

twenty years Plymouth Church has been at peace, walking in unity and harmony. No church has more working power. Its donations to every cause of humanity, philanthropy, and religion are large. In mission work, and every form of Christian labor, its members take the lead. He seldom opposes the introduction of any subject about which his people wish to talk. He will allow an exciting subject, to which he is opposed, to be introduced for debate. He will give notice of the discussion from the pulpit. He will sit quietly through the whole debate. When the right time comes, with a few kind, earnest words, he will squelch out the matter, as a man crushes out a coal with the heel of his boot.

THE INFLUENCE OF PLYMOUTH CHURCH.

There is but one Plymouth Church, because there is but one Henry Ward Beecher. Its influence is felt in every part of this country. When the present edifice rose from the ashes of the former one, its conveniences, parlors, social rooms, pianos, and other appointments, were subjects of general censure or general ridicule. Scarcely a church of any denomination is now erected without them. He inaugurated congregational singing led by a choir, and the printing of tunes as well as hymns for the use of the people. Its fine Sunday-school room, with fountain, flowers, pictures; with its organ, melodeon, piano, — tasteful, attractive, and beautiful, — was the subject of general censure — now generally imitated where churches have ability and taste. In the style of its conference meetings, its Sabbath-school work, and its relief from the dull, tedious routine of the olden

time, in its identity with the reforms and humanities of life, and in its social power, the Plymouth Church affects nearly all the churches in the land. Should the pastor die, the church dissolve, and no visible organization remain, it would speak, though dead, to all parts of the land, in the islands of the sea, on the mountains of the Old World, and in all places where spirit and success attend the ministry of the Word.

MR. BEECHER IN THE LECTURE-ROOM.

Those who have not seen Mr. Beecher in his lecture-room know little of him, or his power over his people. The room is large, and will hold a thousand persons. It is as plain as decency will allow. Settees fill the room, covered with crimson cushions. A carpet covers a part of the floor. The platform stands between two doors at one end of the room. It has neither railing, desk, nor drapery. A small table holds the Bible and hymn-book. Beside it is a cane-seat chair. Promptly on the hour Mr. Beecher seats himself in the chair, and gives out the number of the hymn. He uses none of the formulas so common, such as, "Let us sing to the praise of God," or "Let us introduce our worship," or "Sing, if you please;" nor does he read the hymn. He simply says, "740." The house is entirely full. The sound of the people finding the hymn is like the rustling of autumn leaves. The singing is not a formality. On the left hand of Mr. Beecher is a grand piano, played by the organist, which leads the congregation. It is full, grand, majestic. Mr. Beecher leads. If the congregation sings faintly, he calls for a full chorus. If they drag, he reminds them that though the words are

sweet, singing must come up to time. Some brother is called on to pray. Another hymn is sung, another prayer offered. Another hymn. Then, sitting in his chair, Mr. Beecher makes an address, sharp, interesting and tender. He carries his audience with him in prayer. All bow the head while he utters the words of tenderness, entreaty, and thanksgiving. His people lie near his heart. Their woes, wants, sorrows, and joys are borne upward on his petitions. At the close, the loud respiration and the suppressed cough indicate how intense the sympathy has been between pastor and people as they bow at the mercy-seat.

The meeting continues only an hour. The enjoyment runs through the whole service. The hour is only too short. No one is weary; no one glad when the closing hymn is given out. He does not rise to give an address, but sits in his chair like a professor. He has much to do with religious experience. He often sketches his early struggles — some anecdote of his father; some mishap of his childhood; his college troubles; his conflicts with poverty; how he groped in darkness seeking for the Savior; how he built a house in Indianapolis, and painted it with his own hands. So he fills up his address, which illustrates some practical or doctrinal truth. He fills up lecture-room talks, as he calls them, with things rich, spicy, exhilarating and humorous.

HIS CONVERSION.

In a season of much religious interest, Mr. Beecher gave this account of his conversion. Family influence led him into the church. He was a professor before he was a Christian. He tried to do his duty, but he did not know his Savior, and had no joy in his service. He was at Amherst College when a powerful revival of religion broke out. He was deeply moved. He passed days in agony, and kneeled by the side of his bed for hours in prayer. He was as one alone in a dark and lonely castle, wandering from room to room, sick, cold, and in terror. He called on the president of the college. This was a great cross, as he was known to be a member of the church. The president shook his head as Mr. Beecher told him his condition, and refused to interfere, lest he should grieve the Holy Spirit. Mr. Beecher went home no better, but rather worse. He attended the village church. He remained among the inquirers. The minister, talking with the anxious, came within one pew of him, and then went back to the pulpit. The college course was completed, and Mr. Beecher was not converted.

At Cincinnati he began the study of theology. His father's influence led him to that course. He entered the Seminary to please his father, but did not intend to be a minister. He not only was not a Christian, but he was sceptical. One of his brothers had swung off into scepticism, and should another openly follow, he thought it would break his father's heart. So he became a student in theology. Some ladies, belonging to the first families in Cincinnati, invited him to be-

come their Bible-class teacher. How could he teach what he did not know, or enforce what he did not believe? He was a member of the church, and a theological student, and he could not honorably decline. All he need do was to tell the class what the Gospels contained. He need not tell them what he thought of them. So his work began. He studied and collated the Gospels. He put together all the passages, hints, scraps, and facts that bore on the character of Jesus, and his relation to lost men. In this study Jesus appeared to him. He smote the rock, and the waters gushed out. He saw the Savior, with all his love and compassion, and fell at his feet to adore. "Never, till I get home," said Mr. Beecher, "will I have brighter visions of my Redeemer. I saw Jesus in all things — in the flowers, in the fruits, in the trees, in the sky, and, above all things, in the gospel. Years ago, in my deep anguish at Amherst, had some one said to me, 'Young man, behold the Lamb of God,' I should have then found the Savior, and have been spared years of darkness, anguish and sorrow." This statement was made by Mr. Beecher while he was deeply affected. Tears coursed down his cheeks. His emotions, at times, forbade his utterance; while the great audience heard, with hushed attention, this revelation of his religious experience.

PERSONAL.

Mr. Beecher assumes no control over his church. The astounding rental goes into the hands of his trustees. They pay Mr. Beecher an annual salary, and dispose of the rest as they please. In Plymouth Church

he is a simple member, and nothing more, except in the pulpit. He conducts the Friday night meeting, because the church have voted to have him do so. When a church meeting is held, he never takes the chair unless it is voted that he shall do so. Sometimes he is elected, sometimes not. The old-fashioned, hard theology Mr. Beecher does not like. He often selects the ugly features of that system, and pitches into them like a pugilist. He holds them up to scorn and derision, and stamps upon them with his feet. As a religious teacher, Mr. Beecher regards a man in all his relations. He preaches to him as he finds him. He takes a child, and runs him through all the phases of life to old age. He preaches to man as a son, a brother, a subordinate; as a workman, a clerk, one bound to college or to one of the professions. He believes Christianity takes hold of social, moral, and political life. He can turn his hand to anything. His reading is extensive and varied. He is a capital mechanic. His farm at Peekskill, his rotation of crops, his rare and choice fruits, show that he is as superior a farmer as he is a preacher. In art matters he has few superiors. He would have been eminent in anything he might have chosen to do. No man in the world understands his physical system better, or conforms more closely, in eating, sleeping, and exercise, to the laws of health. He is thoroughly temperate. He is over fifty years of age, and is robust and healthy, and has twenty-five years of hard work in him yet. He lives plainly, is simple in his dress and in his habits. Seen in the street, one would sooner take him for an express-man

in a hurry for the cars, than the most successful preacher in America.

AS A PASTOR.

Like Spurgeon, Mr. Beecher believes in preaching. He does no pastoral work, in the proper sense of that term. He visits the sick, buries the dead, performs marriages, but he must be sent for. His parish is so immense, so scattered, that he could do nothing else if he undertook to visit.

X.

HARPER BROTHERS.

RECORD OF FIFTY YEARS. — JAMES'S BOYHOOD. — ORIGIN OF THE HOUSE OF HARPERS. — ESTABLISHMENT ON FRANKLIN SQUARE. — EMPLOYEES. — THE CHARACTER OF THE HOUSE. — THE COUNTING-ROOM.

RECORD OF FIFTY YEARS.

JAMES, John, Wesley, and Fletcher Harper — who compose the house of Harper Brothers — have been in successful business for fifty years. Their publishing house, on Franklin Square, is the largest of the kind in the world. Brockhaus, in Leipsic, and the great establishments on the continent of Europe, do not combine all the departments of labor necessary for the production of a book. In Europe, books are usually sold in sheets. Printing is one department, electrotyping another, and binding a distinct business. The Harpers print, electrotype, and bind under one roof. The manuscript is taken from the author, the types from the foundry, leather from the currier, and paper from the mill. They leave the establishment a perfect book, printed, illustrated, and bound in the highest style of art.