphanage, and by his pen outside, he has shown himself to be the orphan's friend.

Up to the spring of the year 1870 one hundred and fifty-four orphans had been admitted, six of whom had been removed, leaving one hundred and forty-eight in residence. In 1877 the resident orphans numbered two hundred and thirty.

How the Children Live.

Each of the eight houses forms a separate family, that plan after having mature consideration been resolved upon as the best. Each family is complete in its own arrangements; each dwelling having a large sitting and four lofty bed-rooms for the boys, with lockers, which, when closed, form handy seats in the middle of the room; and a sitting-room, bed-room, and kitchen for the matron in charge. A large covered play-room adjoins the houses on the east, and separate from that is the infirmary, forming the east end of the quadrangle. At the west end is the school room and dining-hall, the master's house and entrance gateway: and in the rear of the dining-hall is the suite of offices for cooking and other domestic purposes.

In selecting the most needy boys for the benefits of the institution, the trustees are in no way influenced by the religious opinions of their parents. Those showing the most pressing want have the

preference.

A Big Family.

A judicious writer has said of the Stockwell Orphanage:

"How superior any real approach to the family ideal is to the barrack system was apparent to us on a mere glance at these fatherless lads. The families are large, about thirty boys in each house; but they are under the care of affectionate and diligent matrons, and everything is done to compensate for the loss of parental rule and training. There is more of the 'home' than of the 'institution' in the atmosphere. To encourage home ideas, and for the sake of industrial training, the boys in turn assist in the domestic work during the morning of the day; each boy's period of service being restricted to one week in six, servants being entirely dispensed with. A working cook superintends the kitchen, aided by the boys.

"No regimental uniform is suffered. The boys differ in the clothes they wear, in the cut of the hair, and show all the variety of a large family. The boys do not look like loosely connected members of a huge and miscellaneous crowd, but sons and brothers. No traces of ill-disguised dissatisfaction, as though in perpetual restraint, always under orders, were apparent; but a free, healthy, and vigorous homeliness, as if under the genial and robust influence of love, made itself everywhere manifest.

What Becomes of the Lads.

"With all the care of a Christian father, situations are chosen for the lads, where their spiritual interests will not be in danger; and when they have been passed into them the master corresponds with them, and gives them counsel and assistance as they need. Like a true home, its benediction follows every inmate throughout his life. We were specially pleased with our visit to the school. The boys are well drilled in elementary knowledge, reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, history, geography, vocal music, Latin, shorthand, science of common things, and Scripture. A French class is held for the elder boys. Military drill is given daily. Drawing is successfully taught, and many boys excel in it. The singing-class did very great credit to its instructor-- singing at sight, with great accuracy and sweetness, music of some difficulty."

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors were deputed from the Local Government Board to visit the institution, and they gave the following, report, which reflects the highest credit upon Mr. Spurgeon for his wisdom and prudence:

"An admirable institution, good in design, and, if possible, better in execution."

Not a Sectarian Institution.

The children are admitted between the ages of six and ten years, and they remain until they are fourteen. From an abstract drawn up by the master in 1873 it was found that the creeds of the parents of the children admitted to that date were in the following proportions: sixty-nine were members of the Church of England; twenty-six Independent; nineteen Wesleyan; fifty-one Baptist; four Presbyterian; one Catholic; and thirty-five made no profession of religion.

In the management of the Orphanage will be found one of its chief attractions, and one which ought to commend its plans to other similar institutions. The author of a book called "Contrasts" cites the Stockwell School as a specimen of admirable administration, proving that large expenditure in some public institutions does not guarantee thorough satisfaction. In some orphan schools and pauper schools the rate of expense per head is from one hundred and fifteen to one hundred and forty-five dollars, whilst in the Stockwell Orphanage, with complete organization and highly satisfactory results in each department, the cost is only seventy-two dollars per head, inclusive of everything. This is the highest testimonial which could be given of its efficiency.

Rules of Admission.

Looking over the list of applications which are entered in the books at Stockwell it was ascertained that two only out of every dozen cases could be received. What becomes of the other ten?

"Think of widows, some of them sickly and unable to work, with four or five children; families of Orphans deprived of both parents; and yet the Stockwell trustees had to decline them because there were more necessitous cases. But there was one comfort, they had not to pay any election expenses."

On that subject Mr. Spurgeon has written the following judicious remarks:

"No widow ever goes away lamenting over time, labor, and money spent in vain. The worst that can happen is to be refused because there is no room, or her case is not so bad as that of others. Not a shilling will have been spent in purchasing votes, no time lost in canvassing, no cringing to obtain patronage. Her case is judged on its merits, and the most necessitous of the day. We have now so many applicants and so few vacancies, that women with two or three children are advised not to apply, for while there are others with five, six, or seven children depending upon them, they cannot hope to succeed."

A dozen orphanages as large the one at Stockwell could be filled at once with children needing such help.

A Good Investment.

The economy with which the Orphanage has been managed has excited the admiration of many who are familiar with the details of kindred institutions. Those who honor Mr. Spurgeon with their contributions make a good investment, and will share in the blessedness of the return. The office expenses are reduced to a minimum, and no paid canvassers are employed. Offerings find their way into the exchequer from all parts of the globe, and though at times there has been a little tightness felt, the children have never lacked a meal.

Mr. Spurgeon is a man of unwavering faith in the living God, and though his faith has been put to the severest test, it has never failed him. Friends who have not been able to give money have sent gifts in kind. Flour and potatoes, meat and preserves, are always gladly received. One manufacturer has given all the coverlets for the beds, and the proprietors and pupils of a young ladies' school have endeavored to keep the boys supplied with shirts.

Gratifying Results.

The Orphanage has now existed long enough to form a correct opinion of its merits in every department. Hundreds of boys have left the school and entered on the duties of life. The reports which have been received annually from those business men who have taken them have been most gratifying. With few exceptions, those who have left keep up communication with the home. Summing up these results, a recent report says:

"Almost every boy who has gone into a situation has given satisfaction. Where failure has occurred it has arisen from a craving for the sea, or from the interference of an unwise mother. Some of the lads are in good positions, and command the esteem of their employers."

Nearly all the boys have sent a portion of their first earnings as a donation to the orphanage, in sums varying from one dollar to five dollars, thus manifesting a spirit of gratitude. Some of the letters received from them are read to the boys, and produce on their minds, beneficial results. Many of the boys have, before they have left, become decided Christians, and some have made public confession of their faith by baptism. The head master himself was publicly baptized in 1874, and five of the boys joined him in the same act of dedication.

Successful Anniversary.

Others have become members of Christian churches in the towns and villages where they have gone to reside. One of the first boys converted is now devoting his evenings and Sundays to missionary work in South London, and showed so much talent for preaching that he was received into the College in January, 1876.

It is gratifying to be able to record that the health of the inmates has been graciously maintained, with but little interruption, through the several years of its existence.

The 1875 anniversary of the schools was held at the Orphanage on the pastor's birthday, June 19th, which was preceded by a bazaar. The attendance was so numerous that it was necessary to hold two public meetings to accommodate the large number of persons present. The Earl of Shaftesbury was present, and spoke at both the services. The contributions added two thousand five hundred dollars to the funds.

["LIFE AND WORKS" CHAPTER 8](#)