

The Lessons of a Life

The Influence of Henry Ward Beecher's Preaching on Religious Life and Thought in England

By the Rev. Charles A. Berry, D.D.

The following address was delivered by Dr. Berry, in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, on Sunday, November 7, as a part of the jubilee services held in commemoration of the semi-centennial of the church and the installation of its first pastor. Dr. Berry is in the forty-fifth year of his age, is the pastor of one of the largest Congregational churches in England, is this year Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales (the youngest man, with one exception, ever elected to that office), was called to Plymouth Church after the death of Mr. Beecher, but declined the call, and came this fall on the invitation of the Church to take part in its semi-centennial services. In person Dr. Berry is rather under the usual height, with a well-knit frame, a noticeable head and face, and the general air rather of a business man than of an ecclesiastic. He has the reputation of being one of the best platform speakers in England, and well deserves it. He speaks with great vigor, though without vehemence, at times with a passionate fervor but never with unrestrained passion, and throughout his address produces the impression of a reserve of force which is still unexpended. He has been several times asked to stand, as a Liberal candidate, for Parliament, but has always declined, because he regards the pulpit as the more important vantage-ground for Christian work. He has been active in forming the recent federation of Nonconformist Churches in England, and is to speak on this subject in New York, Boston, and Chicago, during his present visit to America. He is also to speak at several of our theological seminaries, and to visit Washington in the interest of International Arbitration. He returns to his home December 8.

DR. ABBOTT and my dear Christian friends: In recognition of the fact that Henry Ward Beecher, beloved as the pastor of this church, was yet the property of Christendom, and by a delicate and gracious courtesy, I have been called from the shores of my beloved fatherland, and from the home and work I love, to speak to you to-day upon the influence of Henry Ward Beecher on teaching and preaching in Great Britain. But before proceeding to that task, not less grateful because difficult, it is my duty, as it is my privilege and my joy, to express to the pastor, the officers, the members of this famous and influential church, the congratulations and the good wishes of a host of sister churches across the Atlantic waves. My own church especially, which has more than once come into close and sacred relations with Plymouth, and never into relations more co-operative or effective than when, during a recent and regrettable crisis, we exchanged cablegrams of mutual petition for the preservation of peace and the restoration of good will between America and

England, has charged me to express to you the warmest sentiments of appreciation and regard, and most cordial prayers for your enlarged usefulness and prosperity in the new half-century on which you have entered this year. The welfare of Plymouth is indeed the solicitude of all English-speaking Christendom, not merely because of recognized debt to the ministries and achievements of your glorious past, but because of sincere desire to have those ministries attested and confirmed in a solid, sober, unbroken, and apostolical succession of saintly and serviceable fellowship. The severest, and therefore the truest, test, whether of a pastorate or of a church, and especially where great publicity and popularity have attended their union, is reached only when the two are sundered—when, on the one hand, the contagious and constraining vitalities of a great personality are withdrawn, and, on the other hand, the responsive enthusiasms of an appreciative people are denied the magnetic excitation of thrilling voice, and kindling eye, and gold-tipped winged eloquence, and are driven

back for their awakement and sustenance upon the quieter but more reliable agencies of intellectual and spiritual understanding. Then it is that the secret comes out whether or not pastor and people have been walking in a vain show; whether or not, in his attraction of great multitudes, the pastor has neglected the training and the discipline of a living church; whether or not the people, seemingly so zealous for God and humanity, are the dupes of a sensuous spell, the victims of mere ravishing oratory, or the intelligent and devoted disciples and servants of a beautiful gospel, made credible by the genius of a heaven-sent interpreter. And it is from that point of view, if I may venture so to express it here this morning, that the friends of Plymouth Church in Britain discover their deepest satisfaction and joy.

Ten years have passed, and well-nigh eleven, since he was taken whose name will forever be entwined with some of your greatest National achievements and most of your ecclesiastical and theological progress. And what do we see around us to-day? A living church—large, compact, earnest, reverent, devoted, as rich in organization as it is in life, still occupying its place down here right in the midst of this thronged and crowded city, a center of one of the most gifted and devoted Christian bands to be found anywhere in the world, a church laden with holiest traditions and memories, and yet alive and devoted to the thought and duty of to-day. *This* is the true Beecher memorial, not that brass medallion (speaking as is the likeness, it suggests more than it contains); not yon bronze statue, erected by the love and reverence of grateful citizens; not any printed or spoken eulogy, apt to become exaggerated, or, in fear of exaggeration, apt to fail in tribute; but this living church, surviving him, pulsating by his spirit, reproducing his ideas and ideals—this living church, that loved and loves him so well as to turn from mere grief or reminiscence to active service—this is his memorial. And we across the water thank God that his memorial is in the form of a living fellowship rather than of cold marble or printed eulogy.

And what is thus the best memorial to the man who is gone is the best tribute to the church that remains, and to him who reluctantly, nervously, in spite of feelings that his work lay in other directions, took up the leadership of this church, and has maintained, as he still maintains it, in effi-

ciency of Christian instruction and Christian service.

Our congratulations to-day from across the water are deep and sincere. We rejoice with you over your great and glorious past. We enter, if with surprise yet with the more grateful joy, into your loving and fruitful present. We join hands with you in petitioning that, as in the past and in the present, so in days to come, you may enjoy the conscious presence of the Master, and work effectively by the grace and power of the Holy Ghost.

Now, from what I have said, it will be quite clear to you that this memorial service, at least as far as I am concerned, is neither to be an exhibition of vain and reminiscent regret, nor a mere ebullition of foolish and degrading idolatry. If to-day we look back, it is to relearn the lessons, to catch the inspirations, which sprang from the lips and the mind of your great preacher. If to-day, in looking back, we concentrate our thoughts upon a man, it is not that we may glorify him or raise him to false eminence in the thought and affection of Christendom, but that we may glorify God in him—the God who made, the God who inspired him. There is, as we all know, a false hero-worship, the worship of a man which hides God, and which the more shrivels the heart because it plays upon it the fiction of enlargement. But there is a hero-worship that is true, that is divine, that is enlarging and sweetening. A great man is God's best gift to men. Not to recognize and not to cherish him is to blaspheme the bounty and the grace of God. It were, indeed, as easy to blot out from a landscape the mountain that rears its snowy crest beyond the clouds, as to forget or to ignore the presence of great personalities in God's earth and in Christ's church.

That doctrine of equality which declares that one man is as good as another is a lie. Equality of privilege, equality of opportunity, equality as sinners before God, equality as rightful claimants upon God for saving grace—that is the true equality. But in God's world some are made to lead and some to follow, some to teach and some to learn; and any driveling doctrine of equality which would erect the lowest, the meanest, the least capable into line with the foremost, has written upon it the absolute rejection of God. His great men he sends to be brothers and to be servants; but their brotherhood and their service are constituted in this, that they must teach, that they must be obeyed, that they

must lead, that they must be followed. God has gifted them with such amplitude as to live in them for the example and guidance of mankind. And hence it is that in the New Testament we never can get away from the personality of St. Paul. Modest as he was, conscious of his ill-desert in presence of the Eternal, knowing as none other could know the limitations and debilities of his own soul, yet was he conscious that God had put grace into him, and gifts such as constituted him servant and leader of all. And throughout his epistles we find that, with delicacy but with unmistakable meaning, he puts his own case to the front, that men might think, not of him, but of the grace of God that made him; not of his eloquence, not of his fame, not of his personality, but of the wondrous power and the redemptive efficiency of the love of Jesus Christ.

And so we think to-day of Henry Ward Beecher. You cannot shut out his personality. Why should you try? By so much as that personality made the world brighter, God's thought clearer, man's duty simpler, life's sufferings easier to be borne, in that measure he was a fresh incarnation of the Eternal Love. And we think of him to-day, and we glorify God in him, and we pray that the succession, the true apostolic and saintly succession, of God's great and gifted ones may never cease until this weary world has passed through all the phases of its travail and its discipline, and is merged in the shadowless light and the ineffable love of God.

But now from these general remarks I turn to my more specific subject. I am not to speak of Beecher in the entirety of his life—which is as merciful for me as for you; for, if I began to get beyond the fringe of that great personality, you would not get dismissal until sunrise to-morrow, and then I should not have passed the first head of the discourse. I am to speak of Beecher's influence on the thought and preaching of England. That assumes that Beecher had an influence upon the thought and preaching of England; and I am here to-day to affirm that he had a distinct and effective influence in those great departments of life. Now, put that fact into juxtaposition with another fact, which helps to interpret it and to fix its true value. Henry Ward Beecher was seldom seen and seldom heard by the great masses of the people in my country. Only a fraction of the religious leaders and teachers of Britain ever saw that face which reflected so much of the sunniness

of God. It will appear to you quite clear, then, that his influence was not the influence of personal presence, of captivating eloquence, but was the influence of thought when reduced to the cold and lifeless level of a printed page. That fact is of value in determining the quality of Henry Ward Beecher's ministry.

There is a foolish idea in many quarters that the orator and the thinker can never be one and the same man; that the orator is a man devoted to the tricks of speech, dependent for his power upon the resourcefulness of a contagious personality; and that the thinker, on the other hand, is a man who necessarily must withdraw himself from all the activities of the world, and from the influence of great public assemblies. Never was greater mistake made in the estimate of function and faculty. There can be rhetoric without thought, but never oratory. For what is the orator? The orator is, what the word that signifies him etymologically is, the man who beseeches, the man who reasons, the man who pleads, the man who wins. He is the petitioner, the prophet. For what is the prophet? The man who speaks for God to men in winsome speech—speech that interprets the Eternal—and so interprets Him that men want to rush after Him and to embrace Him. The prophet is the poet and the orator. The rhetorician, the man of words—reduce him to a printed page, and you kill both him and his speech. Beecher was a thinker gifted of God with fine faculty of vision; he saw into the deep things of God, and what he saw, God gave him tongue and lip to speak. And so his oratory was lifted far above the wind and bluster of the rhetorician, and became the fine vehicle of thoughts that burn, emotions that kindle, and reasons that bend the will and inspire the soul.

But when we turn to ask what, in this realm of thought, was Beecher's contribution to modern Christendom, we confront a task less easy; for during the period of Henry Ward Beecher's life we in England at least, and you in America, I dare say, came under the sweep and influence of a whole host of new thinkers and new workers. I will speak of the land I know.

In England, during these fifty years past, we have seen the rise of Colenso and Biblical criticism; and, young as I am (despite appearances), I am old enough to remember the virulent and contemptuous abuse heaped upon the head of Bishop Colenso for his daring

pioneer work in the task of rightly understanding the Scriptures of God. But his name and presence have been influential these fifty years in guiding the thought and method of Christian teachers. During the same period, at the very opposite extreme, one sees John Henry Newman and the Oxford Movement leading men away from all inquiry and from all research into absolute surrender to ecclesiastical, not to say Papal, authority. Right in the midst of this same generation rises a figure, refined, modest, little seen while yet the figure lived, much loved since the man within the figure has passed up into the eternal. Frederick William Robertson, of Brighton, has been in England perhaps the most widely potent religious force of the Victorian era, introducing preachers to a method of Biblical interpretation which made the Book more divine by making it more human, lifting the truth of God into celestial light by showing how its ramifications reached through all the darkneses and shadows of human life. There, in a quiet little retreat, among souls kindred with his own, sits John Frederick Denison Maurice, seeing deeply, speaking simply, so throwing himself into his message that men from the professions, and especially from the legal profession, gathering around him, got so much of the man that they could not hold him, but gave him forth throughout England, and made him one of the foremost of our theological teachers. Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, in the Abbey of Westminster, shedding that sweetness and light of which Matthew Arnold spoke so much and exhibited so little; George Macdonald, writing novels, but into them throwing the new religious spirit, and interpreting through literature some of the profoundest, some of the loftiest, theological truths; A. J. Scott in Manchester, and Baldwin Brown in London, bringing back to men the great truth about the Fatherhood of God, and making that Fatherhood, instead of the ancient sovereignty, the center of theological systems—these, and the like of these, have all been busy in England during the Victorian era, teaching, enlarging, sweetening the Church of Christ.

And yet, among them all, not hindmost, but foremost, was the man who was pastor of this church; foremost in thought-leadership and influence, because speaking to men as preacher, not as mere academic student, not as mere recluse reading books and thinking thoughts in silence, but as a preacher

who had seen visions, and dreamed dreams, and gripped problems, and found out new ways to emancipation and progress. Beecher thus shines as one of the brightest stars of our modern firmament, one of the beautifullest of the gifts of God to these later days.

What shall we say was his precise contribution to this manifold and greatly enriched age? I will say, in the first place, Beecher's greatest work was that he helped to bring back Christendom to the realization and enjoyment of the living Christ. Do not misapprehend my meaning, or imagine that I am implying an absence of Christ from the generations that went before ours. Not even theologies could banish Christ out of the world into which he had once come as Redeemer; and he has been here through all the ages, living and working with men. But, alas! how often has Christ been here, as God was with Cyrus of old, girding him, yet unknown by him, undiscerned by him. It sometimes seems to me that the mediæval epochs of Christian life are well represented in that Disciples' walk to Emmaus with the Master, when, with glowing heart, they knew they were in the presence of a great teacher, but with holden eyes they did not see him, did not know him.

Beecher's work has been to open men's eyes to the fact that He who makes the star to glow, He who lifts the hopes and purposes of Christendom, is none other than the Son of God, and that He is not dead but risen and living; and that He who lives and sits upon the throne descends and dwells with us, nearer to us than breathing, closer than hands or feet.

Very early in the story of the Christian Church did Christ come to be more of a historic person than of a Living Presence, more of a dim and distant reminiscence on the page of history than a deliverer and companion standing by our side. The Roman Catholic Church, to which with reverence and with thankfulness I personally acknowledge deep debts of gratitude for many things bright and beautiful, yet did this wrong to Christendom, that it placed itself between the believer and his Lord, and taught men to look for Christ in a sensuous sacrament, in a sensuous priest, in a ritual service, and created, however unwittingly, in the thought of Christendom, this feeling, that only *there* could Christ be found; that outside of those sacred walls men walked and worked, and fought and suffered, without his close companionship

and inspiration. And when, in due course, Luther arose in his might, with a waiting and willing Europe at his back, to smite the shackles of the Catholic Church from the neck of Christendom, alas, alas! men went and put the Bible where the Pope had put the Church—put there the Bible, and doctrines springing from the Bible—and recreated a sense of limitation in the spiritual universe, causing men to think and believe that in the Book and nowhere else could they find Christ or learn anything about him, and that in the doctrines of the Church they had the embodiment, such as it was, of the Master's presence with his people.

And so the Church struggled on, weakened and limited by these false conceptions of Christ, and of the way to Christ, until in our own age, from every quarter of the compass, hungering souls cried out for the Living God, for the Christ who said that he would come back again and dwell in his church and with his people; and foremost among those called to interpret this cry of the heart and to guide men to the Living Saviour was Henry Ward Beecher, who himself had found the way, and whose whole life and preaching exhibited the reality, the closeness, the sacredness of communion with Christ.

In one of those matchless epigrammatic definitions that brighten so many of the pages of James Martineau, I found one day this little gem of definition: "Complete unbelief is attained when God is driven as much out of the past as we have driven Him out of the present; and complete belief is reached when God is made to fill the present as much as piety causes Him to fill the past." No truer word has been spoken to this generation than that. To fill this present with the living God; to have the courage and the truth to say that if God is not here in Brooklyn he never was in Jerusalem; that if he did not speak by his gifted prophet here, he had nothing to say to Abraham, nothing to David, nothing to Isaiah, and nothing to Paul; and that if he be not here a living inspiration, to comfort and to quicken and to bless, the whole story of his unveiling in the past is one vast but beautiful fiction, to be buried henceforth from the thoughts of men—that is the truth and the duty of this present time. And Beecher led us in England, as he led you in America, to see God and to know that Christ was present, to see the lineaments of His face, to bask in the light of His spirit, and to feel all care and worry and weakness

and limitation removed by the saving and emancipating touch of Christ in the heart.

Out of this great truth, which Beecher taught us to recover, came another truth—namely, that the sources of theology are not to be found in books, not even in sacred books, but in Christian experience. Having found the Living Christ and recognized him, having come into personal communion with him and felt the glow of the heart, and the broadening of the vision, and the sweetening of the temper, and the quickening of all the perceptive and appreciative faculties, it was an easy and a necessary step to the conclusion that here are the great facts on which theology is built, out of which theology must be formed. As the scientist goes to nature for his facts, and proceeds by methods of induction from observed facts to necessary conclusions, so, said Beecher, the theologian must come into the realm of Christian facts, discoverable in the great body of Christian experience, and must by the same inductive methods argue from these facts to what is true about God and what is true about man and duty.

It is true that the scientific student must have his class-book, must study his class-book, and by it be guided where to look for his facts and how to treat them when he finds them. And so we have *our* text-book, this Bible of God, this book of man, and in addition to it we have our volumes of Church history, and we have our histories of Christian doctrine and Christian method. But these are but guides, pointing us to where we shall find the great verifying facts, and teaching us how to deal with them, and what to make of them when we find them. Do you tell me that such a basis for theology is uncertain? that the experience of one man may differ widely from the experience of another man? That is true; for if out of mere individual experiences we were to attempt the construction of a theology, we should reach conclusions as confused and as misleading as would be those of the scientist if he attempted, out of a little fact here and a little fact yonder, to construct a great scientific theory. Our induction must be from all the facts. My experience must be attested by yours, yours and mine by that of a great company, that of a great company to-day by that of a great company which went before us. When so attested and so confirmed, it will be found that the great realities of religion are written in the hearts and souls of men; and that through

a broad induction from them must we arrive at our beliefs in theology. Mr. Beecher's theology was not made up out of books, did not constitute itself in propositions; it was the living interpretation of facts which he observed and of experiences which he shared. And so it comes to pass, if you will allow me one illustration, that Henry Ward Beecher put before the Church the doctrine of the Deity of Jesus Christ, which to me seems absolutely irrefutable. He did not merely gather texts strewn here and there over the Biblical page, and piece them together, and say, "This book tells me that He was God, and I must believe it because the Book says it." No, he went back into his own experience, into the experience of the Christian Church. And what did he find? He found there unmistakably a great yearning after God, a yearning so deep and persistent that only one thing could be concluded—that God put it there, and put it there as a ground of expectation that He would answer the craving He had created. And out of that came clearly and necessarily the conclusion that the God who made man thus to need and to yearn after Himself must answer him, must come to him, or cease to be God—become indeed Diabolus, not to be worshiped, however strong, but to be rejected and repelled as one who made the soul only to mock it and to destroy it by delusion and despair. Thus it was that, arguing from Christian experience, Beecher learned that it was reasonable and obligatory for the God who made man to come to him, and speak to him, and work for him, and die for him. Then, bringing these observations and reasonings to the light of the Scriptural Revelation, and looking at the historic Christ from the standpoint of human cravings and needs, Beecher could not escape the conclusion that the Christ portrayed in the Gospels was God's answer to man's necessity. And in grateful surprise he cried, "Why, this is God. There is not a single thing I would have in God but I find in Christ. There is not a single thing in Christ I would not like to have in God. Why, this is, this must be, God. I worship and I adore."

That is an illustration of the new method in theology, largely inaugurated by Henry Ward Beecher. Do you not see how much more powerful, how much more conclusive, it is? Take any number of texts and prophecies and Messianic hopes written here in the Book, and you cannot build up a theory from them which you will not sometimes doubt and

sometimes reject. But build up your theories from Christian experience, and you have an absolutely invulnerable castle of truth in which to live and breathe and work. This, then, was Beecher's second contribution to modern Christian thought—to teach us where to find the sources of our theology.

I cannot do more than merely indicate the effects which flowed from these two great contentions and contributions. Will you note, then, in passing, that this method of Beecher's made theology an intensely vital and interesting study—the most vital and interesting of all studies?

When I was a youth at college, the most popular thing to say in class was that the study of theology had decayed, and that only intellectual fossils engaged themselves in its pursuit. It would be a shame unspeakable for any man in England to say that to-day. For theology has become the very center of all studies; and men are turning to it from every walk in life, as to that which most satisfies, most repays, most instructs. And the secret of it is that the theology which used to be studied was studied from books; the theology that has now won and held the intellect of Christendom is a theology studied from life.

In the second place, this method supplied the elements of certainty in religion. It threw men back upon the witness which God has placed within themselves, and lifted them, as to the certainty of their faith, above the reach of any criticism or any new development of thought. In England, except in few and inconsiderable places, it would be impossible to-day to raise any alarm, to create any heresy-hunt, because a man brought before Christendom some results of Biblical criticism, or some new interpretation of any of the great doctrines of the faith. Why? Because men have come to see that whether Jonah is a fact or a fiction does not matter; that the spiritual and ethical truth in the story is the thing of importance; that whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch or not is of infinite unimportance, except as a matter of literary interest, so long as the great unfolding of the divine will is seen to be unmistakable and divine; and because men have come to see that the credibility of Christian truth finds warrant in the heart and souls of men, and not in the mere maintenance of historic propositions and theological theories. And so it has come to pass that we in England—I do not know how it is in America—that we in Eng-

land live very calmly amid the busy development of scientific theory, amid the busier activities of Biblical criticism, amid the rearrangement of doctrinal truth. We are very calm, because we know that He in whom we live and trust is in us and with us. We know Him. We do not know merely about Him. We know Him. We walk with Him. We let Him come into the heart. There is glow, there is sunshine, there is brightness, there is hope, where He is. And so we say, "Do what you will with the mechanics of religion, you cannot take Him away from us; He is crucified in us afresh every day; He rises afresh in us every day; and, when we are willing, He sends Pentecosts of glow and power into our expectant souls. We *know* Him because we *have* Him; and our faith is sure."

The time has passed, and I must now content myself with saying in conclusion that I have laid no particular stress in this review upon Beecher's specific contributions to this or that form of Christian doctrine. I have done more, or attempted to do more: I have tried to show that he has influenced the whole spirit of theology and the whole attitude of Christian thought. Calvin's name is identified with the doctrine of Sovereignty, Luther's with the doctrine of Justification, Wesley's with the doctrine of Sanctification. You will never be able to identify the name of Beecher with any one single doctrine. But this we do in England—this I trust and believe you do in America: You recognize that this man held so much of God in him, and recognized so clearly the grace that had saved him, as to bring into the whole realm of theologic thought a new spirit, a new outlook, which broke down ancient superstitions, and made the way clear for men to work in new constructions, solid and beautiful, of Christian truth and Christian hope. His was the influence of leaven in the meal. Sometimes it is the fate—shall I not say it is the glory?—of such workers as he, soon to be lost on the page of history as a mere name, and to live, as he often longed to live in life, obscure, unnoticed of men, with his work for his joy and his Master for his reward. But whether the name of Beecher goes down on the page of history as one of the creative personalities or not, of this I am assured: his spirit will go down, and it will be a spirit making for peace, breadth, charity, yea, a spirit making for the recognition of Christ, the love of Christ, the surrender of the heart

to Christ, and issuing through that surrender into emancipation and enlargement of thought, of service, of personal and sacred experience.

Accept, then, my friends, these fragmentary utterances of one who knew and loved your pastor, and who knew and loved him well enough to know that, as he is here with us to-day, he is well content at the absence of mere personal eulogy, and at the exaltation of those great truths and wise methods for which he pleaded. Mr. Beecher is gone from you, and gone from the world, as a corporeal presence; but his influence still lives and operates in many hearts and lands. Here in this building, where the echoes of his voice still linger, that influence is obvious and potent. Beyond this building, outreaching even the expansive coasts of this vast continent, that influence is not less effective because less specifically recognizable. He lives, here where he was known, beyond, where he was not known, in the work he accomplished, in the thoughts he uttered, in the spirit he breathed. But if he is to continue to live, it must be through you, and through us who caught so many inspirations from his heart. And the most permanent, as it will be the most honoring, memorial we can rear to him will be to obey as well as learn his teaching, and to translate into renewed and sanctified life the credible and beautiful Gospel which he preached with such power and exhibited with such grace during forty sacred years in this house.



Living

"How to make lives worth living?"

The question haunts us every day;
It colors the first blush of sunrise,
It deepens the twilight's last ray.

There is nothing that brings us drearier pain
Than the thought "We have lived, we are living,
in vain."

We need each and all to be needed,
To feel we have something to give
Towards soothing the moan of earth's
hunger;

And we know that then only we live
When we feed one another as we have been fed
From the hand that gives body and spirit their
bread.

Our lives, they are well worth the living
When we lose our small selves on the whole,
And feel the strong surges of being
Throb through us, one heart and one soul.
Eternity bears up each honest endeavor;
The life lost for love is life saved forever.

—Lucy Larcom.

The Man from London'

By W. J. Dawson

ONCE a year there was always a crowd at the old Meeting-house in Barford, for on that day Plumridge Green added its forces to the Barford congregation. The occasion was a great one. It was to hear a man from London. It was well within the bounds of possibility that quite as good a man might have been found in Belchester, but this was a hypothesis which at that time no one had ever ventured to discuss. Even to have suggested it would have roused scorn and contempt, and he who so dared would have instantly earned the reputation of a cantankerous fellow who had set himself against the traditions of the elders. On this point Barford stood firm. The man who preached the annual sermon must come from London. It didn't matter much who he was; but come from London he must.

It was not that Barford always found unqualified pleasure in the sermon. On the contrary, it was very freely criticised when the man from London had departed, and Davy Lumsden rarely failed to explain that its imperfections were numerous and startling. But even Davy, when the committee met to select the next year's preacher, was as strong as anybody else on this primary qualification, that he must come from London.

In the days before Mr. Shannon had entirely gauged the peculiarities of his people, he had once inadvertently suggested that they might try Bunting of Belchester, whose local reputation had been of a soberly meteoric kind. But the discussion which ensued soon opened his blind eyes to the depth of his error.

Davy undertook to explain the situation, and he did so in a single sentence. The sentence was this: "But what about the bills?"

"Well, what about them?" retorted the minister, who in those early days still cultivated a tendency to strict logic, which he had not yet learned was a form of mental activity better suited to colleges than committees.

"Why, you can't say 'Bunting of Lonnun,' can you?" said Davy.

"Certainly not," said the minister.

"Though I've know'd such things done.

The St. Colam folk did it once. They got a man from up Southminster way, to save expense, and put after his name 'From Lonnun.' They thought as no one 'ud know no better, but they did. They know'd as he didn't come in by the Lonnun train, and they saw as there warn't no Lonnun label on his portmanny. An' they wouldn't go to hear 'un."

"I don't understand what that has to do with the question," said Mr. Shannon, stiffly.

"Well, it's like this," continued Davy, serenely. "It's Lonnun as does it. 'Tain't the man, it's Lonnun. The biggest fool from Lonnun is more good to we than the wisest man from Belchester. Folks do look at they bills, particerlar they Church folk, an' say, 'Well, we'll go to hear he, because he be from Lonnun.' 'Tain't so much like encouragin' Dissent somehow, as it 'ud be if the man come from Belchester. An' what I want to know is, 'what about the bills?' How 'ud they kind o' strike the public mind, so to speak, if there warn't no word about Lonnun on 'em?"

This was a point of view not to be gain-said. Mr. Shannon remembered that when he had preached for the first time at Barford, as a candidate, he had been announced as "from London," and the type in which London was printed was much larger than the type which announced his own humble name to the public. For the first time he caught a glimpse of the main reason of his success, and it amused and mollified him.

So it was henceforth a settled principle that the annual preacher should be metropolitan. Johnny Button did indeed suggest that '*from near London*' would look quite as well on the bills, and, as that was an elastic term, a great deal might be done to widen the field of choice. Every one knew that this was merely a sly dig at Davy, who would have done almost anything to save expense. But Davy, whose financial genius always shone supreme on committees, found no difficulty in proving that what you saved upon the railway fare you would infallibly lose in the collection. Besides which, it would lay you open to the insinuation on the part of the Church folk that Dissent no longer had in London any preachers worthy of a Barford anniver-

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