

MEMORIALS OF
ROBERT SPEARS
1825-1899.   



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OF
ROBERT SPEARS

1825—1899.



ULSTER UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,

35, ROSEMARY STREET, BELFAST.

—
1908.



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TO
THE MANY FRIENDS IN
BOTH HEMISPHERES
WHO
CHERISH THE MEMORY AND
HONOUR THE WORK
OF
ROBERT SPEARS
THIS
SMALL TRIBUTE OF
LASTING AFFECTION AND
DEEP DEBT
IS
IN HIS SPIRIT
DEDICATED

25th February, 1903.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
DEDICATION	
CONTENTS	
NOTES	
PORTRAIT	
PREFATORY SKETCH	1
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	4
REMINISCENCES	17
LEADER	47
MEMORIAL SERMON	50
PROSPECTUS OF "STOCKTON GAZETTE"	58
INSCRIPTION AT HIGHGATE	59
INDEX	60

NOTE.

In this little volume will be found, prefaced by a Character Sketch from the pen of Robert Collyer, the Biographical Sketch by Samuel Charlesworth, revised from the *Christian Life*, March 4th, 1899; with added Reminiscences, supplied by members of the family of Robert Spears, and introducing autobiographical passages from his own "Reminiscences of a Busy Life," contributed to the *Unitarian Bible Magazine*, 1896-9. Appended, with other matter, are the leading article, by Dr. C. S. Kenny, from the *Christian Life*, March 7th, 1899, and the Memorial Sermon by Principal Gordon, reprinted from the *Christian Life*, March 25th, 1899. While the contributions from these various sources necessarily overlap, this may only have the effect of deepening the general impression.

ROBERT SPEARS.

- 1825.—Born (September 25th) at Lemington, Northumberland.
- 1845.—Theological Discussion (August 19th to September 4th) at Newcastle between William Cooke and Joseph Barker.
- 1846.—Schoolmaster at Scotswood-on-Tyne, Northumberland.
Marriage to Margaret Kirton.
- 1848.—Acquaintance with George Harris.
- 1849.—First Preaching as a Unitarian.
- 1852.—Minister at Sunderland, Durham.
- 1856.—Establishment of the *Christian Freeman*.
- 1858.—Minister at Stockton-on-Tees, Durham.
- 1859.—Publication of the *Unitarian Handbook*.
Establishment (December 30th) of the *Stockton Gazette* (now *North-Eastern Gazette*).
- 1861.—Minister at Stamford-street, Blackfriars, London.
- 1867.—Co-secretary of British and Foreign Unitarian Association.
Death (October) of Margaret Spears.
- 1869.—Marriage to Emily Glover.
- 1870.—Visit of Chunder Sen (April).
General Secretary of British and Foreign Unitarian Association (June).
- 1871.—Journey to Paris.
- 1873.—Publication of Shilling Edition of Channing.
- 1874.—Minister at College Chapel, Stepney Green, London.
- 1876.—Resignation (March 14th) of Secretaryship of British and Foreign Unitarian Association.
Establishment (May 20th) of the *Christian Life*.

- 1877.—Publication of the *Record of Unitarian Worthies*.
1881.—Foundation (June 7th) of the Christian Conference.
1882.—Journey to Italy.
1884.—Publication of Quarto Edition of Channing.
1885.—Minister at Highgate Hill, London.
1886.—Establishment of Channing House School.
1887.—Journey to America.
1889.—Amalgamation of the *Unitarian Herald* with the
Christian Life.
1890.—Opening of new Church at Highgate Hill.
1899.—Last Sermon (January 8th).
Died (February 25th) at Arundel House, The Bank,
Highgate.
Buried (March 1st) at Nunhead Cemetery Surrey.

PREFATORY SKETCH

IT was my good fortune to find Robert Spears in London on my first visit to the Motherland in 1865. I brought a note to him, I think from Dr. Hale, of Boston; went on the Sunday morning to his chapel in Stamford Street with my voucher, and gave it to him after the Benediction. He gave me as warm a welcome as my heart could desire, and asked me promptly to take the evening service. He insisted on my going home to break bread, and would fain have made me his guest during my stay in London. And I still remember my hearty welcome in the church that evening. The Stamford Street congregation seemed close of kin in their hearts' turn to my Church in Chicago, and what Abraham Lincoln loved to call the plain people. They received the word gladly—such as it was—and shook hands with the stranger as if they meant it, so that I was ever so glad I had been invited to speak to them that evening.

This was the way the friendship and fellowship began, to grow only the closer and warmer through the many years. I found Robert was sincere as the daylight, wholesome as good brown bread, and, as we say over here, “a man to tie to and to love.” And I have thought that some thread of our early fellowship and friendship lay, it may be, in this, that the lines of our life in the earlier years lay so near each to the other. In those years he had worked at the anvil, had joined an offshoot of my Mother Church, the Methodist, and had been a local preacher, but found he was not at home in that Church or the work he must do, and had found his home, ten years before I found mine, in the

Unitarian Church, and the faith of which he was, to my own mind, a pre-eminent evangelist who had lost none of the old fervour in finding the new fellowship.

Talking once with Oliver Wendell Holmes about our churches and ministers, he said: "Brother Collyer, I love to hear a man preach who believes more than I do, and I need to hear those men; they are a great help to me." I needed such a helper in the earlier years—do still for that matter—and found one in my friend Spears, as I found another in James Freeman Clarke. This was the fine gold in the faith of Robert Spears; he reminded me now and then of the old Hebrew prophets and their "Thus saith the Lord," so sure he was of the truth he was chosen to preach. It was no may be, only a must be—no beating about the bush, but good sinewy English, right to the purpose, with a touch he never lost of the Northumberland burr and accent which I loved to notice in his speech. And when I would meet him in London, my heart was always warmed also by the fervent fire I found in him for the welfare of the churches of our name, or of our kinship by the heart all the way from Hindostan to Iceland, no matter what the name. And I mind how glad he was to tell me of the new churches and new missions under way, and what a good hope he felt that they would flourish. He seemed to hold them all and know them all by heart, as indeed he did. I remember, too, the touch of sadness with which he would tell of some church that was dead or dying of old age and senility. He would have them all renew their youth and live for ever, touched with an earthward immortality.

Adam Clarke used to say: "You cannot have too many irons in the fire if you handle them well, and make your stroke." I think our good Adam never worked at the anvil—still this is true when you have the right man. And my friend was the right man. He had many irons in the fire, but he made good work, and let none of them burn to a mere cinder. So that I would wonder how he could mind them all, and turn out such good work as author, editor,

minister, and missionary, for he was all these, "called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God."

And twice in the many years we went away together on a ramble to Scotland and to the South of England. These memories are delightful—he was such a good fellow and a good comrade when he was out of the harness, so full of joy and all pleasantness. Only he would put two days' travel into one. He was eager that I should see so much, while, like Ephraim in the Scripture, my strength was "to sit still." Many more memories touch me as I sit and muse, but I have been cautioned as to brevity, and remember the saying that one sure sign of dotage is anecdote, so here I must stop.

ROBERT COLLYER.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

BY SAMUEL CHARLESWORTH.

THE Rev. Robert Spears was born September 25th, 1825, at Lemington, a small village about five miles west of Newcastle-on-Tyne. His parents were of a humble class in life, of excellent character, of whom he always spoke in terms of respectful appreciation. He was the fifth son of eight children (by the second wife) of John Spears, a foreman of ironworks, a man noted for his strength, and currently reputed able to do the work of three men. His mother, who lived to her ninety-second year, was a woman of much force of character; and in his last autumn he spoke of his own health being so good that he hoped to attain no less an age. In religion, his father was a Presbyterian, of the Scottish type; there being no chapel of this denomination at hand, the family usually attended the parish church at Newburn. It was in Newburn Church that the famous engineer George Stephenson was married. Of the moral tone of the village in which his boyhood was passed, he always spoke with admiration. As may readily be supposed, Mr. Spears's educational advantages were few, but he was gifted with exceptional native capacity, mental and moral, and herein lies the explanation of the remarkable influence which he exercised in every sphere in which he moved. Conscious of innate power, it was natural that he should put it forth, and thus become the man of mark that he was.

At an early age he was sent to work as an engineering smith. But he soon found a great delight in study, and

spent a great part of his evenings in reading. His mother sympathised with him in his desire to learn, and saved pence to enable him to obtain the books he required. He availed himself also of the loan of books from the Newcastle Mechanics' Institute. Gradually he discovered in himself a faculty for teaching, which he afterwards turned to profitable account. During his residence at Sunderland, referred to below, he made a very handsome income by teaching; having both day scholars and night scholars, the latter including adults. Disliking the work in which he was engaged in his native village, he set up a school, and met with much success. In 1845 a public debate upon Unitarianism was held in Newcastle-on-Tyne for several successive nights between Joseph Barker, then famous, and Mr. Cooke, a prominent minister of the Methodist New Connexion, to which Mr. Spears belonged. We have heard him say that this debate made him a heretic. In 1846 we find him in charge of a school at Scotswood-on-Tyne, connected with the New Connexion, and by-and-bye he was one of the Connexion's local preachers on trial. While on trial, he was not subjected to any theological examination. But he must needs go through that ordeal before he could become a fully-qualified local preacher. It was while passing through this ordeal that Mr. Spears's "unsoundness" on various questions of doctrine became manifest. He declared that he was perfectly willing to answer all questions, on the condition that they were couched in the language of Scripture, and not taken simply from books explanatory of the Methodist beliefs, which were only, he said, the handiwork of men. To the question, "Do you believe in the trinity and unity of God?" he replied, that before he could answer the question it must be expressed as the New Testament expresses it. Other questions also, such as, "Do you believe in the fall, and in the inherent depravity of man?" Mr. Spears answered by admitting that in many cases a man's whole life was one continued "cataract," but made the same request as before. The

result of answers such as these was many meetings between Mr. Spears and the leaders of his church, with, however, no satisfactory result. Whilst his mind was still in a state of suspense with regard to religious beliefs, it happened that in 1848 the late eloquent and apostolic Rev. George Harris, minister of the Unitarian congregation at Newcastle, came to deliver a lecture at Blaydon, not far from Mr. Spears's home. Here we reach the turning point in his career.

He requested and obtained an interview with Mr. Harris. The result may be stated in his own words:—"Mr. Harris's answers to my questions showed that I must change my religious home." He did change it. He seceded from the Methodists, but with no unfriendly feeling whatever towards them. On the contrary, he always afterwards spoke gratefully of the kindness and brotherly spirit which had been shown to him, not only whilst he was one of them, but when he took farewell of them. In 1849 he was clearly launched into the open profession of Unitarianism, and Mr. Harris gave him preaching engagements at several places in the North. He found that the Unitarian Church was indeed his true religious home, and that Unitarian doctrine was the very bread of life to his soul. He was especially delighted with his discovery that Unitarian divines could state and vindicate their doctrines in the very language of Scripture. His own admiration of the Scriptures amounted to a passion. He loved the Bible with his whole heart, and one of his truest and deepest delights was to defend the position he always assumed—namely, that the grand old Book is Unitarian from beginning to end. His "Unitarian Hand-book," and his "Scriptural Belief of Unitarian Christians," showed how closely he had studied the Bible from this point of view. That he would become a preacher of Unitarianism was now inevitable. Sunderland, Stockton-on-Tees, and London were the successive scenes of his Unitarian ministry. The result of that ministry up to the year 1891 will be told hereafter in his own words.

It was in 1861 that he came to London, on the invitation

of Sir James Clarke Lawrence, who, through the Rev. R. Brook Aspland, had become acquainted with his remarkable success as a minister at Sunderland and Stockton-on-Tees. His first great work in the metropolis was to revive, under the auspices of the London District Unitarian Society, the congregation at Stamford Street Chapel. How rapidly he won admiration for his zeal, energy, and success as a propagandist of Unitarianism, may be judged from the fact that at the annual meeting of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in 1867 we find him elected to the very important position of co-Secretary with the Rev. R. Brook Aspland. The Association's sale of books was soon immensely increased by the vigorous measures he adopted to bring them widely under public notice, and he put new life into every department of the Association's work. His official connection with the Association extended over about nine years, for on the death of Mr. Aspland (1869) he became the general Secretary (1870), and held that office for nearly seven years. On his resignation, a very handsome money testimonial was raised and presented to him, the subscribers including members of our body in every part of the country. Many of them differed from him very widely on questions of theology, but they admired his devoted zeal in advancing what he believed to be the cause of sacred truth. The late Mr. Samuel Courtauld, for instance, belonged to another school of thought than that to which Mr. Spears adhered, yet he subscribed £100 to the testimonial. The total amount subscribed was £1800, being at that time the largest sum ever presented to a Unitarian for distinctly Unitarian services. It was invested to produce him an income for life, the capital remaining intact for the benefit of his family afterwards. We need not refer to the story of the controversy which was raised within the Association on the question of its publishing certain works of Theodore Parker, further than to say that Mr. Spears's energies were set free for the establishment, with the aid of generous friends, of a weekly newspaper. The first number

of the *Christian Life* appeared May 20th, 1876, and from that day to this it has upheld the cause of Unitarian Christianity of a Scriptural type with a consistency that has never wavered. The proprietors of the *Unitarian Herald* disposed of it to the *Christian Life* in the year 1889.

Our departed friend was always openly and frankly a Unitarian. He conceived it to be his plain duty to the cause of truth to thus indicate his theological standpoint. The Unitarian name was very precious to him. Some of the most sacred associations of his life clustered around it. Towards the close of the year 1891 there fell under his notice complaints of certain ministers in our body that they felt their usefulness impaired by the name. This stirred him to write an article bearing his own signature, emphasising his conviction that his own openly-professed Unitarianism had never affected unfavourably in the slightest degree the usefulness and success of his own ministry, but had greatly contributed thereto. The article appeared in the *Christian Life* of October 31st, 1891. It was written from a profound assurance that we should be committing a great mistake if we ever entertained the idea of hauling down our denominational flag. We reproduce the article almost entire, as it contains a most interesting piece of autobiography:—

["For forty years I have borne no name but that of a Unitarian minister; and if I had other forty to live, or to live life over again, no other profession would be mine, whatever office or honour or emolument might be within my reach. I was once asked by a deputation from a Congregational Church, one of some mark, to take charge of their church. The deputation told me that they were as much Unitarian as myself. My reply was, I must always call my teaching Unitarian. This closed the negotiation. I call a spade a spade; and it will be found by experience, that however people in general, outside of us, dislike the name Unitarian, they dislike 'dodging' with names still

more.] This brings me to the point of usefulness. I have had, thank God, in a forty years' ministry, distinctly named in every place 'Unitarian,' a measure of success it may be useful for persons who are timid about the word 'Unitarian' to know. In 1851 I was pastor of our church in Sunderland. There was a mere handful of people, less than a score, when I went; so few that the two or three could not be always got together. I had no stipend, and so supported myself by a school. After seven years, I left some one hundred and twenty worshippers, and had saved the property from being sold. Sunderland was much more intolerant towards Unitarianism in 1851 than now. I did something there to soften the harsh tone of the "orthodox," without abandoning the Unitarian name.

"My next scene of duty was at Stockton-on-Tees. The congregation had been let down, and although they had an endowment of nearly £50, could offer only £65 as a stipend. I can say with a good conscience that I have never allowed the question of stipend, and the number of weeks of holiday, to be a basis of agreement in accepting a pastorate, although I have had a family. My deep conviction is, that no minister will lack the necessaries of life for himself and his family who devotes body and soul day and night to his duties; and none should do less. When I entered Stockton I recollect the dilapidated state of the pews and floor, &c., as well as the small congregation. I avowed, in that old Presbyterian building, my Unitarianism, and preached it with a distinctness never before known there, and at the end of three years left a renovated building and a congregation that filled the pews. The Town Hall was engaged for a gathering to bid me farewell. My destination was to Stamford Street Chapel, London. Two large meetings at Sunderland and Stockton were gathered to bid me good-bye, but in no case have I had a meeting to welcome me to any pulpit, for the simple reason that such a meeting could not be got together. But in every case where I left, such a welcome was given to my successor.

"In 1861 I entered on my duty at Stamford Street. The secretary of the Church wrote to me, I was most 'ill advised' to try Stamford Street. Nothing more could be done there. The late Rev. W. Gaskell told me he had preached at Stamford Street, and there was literally no congregation. He said, 'Do not go.' My lot was cast. The congregation promised to keep the chapel open two years, and the London District Unitarian Society said they would give me a stipend of £100. In my ministration there I made open profession, exposition, and defence of Unitarianism; and in seven years we had one of the largest Unitarian congregations in London, and were freed from all external aid. There was no dilly-dallying there about the name Unitarian. It was while I was at Stamford Street I was invited to take the secretaryship of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. The few years I had the honour of that office the income from all sources was nearly quadrupled. My aim was to make it £6000 a year, and this I would have accomplished if I had been permitted to continue my work in addition to the pastoral duties I then had in hand. The sale of the books and tracts of the Association, during my secretaryship, rose from £10 to upwards of £500 a year.

"There are a few instances connected with my pastorate at Stamford Street very honourable to that congregation. In any new work to which I put my hand they encouraged and supported me. Mr. S. S. Tayler, now Alderman Tayler, was ready with others to go anywhere and do anything to help to spread Unitarianism. He and Mr. John Wood during my ministry were chief in opening Forest Hill and then Croydon. We also originated St. John's at Walworth, now Peckham; also Clerkenwell, Stepney, and Notting Hill. There was no whining about dividing our forces or destroying our usefulness. Nor did we talk about founding 'free churches,' 'liberal churches,' and all these delusive terms; we went in for 'Unitarian Christian Churches.' In this connection I must say how liberal has been the support

of the Messrs. Lawrence, the late Mr. Samuel Sharpe, Mr. F. Nettlefold, Mr. D. Martineau, Mr. Hopgood, and others. We have laymen always ready to help when they see that good honest work is in hand. I can ascribe their help, and any measure of success, only to my open profession of Unitarianism.

"Stepney was originated by my lectures in East London, and for a dozen years had my help, but not my undivided services, for I had many things in hand while minister there. Yet I had the names of 200 adults and 400 children at one time receiving religious instruction from myself and others there. My removal to Highgate five years ago was necessitated by the founding, in conjunction with Miss Matilda Sharpe, of Channing House School. It was only right that a Unitarian Church should exist there, with some eighty pupils from Unitarian families. The hall which we built became too small for our congregation. So in 1890 we opened a fine building that is now frequently filled with worshippers; and the hall is turned into a free reading-room and library, one of the most successful institutions of its kind in London. We declare in large letters, on both buildings, that we are Unitarians; notwithstanding this, the members of all sects and parties gather round our thirty tables; a more pleasing sight than our reading-room it would be difficult to meet with. In view of these facts, I am amazed that any of our people should shun the name Unitarian, or imagine that it impairs their usefulness.

"I may add, that my time has not been entirely devoted to Church work. I have circulated nearly one million of the 'Unitarian Declaration,' and upwards of three hundred and twenty thousand tracts; during the last five years, nearly one hundred thousand of Channing's complete works, great and small editions; some fifteen thousand of my 'Unitarian Hand-book,' and nearly forty thousand of the 'Origin of the Trinity,' by Mr. Stannus and myself. Three papers in these forty years I have originated:—The *Stockton Gazette*, 1859—now the *North-Eastern Gazette*, that has a

daily circulation of forty thousand copies; the *Christian Freeman*, 1856; and the *Christian Life*, 1876, all doing useful service.

“Forty years ago I entered on my duties with a sense that I was called to work of this kind, and yet I felt that I had no special aptitudes, had no college or ministerial training, no family prestige, and had the disadvantage of a northern dialect or brogue. Others have no such disadvantages to struggle against. An open door to usefulness, much more so than I have ever known, may be theirs. I have said, and repeat the words, if I had life to live over again, it would be done with the old name, ‘a Unitarian minister’; and nothing I know of would win me from that straight line of duty. I have not simply founded or recovered to life a dozen churches, and established nine Sunday-schools, and three journals, and helped into existence other useful institutions; but I could tell how, with the help of God, I have been the means of sorrows lessened, of joys heightened, of lives made more bright and pure, of hearts made more strong, of homes made happier, and of gratitude expressed a thousand times for our gospel of Unitarianism. I do not deny that other ministers, and ministers of Unitarian churches, have done more good work; but I do protest against the idea that the Unitarian name stands in the way of religious and social usefulness. I submit these things most humbly to those who would prefer to extinguish the Unitarian name.”

Such was the sketch of Mr. Spears’s career written by himself towards the close of 1891.

We may appropriately note here that in the editor’s address to the readers in the last number of the *Unitarian Herald* the following words occur:—“It is a matter of interest to ourselves, and will be to our friends, to know that Mr. Spears was invited by Dr. Beard, Mr. Gaskell, and the other founders of the *Herald*, to undertake the management of this paper, which his acceptance of the Stamford Street pulpit, London, compelled him to resign. We should also

like to reveal the fact now, hoping it is not a trespass on the privacy of advice given to us some time ago, that the Rev. Brooke Herford expressed to us his opinion that the *Christian Life* and the *Unitarian Herald* should be united.”

There were few achievements of his life from which Mr. Spears derived greater satisfaction than his having been enabled, with the help of wealthy and generous friends, to circulate so many thousands of Dr. Channing’s works. In the autumn of 1887, he was one of a party of personal friends who spent about sixty days in a visit to the United States and Canada. During this visit he had the pleasure of shaking hands with more than one member of the Channing family, who told him that he had done more to make the works of their great relative widely known than any other person or Association they could name. He regarded his dissemination of the writings of the famous American Unitarian divine as “the crowning work of all his activities.” Unquestionably he was thereby instrumental in immensely advancing the cause of a pure and Scriptural Christianity. On a previous occasion, in 1882, he spent, with two friends, thirty days in Italy. One of his companions well remembers the honour paid there to Mr. Spears by an American traveller (not himself a Unitarian) for the ethical service he had done the world by his dissemination of the writings of Channing. These were the only two great holidays of his life.

It was always a source of great satisfaction to our friend that he was enabled to establish friendly relations between British Unitarians and the cultured Monotheists of India. His first personal contact with the leaders of the Brahma Somaj of India was in 1870. In that year the late Mr. Samuel Sharpe was president of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, Mr. Spears being the secretary. Miss Frances Power Cobbe called upon him to urge him to do what could be done to make the visit to this country of Keshub Chunder Sen and his companions a success. Mr. Spears

interested the Committee in the matter, and they gave him full power to do his best for the Indian visitors. Of course the funds of the Association could not be touched for such a purpose, but a few friends subscribed a sum to meet the hotel and other expenses. A splendid reception was given to Mr. Sen at the Hanover-square Rooms. Mr. Sharpe presided; and among those present were Lord Lawrence, who had been Governor-General of India, Dean Stanley, Dr. Martineau, and some twenty representative men of all the various denominations in London, including a Jewish Rabbi. That meeting secured the reception and success of Mr. Sen in various provincial towns and cities, and opened pulpits to him in nearly all churches. Mr. Sen's appointments over the whole country were made by Mr. Spears; and at the close of his visit the distinguished Indian was presented with £500, Mr. Sharpe having acted as treasurer. Feeling that the Brahmos of India have committed themselves to a great religious and social work, Mr. Spears considered it advisable, in the interests of Christianity and the mission work of many Christian societies, that we in England should present a friendly attitude to these reformers. The same friendliness which he showed to Mr. Sen, he afterwards showed to Protap Chunder Mozoomdar and other men of eminence among the Brahmos. Mr. Sen was his guest for many weeks, as was also subsequently Mr. Mozoomdar.

Any one who had even a slight acquaintance with Mr. Spears would soon discover that he was essentially a man of action. He presented himself to one's view as a man who had found in the New Testament all the truth he needed to live by, and thenceforward proceeded to live it, never dreaming away his time in profitless mental speculation. So varied and numerous were his activities that many of our readers may be able to remind us of "something accomplished, something done" by him that we have omitted to mention. During the last three years he has contributed to each monthly number of the *Unitarian*

Bible Magazine, edited by the Rev. G. Carter (London: 5, Furnival-street, Holborn), under the heading "Reminiscences of a Busy Life," a series of sketches of some of the more interesting passages of his life. We have been permitted to make free use of these sketches in preparing our memoir. His ardent propagandism of the Unitarian faith, and his interest in the churches which stand for that faith, remained with him to the very last. Besides the care of his own congregation at Highgate, he has had for some time past the whole or partial oversight of our cause at Walthamstow, Southend, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Longton, Barnard Castle, King's Lynn, Bury St. Edmunds, and Deal. In reviving dying causes or initiating new ones he had no equal. Unitarianism had done so much for his own soul that he could never sit down and rest whilst he saw an opportunity of extending its blessed influences to any human being within his reach.

Of his personal characteristics so much might be said that it will be better to speak of them in a separate article. His personality was as interesting as his life labours were important. His enthusiasm in any work he undertook was contagious; his sincerity and unselfishness won admiration which expressed itself in moral and material support of his projects. The genuineness of his whole character made a deep impression upon all who had to do with him. It seemed to beam forth like light from his frank, manly, and open countenance. His genial, happy, cheerful demeanour was an outcome of the optimism which he had learned from Jesus Christ. He seemed to bring sunshine into every circle which he entered; and noting the fine contour of his head, one concluded at once that in some one or other sphere of activity he would be a man of commanding influence. The conclusion was verified by the fact.

Robert Spears died on Saturday night, 25th February, 1899, and was buried at Nunhead Cemetery on 1st March. During his last year, his fine physical constitution gave symptoms of being no longer equal to the strain which it

had so long borne. In the closing month of 1898, there were signs of internal malady, which did not, however, till the beginning of 1899, reach grave developments, causing intense suffering, almost to the last. His fortitude was marvellous, and his religious faith never shone more brightly than in his days of pain.

In 1846 he married Margaret Kirton, who died in October, 1867, and was buried at Nunhead Cemetery; of five children by this marriage, the youngest daughter, married to Dr. Jones, is the only survivor. By his second marriage in 1869 to Emily Glover he had six children: the elder of the two sons is Dr. John Spears.

His home life was admirable and beautiful. In his earthly dwelling he "walked with a perfect heart." It was a dwelling of uninterrupted peace, harmony, and love. To wife and family he was in every sense a tower of strength and comfort.

His energy and persistency of purpose was accompanied with the sincerest respect for the opinions of others, however much they might differ from his own. For sixteen years the writer of this memoir had been closely associated with him in the editorship of *The Christian Life*, and during that time the harmony of good feeling was never for a moment broken.

REMINISCENCES.

COULD any scribe portray the winning personality of Robert Spears? No such difficult task is mine. This little sketch of him is for those who knew and loved him, and desire some written record of a life so strong and full, and blessed in its power of blessing. Many have asked, can any one tell us more about Robert Spears? Perchance these few following lines may add something to the memorial of the consecrated work of a leader and teacher of men. Many gifts combined to make him the man he was. That best inheritance, a sound and vigorous constitution, was his, so that after the hardest, longest toil, sleep, sound as a healthy child's, would quickly restore him; and this great gift was his through life, so that he had not the same dread of fatigue which hinders many. Like his endeared friend Robert Collyer, his early life was spent in a North Country village, his first home being a very humble one, though rich in some of the things which 'make for righteousness.' His parents were much looked up to in a small community where the character of everyone must be known, and very precious to Robert Spears was the memory of his childhood, with its abiding lessons in the realities of life. In his home everything was earnest and true, and he was early taught to reverence God by seeing the faith and trust of his father and mother. For his eldest brother, John, he had the greatest admiration, and would often say he was the most gifted of their family. Poignant was his grief when that brother, who had emigrated to America, was drowned in the Alleghany River, with his eldest son. When Robert

was but five years old, a brother three years his senior had been drowned close to his home. This tragedy had a great influence on him. He well remembered the anxiety of his parents about the missing boy, their grief, the sympathy and help of neighbours and friends, the loss of his playfellow, and, young as he was, his sorrow for having denied his dead brother any little thing.

Except for this, his childhood was a very happy one, full of innocent pastimes, and of helpfulness in the garden or the home. The changing seasons brought their ever new joys. In spring there was the throwing of Easter eggs ("Pace" eggs), for which there was preparation days before, by dyeing them various colours. Then he must gather cowslips for wine. Many times a day did he bathe in the cool river on hot summer days. In autumn he joined the gleaners, bringing home to his dear mother as much corn as he could carry, well rewarded by her smile. When winter came with snow and ice, that seemed the very happiest time; for then, from safe hiding places were brought the "sleds," strong boards with ropes attached, so that the merry boys could drag them up banks and hills, enjoying the slides down again. The memory of such enjoyment was fresh to him with every winter's snow. He heard again his brothers' shouts of delight, the rattle of their "sleds." To show the prevalence of superstition at that time, he would relate, with a smile, how his mother once reproved him, for giving on New Year's morning a shovelful of burning coals to a careless neighbour. "Had you no more sense, Robert, than to let fire be taken out of our house on the New Year's morn?" As time passed on, these old-world fancies faded away in a better light.

This happy boyhood was a sure foundation on which to build his useful after life. To the end he often dreamed of it, seeing again and talking to his old companions long years after they were dead. His truly wise mother encouraged his love of reading, saving money to buy him the books he longed for. He loved to speak of this, and how she bought

him gloves (which few wore in those days) and made him a frilled shirt for best. These may seem trifles; but does not Mrs. Browning tell us such things are "corals to cut life upon"? His father died when Robert was about eighteen years of age; his mother lived to the venerable age of nearly ninety-two.

In many ways the days of his youth were stirring times. He had a vivid remembrance of the wreck of the Forfarshire steam-packet in 1838 on the Northumbrian coast, when the crew were saved by Grace Darling and her father. A fine engraving of this rescue was one of his treasures. He could remember times of something like famine, when the flour was extremely bad, and so dear that an admixture of sawdust was actually put into what was called bread. Close to his home was made and used the first railway engine. Rails were laid down, and it was used in connection with the coal pits. Many a time did he get a ride in one of the trucks behind "Puffing Billy" for the small charge of one halfpenny. This was the engine which Stephenson came to study, and improved upon; but honour is due to the maker of this first engine, one William Hedley. It is now honoured with a place at South Kensington Museum.

There was liberality in his earliest religious training, for he seems to have attended the village church, although his mother was a Methodist and his father might be called a Calvinistic Presbyterian. His earliest recollection was of long walks (ten miles there and back) with his father to the Presbyterian meeting. In his teens he became a regular attendant at Newburn Parish Church, but at twenty-one years of age he joined the Methodists. The aged clergyman of Newburn had always a kindly greeting for Robert Spears, whom he well remembered, and Robert liked to speak to him when he went north to visit his old friends. Every familiar face was dear to him, and he felt a strong tie of affection to any inhabitants of his native village. We who live in crowded cities know very

little of this. To grasp the hand of one of his old associates thrilled him with delight, and he would travel a long distance to enjoy this pleasure.

At an early age he was apprenticed to a smith, and by discussions with his fellow-workmen, and addresses to them, he discovered an aptitude for teaching, which enabled him for a number of years to realise a comfortable income. It delighted him to tell how he began school with one pupil, and how fast the numbers grew. His heart was in his work, and such interesting lessons as he gave drew more and more scholars. Some already engaged at work found time to come to him in the early mornings or evenings. It need scarcely be told that such a nature delighted in the company of children. They instinctively loved him, and soon found what a good playfellow he could be.

Having identified himself with the Methodist New Connexion, he became a local preacher. In 1845 the then famous Joseph Barker and William Cooke, of the New Connexion Methodists, were holding a public debate at Newcastle-on-Tyne on Unitarianism. In this discussion Robert Spears was profoundly interested, and it urged him to search more deeply for the truth. His Methodist friends were saddened by his doubts about the Trinity. "Some said I had not read my Bible with sufficient seriousness, and as I had heard that Bede, the Tyneside Saint, read his Bible at Jarrow on his knees, I followed that example." Thus earnest and humble were his strivings, but no "Trinity" could he find.

Three years after this the late George Harris, the eloquent minister of the Unitarian Church at Newcastle, came to give a lecture not far from Robert Spears' home; after hearing which, the young man sought his counsel and guidance, and both were generously given. George Harris became to him a veritable "Father in the Faith."

And now Robert Spears saw his life work clearly. He must join the Unitarian Church; but first say farewell to his good friends the Methodists. This was in

1849. This is what he says about this parting from those who knew his worth:—"There was a liberality and generosity of treatment of myself that I can never remember but with gratitude. Something had been done by my labours at the village meeting-house to give it an impulse of usefulness—a Sunday-school and some other institutions were promoted by me—and there was not the least disposition among the people that I should leave. In fact, some of them thought my duty was to convert the villagers to my views, and so make a Unitarian centre there. This was not my duty—not fair, indeed, to the Church that had been so liberal to me. They had only followed the lines of their denomination in saying I could not be fully recognised to preach in their chapels, and it was right that they should uphold that decision. To that I bowed. And so a farewell meeting was held.

"Young and old met me at that meeting to say 'Good-bye.' Prayers were offered by the most revered members of the church for my future welfare, usefulness, and happiness. Not one word of reflection or reproof that night fell from the lips of the multitude who came to the meeting and to witness the parting. Some little present was made to me that I value still. I remember my friend Mr. Joseph Cowen, jun., so many years M.P. for Newcastle-on-Tyne, was one of the speakers. He did allude to my change of views—mine were now similar to his own—and I remember his saying, after the meeting, if ever I needed a friend in the future, and he would, if he could, be that friend."

For some time he was then engaged by George Harris to preach at various places, occasionally taking the service for him at Newcastle-on-Tyne; but in 1851 he took charge of the cause at Sunderland, where there was a good chapel, but no stipend. He supported himself and family by teaching. In seven years he gathered a good congregation there and made many friends.

The almost sudden death of his noble and revered friend in 1859, was a shock from which it took him years to recover.

His own words best describe how much he found to reverence in George Harris:—"To the diffusion of Unitarianism he devoted the whole energies of his life. All his toil and anxiety, from first to last, were that the simple and beautiful truth of the Christianity of Christ might be believed and loved. He was no dreamy theologian or mystic preacher; he was the well-developed Englishman in body and soul, in all his mental preferences and the duties of the ministerial life. His eloquent powers were occasionally at the service of the anti-slavery cause, free trade, the repeal of unjust tests, and needed reforms. These were but the by-play of his powers. To the work of the ministry he bent his life. Against what he esteemed to be false doctrine, in every form, he lifted up his voice—it was at times like the thunderclap which clears and purifies the air; and truly enough it made some nervous people tremble. But we breathe this day a purer atmosphere, and enjoy a better liberty and more extended rights through speeches and writings like those of Mr. Harris. The young and the old, and all men everywhere, had in him a friend and a brother. Down-trodden humanity found in Mr. Harris an eloquent and fearless champion, and the immediate circle in which he moved had in him the potent influence of a good man's life. In all this he was, at the same time, what may be called a Unitarian enthusiast, and so was deeply touched with reverence and love for those who adopted and stood firmly for Unitarianism."

In 1858 Robert Spears removed to Stockton-on-Tees where the congregation was at a very low ebb. Here he laboured happily for three years. The old chapel was put into thorough repair; and it soon filled with worshippers. It may not be out of place to name one remarkable incident which occurred while he was at Stockton. He says:—"The North-Eastern Railway ran in front of my home, and a level footpath crossing led into a field. My two children, one three years old and the other five, were returning from the playfield and were run down

by a train. They were on the rail when the train struck them; one fell inside the rail, the other outside. The great wheels plunged between them and through their clothing, and the children were carried unhurt, though covered with dirt, into our home by some railway men. I believe this was regarded as the most marvellous event that had ever occurred in the list of railway accidents. I was told that the *Times* newspaper noted it and commented on it."

But his work at Stockton was drawing to a close. There was need of such a man in London. Let us pause to think over what he had been able to do. Two of our churches had new vitality put into them. From a state of decay he had made them "quick with life, and full of a noble promise." His many scholars blessed him. He had founded two newspapers. His journal, *The Christian Freeman*, was carrying wide the words of hope and cheer. His name was already a household word. We might guess him almost a veteran, but his years were only thirty-six. Difficulties only made him braver; constant labour could scarcely weary him; to do his utmost was his delight. He could, when it was necessary, stop to save his strength, but he always continued pressing onward. His true friends in the North did not cease to follow his movements with pride—for, was he not one of themselves?

It was in 1861 that the late Sir James Clarke Lawrence invited him to come to London for three years, under the London District Unitarian Society. In this way now began his work among strangers. Hitherto it had been with those speaking with the same accent, many of whom had known of him from his boyhood. But soon friends gathered round him. At first there were some who feared that his enthusiasm would be wasted in the great desert of London, and with the greatest kindness warned him not to throw his labours away. Truly he had a faith able to move mountains, and bent all his courage and zeal to the work before him. It was not a long time in bearing fruit, for he left no stone unturned. His chapel at Stamford Street, in

Blackfriars, was a fine large building, with the merest remnant of worshippers. He set himself to fill it. Some who at first dissuaded him, became, to their honour, his strong helpers. A new life sprang up in the deserted chapel. By printed announcements of his discourses, and by his friendly visits among the people, he at last succeeded in "popularising Unitarianism in South London." Those who had felt unable to belong to any church joined this one, for here they tasted the bread of life and drank of its waters.

How intimately were his people always known to him! He called so often at their homes, he could share all their joys and sorrows, taking infinite pains to lighten any distress, and to counsel in every difficulty. What a living force he was! Everywhere his enthusiasm carried conviction. Those who knew the amount of his good work marvelled at his power. And all was done with such a charming ease. Well might Dr. Bellows, before his last visit to England, write to him: "Among my chief pleasures is the prospect of seeing again your *shining* face—as fresh in my memory as if we had parted only yesterday."

We have also seen letters from his old and valued friend Mr. James Hopgood, who had an immense admiration for Robert Spears. In one he says, "I think that our anniversary has gone off splendidly, and this would not have been so but for your able and untiring energy."

At Stamford Street Chapel he was ably helped by many of the good and wise. Among other honoured friends the late Samuel Sharpe, with his daughters, were constant in their attendance at his services, and also took classes in the Sunday School. The families of Mr. W. Notcutt Green, of the Plimptons, the Taylers, and others, including Miss Sara Wood (author of some delightful books), gave him invaluable help.

Who could tell of the ceaseless activities for good always in progress during Robert Spears' twelve years' ministry at Stamford Street, how large the Sunday School became,

what constant week-night lectures and meetings were held. The congregation was like one large united family, ready to second their Pastor in every good work. Distance seemed no object to them—their time they freely gave. A gentleman tells him of the following experiences of his work at Stamford Street:—

"You may remember," said he, "that you issued a placard of a course of sermons headed in this way: 'Pure religion is joy, not sorrow; is hope, not fear; is faith, not doubt; is love, not hate,' and so on. I ventured to attend this series of discourses, with great fear; and I asked God at the close to forgive me for the ignorance and bad feeling I had hitherto displayed about Unitarianism." He continued to be a worthy member of the church from that time.

"I had another case of conversion to our views," writes Robert Spears, "in an old gentleman who had been brought up religiously, but had come to the conclusion he had committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. He had not been within the walls of a church for many years, nor in all that time had offered a single prayer to God. He told me that, by what he thought the merest chance, he dropped into our chapel one evening and heard my discourse on the 'Infinite Love of God.' This reclaimed him entirely from the darkness and the desolate state of mind into which he had been plunged. I have other instances of the value of our religion when it is set forth in its positive aspects, but let me now for a minute or two turn to another feature of my work in South London.

"There was one branch of our endeavour that I may just hint at. For several winters I held conferences. These were attended often by large numbers of people, and both ministers and lay preachers of other sects used to be present. I have seen a score of Mr. Spurgeon's young men at some of those meetings, and so was never surprised when from time to time I heard of more than one or two of Mr. Spurgeon's students who had become Unitarians.

Two of our Unitarian ministers declared to me that the first time they ever entered a Unitarian church was at one of those conferences.

"I was down in the country some time ago, and had to speak at a Unitarian gathering. A Wesleyan minister was present, and he shook hands with me, and said he had come twelve miles to see me and to hear once more a few words from me. I marvelled at this information. He replied that he had attended many nights the Stamford Street Conferences on "Theology," and this explained his presence at the gathering that day. Again, a friend of mine, at the seaside for a few days, went to the Congregational Church, heard a very fine sermon, stayed in the vestry to shake hands with the minister and to ask him to tea. He came, and told my Unitarian informant that the Stamford Street Conferences had broadened his mind, and given to him a view of the Unitarian position entirely different from that of his early education. When I was in America, the late Rev. Dr. Peabody told me he should never forget the real enjoyment he experienced one night at Stamford Street, when I was holding those meetings. That night the meeting was kept up till nearly eleven o'clock. Yes! I am not more sure of my own existence than that we did a fine stroke of Unitarianism propagandism at Stamford Street."

These religious conferences, held at Stamford Street, were largely attended, and evidently fruitful in good. It need scarcely be said that they were conducted in a truly catholic spirit, so that inquirers after truth had nothing to fear. It was at Stamford Street, too, that the first Lay Preachers' Union was formed. Mr. Stannus, Mr. John Wood, Mr. Callow, and Mr. S. S. Tayler were among its first members. Twelve of the lay preachers afterwards became ministers of our churches.

What an influence was that active and zealous church among the thoughtful young men of that time! Its light so shone that they must needs see it; students of religion could not shut their minds and hearts to it. Some bravely

took their stand where he did; many more were enlightened, broadened, made more liberal. None who ever heard Robert Spears could doubt his faith, his piety, his joy.

In the great American struggle against slavery, which went on while he was at Stamford Street, he was in full sympathy with the Northern States. His brothers had four sons in the American armies. One of these was shot through the lungs and taken prisoner, but given his liberty on account of his serious wound. This, however, healed rapidly, and he was able to rejoin and again fight for the cause of freedom. Another of these four nephews, though not killed in battle, died from the hardships he had undergone when only seventeen and a-half years old. Well might their uncle Robert watch the progress of this war with keenest interest.

But some of life's heaviest trials came to him while at Stamford Street Chapel. One of his two children, a most promising little girl of eight years of age, died of diphtheria, after only a few hours' illness. For many years this loss would at times come back to him with the poignancy of a fresh sorrow. It was so sudden a blow—she had seemed so strong, and yet no human skill could save her precious life. Only two or three more years passed, and, after a long illness, her beloved mother was laid in the same grave. She had been the dear and faithful partner of Robert Spears' life for nearly twenty-two years. Those who remember him at this time can never forget the courage and calm trust which enabled him, though with broken heart, to continue his dear Master's work. It drew warm friends still closer, and in a letter to him some years later Dr. Martineau referred with admiration to his steady continuance at his duties under these severe afflictions.

His position for seven years as Secretary of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association gave him added powers of usefulness. He was chosen to go to Paris with Rev. T. L. Marshall, at the close of the Franco-German War in 1871, to tender some help to the Liberal Churches there, by

a present of nearly £2000, raised by the generous act of our people. His official standing necessarily brought him into fellowship with many eminent men from distant countries, some of whom he was privileged to have as guests at his house. Dr. Robert Collyer was to him as a near brother; the saintly Dr. Sears spent a few days at his home; then the Rev. M. Jochumsson, Lutheran minister from Iceland (and chief poet of his country), found his sorrows lightened under Robert Spears' hospitable roof, his poetic temperament making him specially susceptible to such warm brotherly kindness. Professor Bracciforti, of Milan, was another honoured guest; Professor Hosmer visited him more than once; and to have enjoyed the friendship of Dr. Bellows was a benediction. Of Dr. Manchot, of Germany, he says, "To know him was a privilege and an honour." "And from all these eminent men I profited much." The late Dean Stanley was always ready to co-operate with him. The chief aim of his whole life was to spread the Christianity of Christ—to combat religious errors by means of lectures, allowing his listeners to put questions to him at the end, being always most careful to make his statements in the very words of Scripture, which he also made use of to answer every objection. The largest and most useful of all these meetings was held in the Lecture Hall at Greenwich. The Vicar had delivered a Sunday night discourse on "Why I am *not* a Unitarian." On the Monday week following, Robert Spears gave an address on "Why I *am* a Unitarian." This lecture had been announced by large placards, and was well attended. He called this the most useful of all his meetings, for it led the late Rev. Charles Wicksteed to travel all over the country giving everywhere his own lecture with the same title. Robert Spears says the lecture by Mr. Wicksteed was "far above mine in popularity, power, and usefulness; though he did me the honour of telling me that my subject at Greenwich was the starting-point of his years of service on this question."

About this time the late Miss Mary Carpenter had told Robert Spears of her visit at the Palace of Darmstadt, the home of our Princess Alice, and how she wished to present the Grand Duchess with the works of her father, Dr. Carpenter. At once Robert Spears had copies handsomely bound, to fit them for a royal library, and when they were accepted he received a most graceful autograph letter from the Princess.

Miss Mary Carpenter had much interested Robert Spears in the work of the Rajah Rammohun Roy in India. When in London, many years before, the Rajah had been accustomed to worship with the congregation at Stamford Street, and some of the oldest members could show with pride the seat where he always sat.

It was in the spring of 1870 that the eloquent Indian reformer Keshub Chunder Sen came to England. He was but little known here before this visit, and Miss Frances Power Cobbe called at the Unitarian rooms to interest Robert Spears in Chunder Sen's mission to England. The Committee gave him full power to do his best for Keshub and his companions. Some friends also subscribed a sum of money for hotel and other expenses. The half-year of his stay in England was a most interesting time to us all, and is best described in Robert Spears' own words. He says: "There is no episode in my life I look back upon with greater pleasure than the days and nights I devoted to the success of Mr. Sen's visit. Still remembered by many is the splendid reception that was given to Mr. Sen at the Hanover Square Rooms, at which Mr. Sharpe presided, and to which I had secured the attendance of Lord Lawrence, who had been Governor-General of India. I also invited the attendance of Dean Stanley, Dr. Martineau, and some twenty representative men of all the various denominations in London, including a Jewish Rabbi. That meeting accomplished the reception and success of Mr. Sen in all the towns and cities of our land, and also opened the pulpits to him in nearly all churches; and it was this which

gave us, on many other occasions, a place of standing among some of the churches that never before had held any fellowship with us. From that day the *Times* newspaper also reported for some years our anniversary meetings. I name this, as I had the honour of many complimentary letters from persons of some note, all praising the spirit of the Unitarian body for the liberal treatment of Mr. Sen, and the union of sympathy that had been by us created among the churches for this great reform movement in India."

Of that meeting the *English Independent* wrote:—

"The Unitarian party have taken him warmly by the hand, but it has happily not been left to them alone to show kindness to a man placed in such an interesting position, or sympathy with a movement which may largely affect the religious and social condition of India. With the Unitarians he is at present most in sympathy; but they had too much good sense to attempt to confine his survey of English Christianity within the very restricted limits of their sect, and the credit of having conceived and convened the interesting meeting of Tuesday night, in which the religious parties met on a broader platform than has perhaps ever before been constructed in England, belongs to them."

"Connected with his visit and his presence in my home," writes Robert Spears, "I could fill pages with anecdote and incident that would be both pleasing and instructive. He held one great meeting in Mr. Spurgeon's Tabernacle. How was this brought about? He said to me one Sunday, 'I would like to hear Mr. Spurgeon,' and so he attended one Sunday evening. On his return home, he told me he went into the vestry after the service, shook hands with the great preacher, and held a conversation with him. Then he said, 'I would like to preach from your platform, Mr. Spurgeon.' 'No, no,' said Mr. Spurgeon; 'I know that you're a Unitarian, and you shall not preach there. Nevertheless, I will allow you to hold a meeting in the Tabernacle if you will keep to some social reforms; let us have none

of your religion.' Mr. Sen consented. Lord Lawrence presided, and a great meeting was held. Sen was a deeply religious-minded man—I always felt this—and here is another anecdote that may interest your readers. He preached in the pulpits of many different churches, and in my own more than once at Stamford Street. He said to me, 'Let us have a week-evening meeting in your chapel; I will tell you the history of my religious experience, and my call to this work by our Heavenly Father.' We held that meeting. A young Wesleyan who was present remarked afterwards: 'He has told his religious experiences and feelings just as I have in part myself felt, and such as others have said at our Methodist meetings. How similar are our experiences! Yes, when we reach the heart of things, we touch the same rock, the same sure standing-place in the Almighty's goodness.'

"I had the honour of entertaining Mr. Sen in my home for many weeks, and it was no small privilege, night after night, to spend hours with him talking over religious affairs. It is still remembered by many that the farewell meeting to him was as largely attended as the welcome meeting, and that some eighteen ministerial representatives of the various denominations of London attended that meeting to say, 'God bless you, and good-bye.' With the aid of my friend Mr. Sharpe, that year President of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, as treasurer, we raised a fund in a few days of over five hundred and fifty guineas as a present to this devoted and eloquent man on his return home.

"Perhaps I may be pardoned for reproducing here a few words of a letter from Mr. Sen to me after he had left England:—'Above all, to you I owe an immense debt of gratitude which no words of mine can sufficiently describe. You have always been to me a kind and sympathising friend, ever ready to meet my wishes and supply my wants. Never did you allow me to feel that I was in a foreign country. It was chiefly by your aid that I found brothers

and sisters in England, and forgot to a great extent the pangs of separation from family and friends. Nay, it was you who arranged for feeding and clothing me, and meeting my daily requirements. How can I repay your kindness? I feel ashamed when I think how much trouble and vexation and anxiety I have caused you, and how you overworked yourself for my sake, and sacrificed your enjoyments only to render me happy. I can assure you that I shall never forget your unfeigned brotherly love, but shall always be grateful to you and Mrs. Spears for your kindness and hospitality. Believe me, yours affectionately,

‘KESHUB CHUNDER SEN.’”

Truly each of these teachers valued the other. They seemed to unite the East and West in religious affection. The devout Hindu needed the strong help of his English brother, and poured out his gratitude for what was unsparingly given. The work of arranging and carrying to a successful issue his mission to our country was heavy, but was always looked back upon by Robert Spears with unfeigned thankfulness. In his friendship and help to the great Indian reformer he always felt he was preparing the way for a better feeling between these devout Theists and the Christian Missionaries. In this he was not disappointed. He had the happiness of seeing less and less friction between the Christian workers and the Brahmo workers. The following extract from an Indian paper in 1896 much pleased him:—

“We, the members of the Brahmo Somaj, do not admire General Booth merely as the great Apostle of a great religion, and a Prince of Philanthropists, but we feel that we are bound to him in a sacred tie. Christ said that he had other sheep, which belonged to another fold, and that in the fulness of time there would be one fold. It is our firm conviction that we are the other sheep spoken of by the Good Shepherd. Whoever takes the name of Christ has, we believe, the spirit of Christ to some extent or other. The British Government, which professes Christianity, is, in

spite of many shortcomings, introducing the spirit of Christ into this country in divers indirect ways. All honour to the noble band of Christian Missionaries for bringing to this land the Bible and the name of Jesus. This spirit of Christ has now got hold of our people, and our country is being leavened with a new leaven. We may not agree in all the theological doctrines of the General, but of this there is no doubt, that we, ‘who glory in being the other sheep’ of the Good Shepherd, are actuated by the spirit of that wonderful personality, from which he draws all his inspiration, and in the name of Jesus Christ we give General Booth a most cordial welcome.”

“I believe,” wrote Robert Spears, “no such greeting would have been, up to this time, possible but for the kindly interest manifested by the Churches in Mr. Sen in 1870, organised and made successful by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association.”

In 1874 he felt it was best to leave his congregation at Stamford Street for more missionary work in Stepney. He had been giving lectures in East London, and saw the great need of a Unitarian church there. Sad was the parting with his many valued friends in South London, who continued to give him their good help in much of his new work. At College Chapel, Stepney, he laboured with the enthusiasm which he always displayed, the result being that in less than seven years two new buildings were added, the attendance at the church filled the pews, and there were some 450 children and forty teachers in the Sunday School.

“Probably the most successful of all my Sunday School work,” he writes, “was that at Stepney, for which two considerable rooms had to be raised, one on the top of the chapel and the other by the side of it, costing nearly £2000. I can remember 450 children attending this school, with forty teachers, and we branched off to the east and founded a school at Limehouse, now Elsa Street; and a school at Cambridge Road, now Mansford Street, Bethnal Green. This was the best piece of Sunday School work I

ever remember doing. At our monthly social meeting, held at Stepney, some eighty teachers usually sat down to tea.

"It would be an easy task for me to fill pages with incidents of a pleasing character during those full years. In my East London experiences nothing touched me so deeply as to see the children of the poorest of the poor in hundreds coming into the school, so neatly dressed, and, on the whole, such healthy, beautiful children. We had a sympathy fund, from which we paid a guinea on the death of a child as a mark of our condolence to the parents. This was subscribed by the pennies of the children. It can scarcely be believed that during three years at one period we had not a single death of a child among the 450 children in our school.

"When I reflect on the services that have been rendered by the younger members of our churches in Sunday School work, and is still rendered cheerfully, I feel the poverty of my words to express my gratitude. How noble, how generous of their time, and how willing to contribute to the better life of thousands of families of whom they know nothing. No wonder our great nation is great among the nations, with its millions of men, women, and young people labouring every Sunday to promote religious feeling and life for no other reward than the sense that they are labouring for the betterment of the world.

"We did a little missionary work also. We opened, with the liberal aid of Miss J. Durning Smith, the Limehouse Mission, now one of the most successful of our London Domestic Missions, where nearly 400 people, young and old, assemble every Saturday night and Sunday, and whose savings reach annually over £2000. Good work is done here every day and every night."

In the autumn of 1882 he greatly enjoyed a visit to Italy with his friends Dr. C. S. Kenny and Rev. A. Gordon. For about thirty days they travelled in that most interesting country. He says he gazed with awe at many grand buildings upon which St. Paul must have looked. In the

great cathedrals the fine singing and music charmed him. He could not help wishing the pictures were more varied; he longed for some beautiful delineations of home and family life. The country everywhere he saw rich and fruitful, but the people too often ignorant and poor, because priest-ridden. At the Church of Santa Croce, in Florence, he saw a mother kneeling at the altar in prayer, her little child running and playing round about it. He wrote in his journal:—

"A dear, sweet child of tender age
Around the altar played—
A better sight by far to me
Than all who bowed and prayed."

In Italy he met again his affectionate friend Prof. Bracciforti, and was introduced to the celebrated Italian patriot Mamiani, in whose honour a fine street of Rome is named. This was a season of great refreshing to Robert Spears. He called it, as indeed it was, one of the two chief holidays of his life.

The disposing cause of his removal from Stepney to Highgate, in 1885, was the foundation of Channing House School at Highgate, for the daughters of our Unitarian families. The idea of such a school, originated with Robert Spears, but the prime mover and support in carrying out the plan was his esteemed friend, Miss Matilda Sharpe. She had long been deeply interested in education, and to Robert Spears' personal labour, thoughtful toil, and ceaseless care she ascribes the successful issue of this noble enterprise. In connection with this he bent his energy to the the creation and erection of a Unitarian church at Highgate, there being no Unitarian place of worship near enough for the pupils to attend. It will be readily understood that this must have meant a heavy tax on his powers, especially as he was also (from 1876) editor of the *Christian Life* newspaper. Already he had become subject to noises in the ears, a nervous affection from which he continued to

suffer to the end of his life, though never complaining when he found it was incurable. Not always was he a stranger to sickness, though he believed he was, for the buoyancy of his nature made him think so. He would often say, "I never have a headache; don't know what that is." But there are those who could testify that his strength was sometimes weakness; even in the prime of life, he had long and weary suffering, hard to bear, but always forgotten by him as soon as he found relief.

His good friends felt he needed another holiday, and in the autumn of 1887 he had the immense pleasure of a visit to Canada and the United States, in the company of Sir Edwin and Lady Durning-Lawrence, two of their nieces, and Dr. C. S. Kenny, then M.P. The whole sixty days of this trip was to him a time of unalloyed delight. He had seldom been persuaded to leave his "post of duty." He writes: "I have never felt much need of what is called a holiday; all my duties, right through life, have been to me like one perpetual holiday." He could truly say with the Psalmist: "Thy statutes have been my *songs* in the days of my pilgrimage."

On the out and homeward journeys he helped to conduct, in concert with Dr. Kenny and Sir E. Durning-Lawrence, the Sunday religious services on board the vessels, while the young ladies led the hymn-singing. Lady Durning-Lawrence wisely would not allow him to preach while on this American tour. She knew how much he needed rest, and he was grateful to follow her advice. To read his journal of those days is as refreshing as sea breezes or mountain air. Everything interested and charmed him—the many grand buildings, the wonderful Niagara, near which three days were spent, but, above all, the eminent men and women of whom he had often heard and could now see face to face.

At Baltimore he stood in the pulpit where Channing had preached his first great Unitarian sermon, and where Dr. Weld then ministered. He spent in Boston some delightful

hours with the venerable Dr. Farley, the life-long friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and visited Emerson's home in Concord.

He also spent a most interesting night with Dr. Putnam, his family and friends; and, when in Philadelphia, greatly enjoyed the company of the Rev. S. J. May, and saw Mrs. Abel C. Thomas, the widow of the well-known apostle of Universalism, whose friendship he greatly valued. He was also able to shake hands with some members of the Channing family, who warmly thanked him for all he had done to make known the works of Channing. At Harvard they were the guests of Professor Peabody. Here he went into Longfellow's house and spoke to the poet's daughter; while at Boston he enjoyed some hours of delightful converse with the Rev. James Freeman Clarke and family, also with Mr. W. H. Baldwin, the President of the Young Men's Christian Union. He stayed several days with his dear friends Robert Collyer and Mrs. Collyer at New York.

Looking over some notes of his visit to America, the following account may be an interesting experience. He says:—"At night we went off to the Negro Church (Philadelphia), called the African Methodist Bethel. I will try to describe this service of three hours' duration. But it is undescribable. Being rather late, prayer was proceeding, and we waited in the porch. At first I feared there was some quarrel; the shouting in the prayer was like the noise I have heard at a village fight, only it exceeded everything I had known in my life. Prayer over, we were admitted, and I pushed my way to the front that I might hear the preacher and everything else. It was like going on to the hurricane-deck of a ship. I never saw twelve hundred negroes all together before. This was the first African church built in the States, just one hundred years before. A lesson was read out of the Book of the Revelation. They are fond of this book, and believe they know all about its meaning. One of Dr. Watts' hymns—a dreadful hymn about the Judgment Day—was sung. Only

about one in five had hymn-books; many may have never been taught to read, for about six hundred present were liberated slaves, all well dressed, the women choosing bright colours. Among them every type of face, from the thick lips, flat nose, and woolly hair to some nearest akin to us, with but little African blood. It took some time for the preacher to tell them the number of funerals they were all invited to attend during the coming week. They have a good organ and choir; also a large Sunday School.

"The sermon was by a young preacher introduced by the minister. He took for his text, 'The day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?' The ejaculations of the congregation at times swelled from a shower to a storm. They seemed to vary from 'Amen,' 'Hallelujah,' to 'Praise the Lord,' 'Glory be to God,' 'Glory, glory, glory.' These they often used in wrong places. Sometimes they were ill-timed, beginning with a gentle breeze of 'Amen,' it seemed as if the wind blew, and a mighty storm and hurricane arose with a clapping of hands and 'Ha!' 'Ha!' 'Ha!' till all was lost in the tempest. At last came the calm, and calm and storm alternated during the night. There was one very interesting feature; they have a Wilberforce College for the better education of their people. A collection had to be taken for this. The children of the school had raised a hundred dollars; he said they *must* raise more than the children. The organ played, anthems were sung, and he called 'Come on' much as an auctioneer calls for higher bids. Then the preacher sang them 'I am the child of the King,' the people joining in the chorus. Then again he shouted 'More money is needed; come on, come on,' and they filed up the aisle again while he sung, and they sung, until at the end of half an hour, 104 dollars were raised. Sir E. Lawrence helped them liberally; he and also Dr. Kenny were invited to the great platform; they both spoke well, and had the calm ear of those twelve hundred people. It was a rare sight. Dr. Kenny told them he represented in Parliament

the same people that Wilberforce did. This produced some sensation. At last they all joined in saying the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostle's Creed, and then the benediction. One of the negroes hunted me up by order and brought me to the platform, and there was a vast shaking of hands. Numbers came up for the honour of a word and a shake of the hand from our party. Fifteen minutes were spent in this most Christian way, so we had a real good time after the stormy meeting, and parted with their blessing on our heads."

Resuming work on his return to Highgate, "It may be," he writes, "that I have not done here the same amount of Unitarian lecturing and missionary work. I feel, in the seventy-third year of my life, not quite so able to be here and there, every night of the week, as twenty years ago. At Highgate we have founded institutions of great value. In addition to our congregation and Sunday School (of some twenty teachers and three hundred children) a Free Library and Reading-room are ours, and all sects and parties agree in telling us these are a blessing to the people and to the members of all churches in the district. We have first-class university lecturers every Monday night, and at the Thursday night meetings most useful lectures. Nor have we abandoned mission work. Our young men have for two years conducted services every Sunday at Walthamstow, and are doing better now than ever in the new iron church. I have gone for nearly two years to Southend, and with the help of ministers and laymen, attached some forty people to our cause. A member of the congregation there has just given me a site on which to erect an iron church of about the same size as that at Walthamstow. For these opportunities of usefulness and for many friends, I thank God."

He was, indeed, a great Evangelist, always seeking to make more widely known the good news of a pure and undefiled religion. And he had the power of influencing others to work with him. Some of his young men helped,

by conducting services at Walthamstow for two years; and then an iron church was erected there. He, himself, was preaching nearly every Sunday evening at Southend, for almost two years, "with thankfulness to God, for these opportunities of usefulness." He sometimes said the building of the church at Southend would be his last; yet we could not think so. He saw the foundation-stones laid, the structure completed and opened for worship, all of which gave him real joy. Only four months before his final illness he was preaching there on "The Future Life," a sermon given almost in full by the *Southend Echo* of September 3rd, 1898.

One of the most notable instances of his power as a public speaker occurred some six or seven years before his death. It was at the large hall in North Road, Highgate. Mr. Athelstan Riley and his church friends had convened a meeting which was to settle, if possible, the much-vexed question of religious teaching in Board Schools. A number of High Church dignitaries were present, and as one after the other defended their poor case it was instructive to watch the silent attention of Robert Spears. At length came the time for opponents (if any such could be) to state objections. And when he stood up for the brief space allowed, at the close of a long meeting, he took their strong forts one by one, till soon only a crumble of ruins was left. He was unanswerable. Their questions could not again be raised. How proud Robert Spears made his friends that night, only those who heard his eloquent words could tell. Amid breathless silence he threw down petty differences, and showed that, even as there is a common life, there is also a common faith. Do we not all read the same Bible? Do we not believe in God, the Creator of us all? Have we not all faith in immortality? Have we not belief that to do good is well pleasing to our Heavenly Father, Who will render to every man according to his works? He proclaimed this larger Gospel, these unanswerable truths, which, like a wave of light, flooded all hearts. Discomfited, if not con-

vinced, the meeting broke up, but never has the incident been forgotten. It was one of the many occasions where the enthusiasm of Robert Spears was irresistible and carried all before it.

The Christian Conference at Sion College, London, was of his originating, and he took a special delight in it. Some may not remember its quiet beginning. This is from his own pen:—

"Some sixteen or seventeen years ago, on the occasion of the Unitarian Baptist Assembly holding its annual meeting at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London, Canon Fremantle and the Rev. Mr. Barnett, of Whitechapel (now Dean Fremantle and Canon Barnett), were present at that meeting; and all so much enjoyed the fellowship of minds of different Churches, I proposed a resolution that something like a Christian Conference should be formed, and that all who cared to bear the Christian name be accepted as members, and that we might meet occasionally and have our religious feelings expressed in the presence of each other of different Churches, and that Canon Fremantle should be requested to take the leadership of this new society and see to its formation. I remember quite well an hour's discussion on this question. At last voting took place, and I won by a large majority; and, to the honour of Canon Fremantle, he stepped forward and approved the vote, and formed the new society, called the Christian Conference, that numbers now a goodly list of names of all Churches, and that has done a fine Christian service all these years. The late Cardinal Manning presided over one meeting. Bishops of the Church of England have presided over more than one. So have Dr. Martineau and other Unitarians. I feel I never did a more consistent thing, or one that has more proved a bond of union and of usefulness, than at the meeting held at the Memorial Hall."

Miss Florence Hill writes it was due to his encouragement and help that she, with Miss Tagart and other ladies, was able to form the first Postal Mission in England. She

says: "Who can weigh the immense value of that moral and religious enthusiasm which Mr. Spears had, or the influence for good of his genial trust in others, that they would be enabled to do God's work?"

In addition to the loved work of his church, to his missions, and his journalism, must be specified his publication of Channing's works, in a cheap form. To this he always referred as the "crowning endeavour" of his life.

He says:—"When I was chosen by the annual meeting of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, in 1867, to be the co-secretary of the Association with Rev. Robert Brook Aspland, whose name I sincerely revere, the works of Channing could not be had in this country for less than ten shillings. An old friend of mine, the late Rev. R. E. B. Maclellan, had published an edition at five shillings per copy; this was out of print. I suggested to the Association in 1872, at the time my revered friend, Mr. Samuel Sharpe, was President, the issue by the Association of an edition at two-and-sixpence per copy, and in less than two years we sold upwards of twenty-five thousand copies of this book. The sale has gone on for a quarter of a century by the Association, and reached upwards of one hundred thousand copies. The last great enterprise with this book was the quarto edition of ten thousand copies, which cost Miss Durning Smith upwards of one thousand pounds, as she most generously sent out some two thousand copies to the foremost divines of all our British churches. Nine of the Bishops of the Church of England acknowledged the gift with their own hands; some others by the pens of their secretaries. Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence bore the cost of the Centenary edition of Channing's works of nearly forty thousand copies. This was called the 'shilling edition,' but for many years it has been sold at sixpence per copy. I call this part of my life labour the crowning work of all my activities.

"Many years ago our eminent layman, the late Mr. Henry Arthur Bright, of Liverpool, complimented me on this work

most warmly, and said, 'You are sowing the seed of a great harvest of Unitarian thought and doctrine that after years will certainly gather in.'"

It was his faith that, if men truly studied the Bible and ruled their lives by it, "every reform the world needs would be effected, and permanently, by the religion of Jesus Christ." Hence he did not throw himself into various movements for social reforms. In the causes of temperance, women's suffrage, and other questions of social moment, he would encourage reformers, but himself took no leading part. He held, too, that politics have no place in the pulpit. All true reforms, he said, would be the natural fruitage of pure religion undefiled.

Although misunderstood by some, he enjoyed many of the most unbroken friendships. Amongst these were the late Mr. James Hopgood, Sir Henry Tate, and Samuel Sharpe, of whom he used to speak as the "wisest man" he had ever known, and whose affection for Robert Spears was more like that of a father for a son. No more faithful friend has he had. He had, indeed, through his long life the best of friends, willing and able to help him carry out his plans; the honoured names of Aspland, Beard, Gaskell, Harris, Higginson are only a few of these. Without the means given him liberally by those who were able, much of his work must have been left undone. He fully realised all his indebtedness, and often thanked those generous souls. What happiness he had in these warm friendships. With what joy would he do anything that would serve them.

Many services was he able to render to the poor and suffering, by the generous aid of able doctors and lawyers, who freely gave their valuable time and skill to cases he had brought under their notice. Sometimes these persons soon forgot the benefits received. When reminded of their thanklessness, he would only say, "Some people *have* no gratitude, but we must do all the good we can to *every one*."

How was it given to one man to accomplish so much? has

been often asked. Only by the most persistent labours. He seldom burned the midnight oil, but went betimes to rest, often rising at four o'clock, so as to get much of his work done in the quiet hours of early morning. Then after his simple breakfast, he would sometimes take a little sleep, his mind being at rest because he had got something done. And all the while he was full of interest in everything that was going on. Nothing escaped him. To all he gave the most careful attention—asking little help, giving much. He possessed a buoyancy of nature and great reserve of power which made one feel there was nothing impossible to him. He seemed always able to do more, and, however numerous his engagements, all were sure to be kept with the utmost punctuality. Those who only knew him in public life could have little idea of the charm of his company. He had a keen sense of humour and the sunniest nature. As Robert Collyer aptly said, "What a *boy* he was in the good heart of him." Such consideration had he for servants, fearing they might be overlooked or forgotten, that even at his last Christmas, when weakness and pain began to overpower him, he sent his servant some handsome Christmas cards. Though posted at a distance, she knew that only her master would have sent them. It is these quiet deeds of everyday life which fill all hearts with love; they stay with us and speak to us for evermore.

With a sudden swiftness the end of his mortal life drew near, whilst he was still busily planning and doing. Within a few weeks of his own death Robert Spears believed he had some years of life before him. Over anxious about the health of others, he believed his own required little care, the ever active mind keeping him always busy, though he had passed the three score years and ten. All suddenly it seemed the hand forgot its cunning, the willing feet must stop. His friends were forced to realise his own calm words of resignation, "My work on earth is done." It struck those near him as some sudden wound or accident.

Though latterly it could be seen that his strength failed somewhat, he had kept bravely on, till his Father in heaven called him home to rest.

It was his wish that little should be written of him. At least this simple record does not overpraise him. It has been much helped by Reminiscences he himself penned, at the desire of Miss Emily Sharpe. He always wrote them with the hope of encouraging others, believing that "success anywhere inspires hope everywhere."

Reckoning by what he was able to accomplish, his might be called a very long life, so full was it of varied interests. Of them all, the pastoral ministry was his most cherished ideal, and the one to which he had hoped again more entirely to devote himself.

He writes:—"Had I life to live over again, probably the whole of my time and powers would be bent on one thing only, that is, the Unitarian Church ministry. In the whole wide range of pursuits, I know of none in which more real usefulness and happiness may be won than that of a Christian minister."

Those who had come under his influence realised the fulness of his love to all men as brethren, and, as the source of that, his love to God was with all his mind and soul and strength. The Creator and Preserver of all, infinite in wisdom and power, would give His children every good gift; even our trials and sorrows were blessings in disguise. This was his constant teaching. To him the future life was a living truth, of which he never had the slightest doubt. This firm intuition concerning immortality was the open secret of his patience and strength in that greatest of all trials, when he knew that he must leave everything dear to him on earth, but knew also that he was on the eve of meeting the loved ones gone before.

How shall we tell of the countless tributes of affection to his memory, of grief at his irreparable loss? They who knew him felt it as a personal affliction, lasting and deep. It mattered not if they had been unable to see eye to eye

with him. They knew his worth. From America how many messages arrived! Above all, from India, even from some who had never seen him in the flesh, came messages of heart-broken sorrow, as if the writers had lost their dearest and most intimate friend. They understood his consecrated life, and poured out their gratitude for the help he had been to them. One wrote, "He belonged to a larger race than his own race, and to a larger country than his own country, his place is high in the brotherhood of mankind." From one of the missionaries of the Brahma Somaj came this word:—"I never knew him personally, but this I can surely say, I often saw his spirit with the eyes of my spirit, and conversed with him through the spirit. His letters unmistakably showed to me what a noble, loving, and exalted soul he had." One more wrote:—"His death has cast a deep gloom over us all. . . His name will ever be sweet in my ears. . . His goodness and simplicity made him so dear to us. God bless Him for ever."

In the review of such a life, the uppermost thought must be one of thankfulness to God. Great as is our loss, the remembrance always with us is of a bright and pure unselfishness, and of a true and noble spirit gone home to God. Patient and full of trust to the end, he rests in the "Everlasting Arms," where there shall be no more death, for Love and Truth are immortal.

To quote him again, there is "the potent influence of a good man's life." It does us good to remember it, and what can we do but humbly thank God that we have known such a one, and can keep him in the treasure house of our hearts. On hearing that he was taken from us, one of his people truly said, "We are all orphans;" but the last words he most frequently uttered were, "Have faith in God." Did he not also leave us a final message, "What can I say to you all better than Christ said to his Disciples, 'Love one another?'"

ROBERT SPEARS

ON Wednesday afternoon, in Nunhead Cemetery, I buried in the grave of Robert Spears a close and intimate friendship of twenty-eight years' standing. When, some twenty years ago, he established *THE CHRISTIAN LIFE*, he invited my help. I contributed to the opening number of the paper, and I have written for nearly every number that has appeared since. On another page of the present issue a valued colleague, whose connection with this journal has been nearly as protracted as my own, has narrated the events of Mr. Spears' busy and beneficent life; and has described how cordial and how harmonious, throughout the many years of his editorship, were the relations between him and his fellow-workers on *THE CHRISTIAN LIFE*. An editor's task is no light one, it taxes both judgment and temper; and often these are put to the test by colleagues even more sharply than by opponents. But throughout the twenty-two years of this journal's history, Mr. Spears' colleagues found their cordial relations with him ever unbroken, and their regard for him ever increasing. Some have thought of him as a doctrinaire who imposed upon others his own dogmas, and limited the range of co-operation by the range of his own convictions. I at least have never found it so. During the thirty-three years that I knew him—for twenty-eight years of which I knew him intimately—we often differed; as every two men of active minds must do. We had marked differences on theology, on religious history, on current denominational movements, on national politics. But he never betrayed a moment's heat in the discussion of any of these differences; or even laid the slightest limit upon my expressing any of them, if I cared to do so, even in the columns of his own journal. If on this trivial personal testimony I lay an unnecessary weight, it is because it concerns some aspects of his character which seem to me to have been sometimes misunderstood and unappreciated.

His character, as a whole, it is needless for me to attempt to portray. It is known to every Unitarian throughout England. It became known at a glance to every one who looked at him. In seventy years of life the human soul never fails to write its signature upon the human face. I have never seen a face where that signature stood

written in characters more unmistakeable or more attractive. Strength, simplicity, serenity, sympathy, were obvious at the first sight of those handsome and winning features. No one could fail to see that the face was that of a man who was happy himself, and whose sole and single impulse was to make others happy.

Herein lay, it always seemed to me, a chief source of the success of his pulpit ministrations. I speak of them with some hesitation; having seldom heard him preach since the days of his ministry in Stamford-street, long ago. But when from time to time I have heard, sometimes in one town and sometimes in another, of men of culture rank and wealth who, after impatiently turning away from more ambitious preachers, had listened with delight to his homely directness, I have realised how predominant a factor in any message the messenger himself must always be. Thus, when the message of religion came from the lips of Robert Spears, the hearers, who saw for themselves that the messenger was full of joy and full of strength, could not fail to feel the value of the Faith which had filled him with this strength and this joy. When he preached, the congregation went away thinking better of their lot in life, and better of their fellow-men, more earnestly of their duties in the world, and more lovingly of the God who governs it. It is a blessed thing to have scattered broadcast these brightening thoughts, Sunday after Sunday, throughout a ministry of half a century's duration. How many who read these words will cherish to their dying hour grateful memories of that ministry! For myself, across the lapse of a whole generation, there comes the recollection of returning from a Watch-night service at Stamford-street Chapel, encouraged and inspired, at the most troubled and perplexing crisis of my life, by the bright and hopeful words with which Mr. Spears had ushered in the dawning New Year.

But great as was the good done by his public addresses, I reckon them the least part of his ministry. Pastoral work is more potent than preaching. Counsel given to the individual will always be more apt, and therefore more persuasive, than that given to the crowd. And Mr. Spears was the ideal of a spiritual counsellor. To a single-minded severity of conscience he added a sympathetic tenderness towards others, yet without for a moment impairing his unflinching sanity of judgment. For he was the shrewdest of men. He had the supreme gift of common sense, irradiated (and probably sharpened) by the saving grace of a quick faculty of humour. In no other man's company have I laughed so often or so long as in his. Ever-observant eyes, busy through a long and active life, had given him an acute insight into men and their motives and their methods. Hence I have often been surprised—even when consulting him on some difficulty arising in surroundings, Parliamentary or professional or literary, of

which his personal experience had never given him any direct knowledge—to find how his thorough general knowledge of mankind would enable him to give advice curiously apt for even the special difficulties of the particular sphere. Perhaps the shrewdness of his advice was never more immediately obvious than in the directions he would give to public speakers. Of the merits or demerits of his own speeches I know little, having scarcely ever heard him on the platform. But I have met no one who equalled him in the skill with which, when consulted about some friend's forthcoming speech, he could select the topics, and indicate the sequence of thought, which would weigh most with the special audience that the speaker might happen to have in view. And in the far graver and more delicate problems arising out of family difficulties or family quarrels, there was a field in which his kindly wisdom found, I hear, its most fruitful sphere of action. This is not the place, nor is there perhaps any place, in which it would be fitting to dwell upon the many cases in which peace has been restored, or misery averted, by his wise and winning words.

A prudent counsellor, a skilful organiser, an active journalist, a busy philanthropist, a most successful minister of the Gospel, a typical follower of Christ: these are high claims to make for any man. Yet I do not doubt that amongst those who will read this tribute to Mr. Spears, there will be some who will say for themselves, as for myself I deliberately say—"He was the wisest adviser I ever had, and the best man I ever knew." Some of us, had we to write his epitaph, would do it in the old lines, familiar long ago to eighteenth-century Unitarians:—

"Go, gentle bosom; go, unsullied mind;
Go, friend to truth, to goodness, to mankind;
Thy dear remains we trust to this sad shrine,
Secure to know no second loss like thine."

COURTNEY S. KENNY.

MEMORIAL SERMON.

"Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?"—GENESIS xli. 38."

DREAMERS, men of ideas, men of action; thus we name the spirits, diversely but divinely gifted, connected yet contrasted, which together frame the triad of forces, divinely strung, whose varied energies move and mould the human world to nobler issues of achievement.

The dreamer, poet, prophet, enthusiast, visionary, must be interpreted through the cooler judgment of the "man discreet and wise," who presents the vision translated out of golden fancy into perspicuous plan. The Egyptian king discerned in the Hebrew slave one who appreciated his dream, took in its twin pictures at one glance, and, reading it off in the language of purpose, mapped out a future on distinct issues. Who was to execute the suggested task, and prove the policy in action? Who, if not the obscure alien who had mastered the situation and drafted the plan?

Early in the last century the Nonconformists were looking about for a man to replace a lost leader of their educational enterprises, removed by premature decease from a career of brilliant promise. To guide their choice, they drew from one of his pupils a written summary of the master's methods. With such insight and ability was this done that, led by Isaac Watts, they placed the whole burden of the duty upon the young shoulders of him who had entered so warmly into its spirit, grasped so thoroughly its principles, delineated so clearly its details. Thus came the opportunity of Doddridge; and Doddridge's use of his opportunity was, in fact, the making of modern Liberal Dissent.

These are ancient instances. You shall tell me whether we have not cause to rejoice in one more modern, in regard to which it is my hope, in harmony with the present feeling that has brought us here to stir up your minds, "by way of remembrance," grateful and hopeful remembrance—not, I trust, the mere vain homage of idle recollection.

No age is destitute of ideals; no age is barren of constructive minds. We can always find the poet; prophets grow on every bush.

We can always find the projector; were an admirable prospectus the sole requirement, few reforms would fail. But the cry is still, in every age, Can we find the man? The homage we offer to genius has ever in it a touch of self-complacency. The poet is inspired, we say; he echoes what is in me. The thinker is true; for his thought is my own. The man who achieves, we admit, has something we have not, and something that is signally and singly his. "Honour to whom honour." And to-day the theme which moves our veneration, hallows while it deepens our sense of loss, and melts us down in thankfulness to God for gifts of His which surpass the measures of our praise, is the career of one who did no little to make his dream come true; a purposeful man, a man in labours abundant, one whom we have found to be such, and do know that the spirit of God was within him.

I.

Robert Spears was educated at the university of the home and in the college of the heart. He was ripened in the world, but his father and his mother made the man. They gave him his northern blood with his stalwart frame. From his father, physically a Vulcan, capable of three men's work, he got some of the grit and grip proper to minds which have digested the strong meat of the Westminster Catechism, that hard, strict nurse of the Presbyterian piety. The religion of his mother, which beautified her old age of over ninety years, shines clearly in that simple and touching prayer she taught her children: "God bless everybody. Amen."

Sound moral teaching came to him from the clergyman of the village church which he attended in his boyhood, and his early surroundings were pure and fresh, healthy and good. He always had a strong love for nature; his scrutiny of nature's ways was singularly close and keen. After brief schooling, he had soon to earn his bread by the swing of his arms and the sweat of his frame. I have heard him compare notes with his friend Robert Collyer on the likeness, and the virtues, of their unpromising starts in life. It was characteristic of his independence and his hatred of oppression that the first turning-point with Robert Spears was the tyranny of a foreman smith. This determined him to seek freedom from handicraft.

Then he at once began, in a sense, the real work of his life. For he had read and he had thought; it occurred to him that he might try to teach. He had listened to preachers of various branches of the great Methodist family, and he became a schoolmaster in the New Connexion. He started, too, a Sunday-school. He was twenty years of age, and he married. His Methodist friends saw in him the making of an evangelist; they took him on trial for the local ministry. Trial

given, and his abilities proved, he was now to be examined for admission as a qualified local preacher.

The grounds of his failure to pass this ordeal were not just exactly the usual ones, and his examiners were puzzled. He had been strongly affected by the sharp estrangement dividing in those days the different bodies of Methodists, so like each other to the outward eye, yet holding so completely aloof from each other's work and each other's sympathy. He had registered a vow to bind himself by no articles of faith or of polity which would make barriers between himself and any branch of Christ's one Church. And as all the Churches drew their essentials from the Bible, upon the Bible he resolved to take his firm stand. Accordingly, when questions were put to him, he was not content with claiming, as many had done before him, to give answers in the language of Scripture. He urged with, it seems to me, even more reason, that the questions themselves should be framed in Scripture terms. So the examination could not come off. Sooner than he saw it himself, the good Methodists perceived that there was but one end to this. If not to-day, then to-morrow or the next day, his place must be with Unitarians. This final turning-point he reached in his twenty-second year.

The development of his mind was meanwhile quickened partly by the debating powers of a gifted man of original force (Joseph Barker), still more by the public addresses and private guidance of a true apostle of our faith, remarkable alike for marvellous eloquence and for missionary zeal. To George Harris, whose acquaintance he now made, he owed his definite Unitarian convictions. The splendid figure and impressive power of George Harris he would oft recall with the fondest admiration. Never had he heard such a preacher before; nor ever did he hear another worthy to be deemed his equal.

Still the Methodists were not willing to let him go. They bade him stay on and continue to preach, though he might not be placed on the plan. The Independents offered him a post without subscription. Yet this, he found, meant a tacit endorsement of their theology, and a silence or—what was worse than silence—an ambiguity respecting his own. So, just fifty years ago, he came clean out into the overt profession of Unitarianism. His Methodist friends did not dismiss him from their school, though he sometimes preached at mission stations for George Harris. The parting came with all goodwill, and many a prayer on either side for each other's welfare, when he definitely decided to enter the ranks of the Unitarian ministry.

I shall not here chronicle his career, and have little need to recapitulate the details of his forty-eight years of active ministerial service. I would only remind you that he began with a chapel about empty and no stipend at all, made his living by teaching, got in his

next charge "a great rise" to £65 a year, and from this charge, after ten years' ministry in the North, he was called to London in 1861.

Well do I remember his coming, and his welcome meeting at Stamford-street, where I first saw him, eight and thirty years ago. He very soon made his mark; though there were not wanting those who wondered that a leader so fastidious as Robert Brook Aspland should have chosen a man with none of the then much-prized "metropolitan polish," and with a North-country accent which he himself described as a brogue. If to have smiled at it be a sin, I confess I have sinned with the smilers; and if fault it be to have grown into a strong affection for its honest individuality, that fault is mine. And here my thoughts go back to one of those annual gatherings of the clans held at the Crystal Palace in days when we were young. Speakers of brilliance and speakers of power were providing us with the sustained enjoyment of an afternoon's oratory. Glorious sentiments were floating in the air; we scarce knew whom most to admire. Then there arose—I see him now, standing where the glow of the sunshine fell full on his brave brow and met the radiance that streamed outward from his living soul—a man with no grace of gesture, no melody of rhetoric, no splendour of diction, no command of style. Partly this very contrast, partly the native force of the plain accents of sheer and suasive earnestness, caught attention and would not let it go. There were not many words, but there was a simple note of hope and cheer and promise in them as they rang through the hall—a tone which made them ring through our hearts, as still they ring through mine.

II.

Robert Spears had his dream; he had his plans; he had his activities. I should like to say a word about each of them, and then I have done.

(1) It was no ignoble, though it seemed to many a quite Quixotic vision, which he entertained and cherished, and in which he fully believed. It was the vision of no less than the world-wide spread of the religion in which he trusted, the religion of Unitarian Christianity. He did not conceive it to be a religion for a section, the private portion of educated people, or of intellectual people, or of a remnant dwindled down from a relaxed Puritanism. He had so great a faith in it that to him it was a visible certainty, standing out in all the clearness of a perceptible fact, that this religion is for the whole universe of mankind. He believed, with a belief uncrossed by the shadow of a doubt, that it would indeed become the universal faith.

If you asked him what he meant by Unitarian Christianity, he would tell you that he meant the teachings of the New Testament,

and these not as interpreted by Unitarians only. His favourite commentary on the Scriptures was a collection of extracts from writers of eminent standing—"Concessions of Trinitarians," it is called—in which every passage that has been pressed into the Trinitarian service is expounded in a non-Trinitarian sense by the Trinitarian authorities themselves. On this he relied as showing that Unitarian Christianity is the plain sense of the New Testament, as gathered by trained and competent students having no bias of Unitarian prepossession.

To him the central figure of the New Testament, the figure of the man Christ Jesus, was the embodiment of his religion and his hope. He had absolute faith in Christ—faith in his word, faith in his spirit, faith in the reality and power of his life, faith in the victory of his teaching and the triumph of his cause. Wherever he found the love of Christ, there he found what to him was the sign and the assurance that morals and religion were taking their right direction. "My deeper respect," he wrote, "for the Indian Theist is based on his deeper reverence and love for Christ than the English Theist." He was on the watch for indications all over the world of the working of a greater willingness to listen to the voice of the Great Master of pure religion, whose portrait he found and whose teachings he read in the pages of the New Testament. In that portrait he beheld what Divine Love can do in human nature. Through those teachings he discerned and received a vision of God, in the perfect fulness of His Fatherhood, the vision of Omnipotent Goodness and Infinite Tenderness.

(2) But no man was less content than he to indulge a mere inward satisfaction in the vision of a golden age to come. He thought the little band of Unitarian believers and workers was raised up by Providence to be instrumental in making that future, to which they looked forward with such confident joy in its ultimate realisation. He had his plans for this employment. Breaking new ground, keeping old ground—these were his dominant ideas.

The opening of new ground meant controversy, and he was a master of that kind of controversy which works conviction. This was always his plan, when addressing himself to a fresh audience, unfamiliar with the Unitarian position and the Unitarian argument—"Bring forth your strong reasons." 'Give me,' he would say, 'four or five of what you deem your clearest texts, your most powerful arguments. Choose them well, for I wish to meet you in your very strongholds. If I meet you there, and show that these selected proofs, selected as the best, will not sustain your case, it will be needless for us to pursue discussion into further points, by your own admission not so strong.' Thus he drew men to think, concentrated thought on distinctive issues, avoided the intellectual dissipation of mere disputing, and left the impression of a reserve of power, and an interest in his cause too well

grounded to let his hearers escape the influence of his religious mission under cover of discursive debate.

The retaining of old ground meant steadfastness; and it was here chiefly that his conservatism came in. He was convinced that much had been lost by movements which tended to scatter and divide, rather than to consolidate and build up.

But it would be doing him grave injustice, and misreading his character, to suppose that he drew strict lines of opinion, either as bounding his sympathies with men, or as embarrassing his choice of fellow-workers. At a time when he was actively deprecating a particular publication scheme, it was well said by Mr. Ierson that "if Theodore Parker had been living, Mr. Spears would have been the first man to take him by the hand."

What is true is, that he never had any faith in mere iconoclasm of any kind. What is equally true is, that he welcomed and appreciated all work which had for its animating impulse the upbuilding of religion. "It is not our differences that separate us in life," he wrote, "so much as the way we handle them." On his initiative was originated the "Christian Conference," which now for many years has brought together men of the most diverse shades of opinion, and helped them to feel the reality of their common ground.

(3) How shall I speak of his activities? The catalogue of his services is incredibly long and full. Should I try to exhaust it, each of you would recollect some omission, and remind me that I had left out a piece of his labour as good as any that I had included.

When as secretary he directed the enterprises of the Unitarian Association, it was gracefully said by Dr. Martineau that the Association had at last begun to merit the full distinction of its "bold and ambitious title." No longer simply "British," it had won the right to use, in no empty sense, the word "Foreign" as well. The Association had, indeed, been first raised to substantial importance and guided towards a representative position by the administrative zeal of Brook Aspland. But it was Robert Spears who pushed it into popularity, developed its resources, quickened it with the energy of his own character, and compelled its recognition as the centre of denominational life and the mainspring of denominational enterprise.

It would be impossible to omit a reference to his employment of the power of the Press as a missionary agent. In this direction his labours were chiefly editorial and selective. The unflinching excellence of the *Christian Freeman* and the unfaltering purpose of the *Christian Life* are proofs sufficient of his journalistic capacities. With characteristic modesty, he regarded it as his highest distinction and his best work that he had been a means of diffusing far and wide the beneficent writings of Channing. Through these the voice of Christian goodness

and religious truth, speaking from the living page, found access to minds of every class; and here was storage of food provided in readiness for years of dearth. Among the products of his own pen particular mention is due to his "Scriptural Declaration of Unitarian Principles." Tracts do not often live long, but this tract has not ceased to move attention, to create inquiry, and to answer it. No man of less experience than his could possibly have chosen its matter so well, or put it together so deftly. It was the cream of his controversial practice, the fruit of long and intimate knowledge of the points of real importance on which men's minds needed to be stirred, the positive proof of a discernment which rightly appraised the respective values of aroused antagonism and awakened reflection.

It was no small part of his effective energy that he set others to work, though still doing all his work himself; for he never delegated anything, but he found a fresh task for every helper. His example fructified, and his cheery word evoked the response of hearty efforts. Evidently it was his aim to lead on congregations to become hives of missionary bees. He planted out his willing hands to start new causes, for he thoroughly believed in expansion from congregational centres, and in movement as the expression of vitality. Broad and deep as were his social and his philanthropic interests, he never devoted himself to them except as they were intimately allied either with his general church work or with his many congregational institutions. Considering his aspirations and his powers, he must have put much restraint upon himself in limiting to this extent his opportunities of public service. This wise concentration was his; within the lines of his providential place, it was given him to find occasions for exemplifying nearly every form of public duty.

How, again, shall I speak of his constant readiness, his generous fulness, his singular effectiveness, in personal service? We all knew it; none who came into any contact with him failed to know it. Prompt, resourceful, untiring, kind: no one—not even the unfriendly—if he wanted a friend in need, ever missed his way by going to Robert Spears. His "forethought and consideration for all" are recorded in a touching and spontaneous tribute from those who, in his printing office, had "the privilege" of working for him as for "a dear friend." "We are as children without a father," said one of his congregation, when the tidings came of his release. What he was to his sorrowing flock is best conveyed in the pathos of these words.

In the multitude of his activities lay his recreation and his delight. "I have never felt much need," he wrote, "of what is usually called a holiday; all my duties, right through life, have been to me one perpetual holiday." No field of duty was more glad to him than his work among the young. His heart glowed with the bliss-

ful sense of fostering in them the progress of a future age, the promise of a purer world. When, at Verona, he came away from the spectacle of the Sunday afternoon classes which crowded one of the parish churches, he said, with characteristic enthusiasm, "This is the finest sight I have seen in Italy." On the last day of his mortal life, when things visible were fading, to the mind's eye came visions of the heart. "Look," he said to his son, "what a beautiful sight—see those children!"

Thus to the end, without remission, he pursued the ministry of labour and of love. The hand of death was on him when he preached his last sermon on the second Sunday of this year. In his remaining days of pain his spirit never quailed. Ever bright of purpose he lived his life, still busy throughout those suffering weeks, with only the welcome of calm faith for the summons which cut short his term of service here. In our lesson to-day we find the word we want—"Our brother Timothy has been set at liberty." He wished, and he tried, to dictate a farewell letter to his charge. Enough, if they will take as for them too, his last bequest to his own family: "What better message can I leave to you all than that which Christ gave to his disciples? 'Love one another'—there is nothing better than that."—Amen.

ALX. GORDON.

5th March, 1899.

PROSPECTUS.

THE STOCKTON GAZETTE

AND

TEES-SIDE ADVERTISER.

DR. FRANKLIN was a sensible man ! It was a saying of his that every family should possess a Bible and a good Newspaper. We joy to think the former is in every home ; we come to aid in supplying the latter. Therefore, on *FRIDAY* Afternoon, *December 30th*, 1859, will be published at our own office, No. 3, Silver Street, Stockton-on-Tees, the first number of a *NEW PENNY WEEKLY NEWSPAPER*, Twenty-four columns, called *THE STOCKTON GAZETTE AND TEES-SIDE ADVERTISER*.

OUR STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES, on subjects of general interest to the public, we will make brief and plain.

N POLITICS the Paper will be decidedly *Liberal*. Its basis of Reform advocacy, we doubt not, will have the sympathy of all the Liberals in the District. Its tone of argument or remonstrance, on political and all other questions, shall be always respectful, whatever views it may advance or oppose.

IN COMMERCE it will advocate *unfettered trade*, and therefore do the very best to gain the reciprocity of all nations.

ON TOWN AND MUNICIPAL MATTERS the Paper will pursue a most unbiassed course, seeking always the general interests of the inhabitants, and be free from all party prejudices, ties, and animosities.

ON PEACE AND WAR, armies and disbanding of armies, foreign affairs and relations, it will be guided by the spirit of late Governments, leaning to arbitration in national differences, yet firmly upholding the power and honour of the British nation.

THE MORAL, SOCIAL, AND SANITARY condition of the people it will ever earnestly seek to improve, and aim to make each person feel individual responsibility to make this world better than he found it.

ON RELIGIOUS DOCTRINES (the peculiarities of Churches) it will be strictly neutral. The reports of all Religious Anniversaries, Meetings, &c., &c., will be carefully impartial.

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All Communications must be addressed to "The Editor of the Stockton Gazette," No. 3, Silver Street, Stockton-on-Tees.

The following inscription, from the pen of Courtney S. Kenny, LL.D., is upon a mural monument to the left of the pulpit in the Unitarian Christian Church, Highgate :—

ERECTED BY THE MEMBERS
OF HIS CONGREGATION
IN AFFECTIONATE MEMORY
OF
ROBERT SPEARS
FOUNDER AND FIRST PASTOR
OF THIS CHURCH

HERE HE MINISTERED DURING THE
LAST FOURTEEN YEARS OF A LIFE
THAT WAS OCCUPIED THROUGHOUT
IN DISSEMINATING AT HOME AND IN
FOREIGN LANDS, BY HIS VOICE, HIS
COUNSELS, HIS WRITINGS, AND HIS
EXAMPLE, THE SIMPLE CHRISTIANITY
OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

BORN 25TH SEPT., 1825.

DIED 25TH FEB., 1899.

"He put on righteousness as a breastplate . . . and was clad with zeal."—Isaiah 59, 17.

INDEX.

- Accident on the Railway, 22
 African Methodist Bethel, 37
 Alice, Princess, 29
 Alleghany River, 17
 America, 46
 American Slavery, 27
 American War, 27
 Aspland, Robert Brook, 7, 42, 43, 53
 Baldwin, W. H., 37
 Baltimore, 36
 Barker, Joseph, 5, 20
 Barnard Castle, 15
 Barnett, Samuel Augustus, 41
 Beard, John Rely, D.D., 12, 43
 Bede, The Venerable, 20
 Bellows, Henry Whitney, D.D., 24, 28
 Bethnal Green, 33
 Bible, The, 52
 Blaydon, Durham, 6
 Board School Teaching, 40
 Booth, William (General), 32, 33
 Boston, U.S.A., 36
 Bracciforti, Ferdinando, 28, 35
 Brahma Somaj, 13, 32, 46
 Bright, Henry Arthur, 42
 British and Foreign Unitarian Association, 7, 10, 13, 27, 31, 42, 55
 Browning, Elizabeth Barrett, 19
 Bury St. Edmunds, 15
 Callow, George, 26
 Cambridge-road, Bethnal Green, 33
 Canada, 13, 36
 Carpenter, Lant, LL.D., 29
 Carpenter, Mary, 29
 Carter, George, 15
 Channing House School, 11, 35
 Channing, William Ellery, D.D., 36
 Channing, Works of, 11, 13, 37, 42, 55
 Christian Conference, The, 41, 55
Christian Freeman, The, 12, 23, 55
Christian Life, The, 8, 12, 16, 35, 47, 55
 Clarke, Adam, LL.D., 2
 Clarke, James Freeman, D.D., 2, 37
 Clerkenwell, 10
 Cobbe, Frances Power, 13, 29
 Collyer, Robert, 17, 28, 37, 44, 51
 Cooke, William, 5, 20
 Courtauld, Samuel, 7
 Cowen, Joseph, M.P., 21
 Croydon, 10
 Crystal Palace, 53
 Darling, Grace, 19
 Darling, William, 19
 Darmstadt, Grand Duchess of, 29
 Deal, 15
 Doddridge, Philip, D.D., 50
 Domestic Trials, 27
 Durning-Lawrence, Sir Edwin, Bart., 36, 38, 42

- Durning-Lawrence, Lady, 36
 East London, 33, 34
 Easter Eggs, 18
 Elsa-street, Limehouse, 33, 34
 Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 37
English Independent, The, 30
 Farley, Frederick A., D.D., 37
 Florence, 35
 Forest Hill, 10
 Forfarshire, Steam Packet, 19
 France, Liberal Churches of, 27
 Franco-German War, 27
 Fremantle, Hon. William Henry, D.D., 41
 Gaskell, William, 10, 12, 43
 Glover, Emily, 16
 Gordon, Alexander, 34
 Green, W. Notcutt, 24
 Greenwich, 28
 Hale, Edward Everett, D.D., 1
 Harris, George, 6, 20, 21, 22, 43, 52.
 Hedley, William, 19
 Herford, Brooke, D.D., 13
 Higginson, Edward, 43
 Highgate-hill, 11, 15, 35, 39
 Highgate-hill, Free Library, 39
 Highgate, North-road Hall, 40
 Hill, Florence, 41
 Hopgood, James, 11, 24, 43
 Holmes, Oliver Wendell, 2
 Hosmer, James K., 28
 Ierson, Henry, 55
 Independents, 52
 India, 46
 Italy, 13, 35, 57
 Jochumson, Matthias, 28
 Jones, Dr., 16
 Kenny, Courtney Stanhope, LL.D., 34, 36, 38
 Kensington, South, Museum, 19
 King's Lynn, 15
 Kirton, Margaret, 16, 27
 Lawrence, Sir James Clarke, Bart., 7, 11, 23
 Lawrence, John, First Baron, 14, 31
 Lawrence, Sir William, Kt., 11, 29
 Lemington, 4
 Limehouse, 33, 34
 Lincoln, Abraham, 1
 London District Unitarian Society, 7, 10, 23
 Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, 37
 Longton, 15
 Maclellan, Robert Edward Barnes, 42
 Mamiani, Terenzio, 35
 Manchot, Carl Hermann, 28
 Manning, Henry Edward, Cardinal, 41
 Mansford-street, Bethnal Green, 33
 Marshall, Thomas Lethbridge, 27
 Martineau, David, 11
 Martineau, James, D.D., 14, 27, 29, 41, 55
 May, Samuel Joseph, 37
 Memorial Hall, Farringdon-street, 41
 Methodist New Connexion, 5, 20, 51
 Mozoomdar, Protap Chunder, 14
 Nettlefold, Frederick, 11
 Newburn Church, 4, 19
 Newcastle-on-Tyne, 5, 20, 21
 Newcastle-under-Lyme, 15
 New York, 37
 Niagara, 36
North-Eastern Gazette, The, 11
 Notting-hill, 10
 Nunhead Cemetery, 15, 47

- " Pace " Eggs, 18
 Paris, 27
 Parker, Theodore, 7, 55
 Peabody, Andrew Preston, D.D., 26, 37
 Peckham, 10
 Philadelphia, 37
 Plimpton, Alexander, 24
 Postal Mission, 41
 Presbyterian Chapel, 19
 Putnam, Alfred Porter, D.D., 37

 Rabbi, Jewish, 14, 29
 " Reminiscences of a Busy Life," 15
 Riley, John Athelstan Laurie, 40
 Rome, 35
 Roy, Rammohun, Rajah, 29

 Scotswood-on-Tyne, 5
Scriptural Declaration of Unitarian Principles, 11, 55
 Sears, Edmund Hamilton, D.D., 28
 Sen, Keshub Chunder, 13, 29, 31, 32, 33
 Sharpe, Emily, 45
 Sharpe, Matilda, 11, 35
 Sharpe, Samuel, 11, 13, 14, 24, 29, 31, 42, 43
 Sion College, 41
 Smith, Jemima Durning, 34, 42
 Southend, 15, 39, 40
Southend Echo, 40
 Spears, Emily, 16
 Spears, John, 4, 19
 Spears John (junior), 17
 Spears, Dr. John, 16
 Spears, Margaret, 16, 27
 Spears, Mrs. (senior), 4, 19
 Spurgeon, Charles Haddon, 25, 30
 Stamford-street Chapel, 1, 7, 9, 10, 12, 23, 24, 31, 33, 48, 53

 Stanley, Arthur Penrhyn, D.D., 14, 28, 29
 Stannus, Hugh, 11, 26
 Stephenson, George, 4, 19
 Stepney, College Chapel, 10, 11, 33, 34, 35
Stockton Gazette, The, 11
 Stockton-on-Tees, 6, 7, 9, 22
 Sunday-school Work, 33, 34
 Sunderland, 5, 6, 7, 9, 21

 Tagart, Lucy, 41
 Tate, Sir Henry, Bart., 43
 Tayler, Stephen Seward, 10, 24, 26
 Theists, Indian and English, 54
 Thomas, Abel Charles, 37
Times, The, 30
 Trinity, *Essay on Origin of*, 11
Unitarian Bible Magazine, 14
Unitarian Declaration, 11, 55
Unitarian Hand-book, 11
Unitarian Herald, The, 8, 12
 Unitarian Name, *The*, 8, 10, 12
 Unitarian Profession, 52
 Unitarianism, Conversions to, 25
 United States, 13, 36

 Verona, 57

 Walthamstow, 15, 39, 40
 Walworth, 10
 Watts, Isaacs, D.D., 50
 Weld, Charles R., LL.D., 36
 Westminster Catechism, 51
 Wicksteed, Charles, B.A., 28
 Wilberforce College, 38
 Wilberforce, William, 39
Wilson's Concessions of Trinitarians, 54
 Wood, John, 10, 26
 Wood, Sara, 24