Autobiography

GIPSY SMITH

1902

1 HIS LIFE AND WORK

1.1 Chapter 17

MY FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA

FROM 1886 to 1889 I was busy conducting missions, among the churches. My experiences from the beginning convinced me that my decision to do the work of an evangelist was right. But during these three years I spent some months full of fear and dismal apprehension. In 1886 I was seized by a painful and distressing throat ailment, which rendered it impossible for me to preach or sing. Sir Morell Mackenzie, whom I consulted, said that the vocal cords had been unduly strained. I had been using my voice in public singing and speaking without a pro-longed rest, or any rest at all, for years, and the effort now began to tell on me severely. For about nine months I was forced to abstain altogether from singing or preaching. I do not desire to spend such another nine months again.

My readers, considering the busy full life I had led for years, will easily understand how sore and heavy a cross these passive nine months were. It was, besides, a severe test of faith. Our little stock of savings very quickly diminished, and we had started on our last 5 before I was able to take up my work again. I was recommended to consult the Rev. Mr. Sandilands, the Vicar of Brigstock, who was a specialist on voice production, and on the diseases of the throat to which clergymen and other public speakers are subject. I spent a fortnight in the Brigstock Vicarage. Mr. Sandilands' treatment was so successful that in a day or two I was reading the lessons in church for him. I believe that the long rest had all but cured me of my ailment, but I was nervous and depressed on the subject, and Mr. Sandilands did me the great service of establishing my confidence in my voice. Before I had left him I was using my voice for five hours every day, and I was soon at work again. Never did I feel more thankful. I was busy during the latter part of the year in the West of England. An influential journal in that district made me the subject of a leading article, as amusing as it was flattering. My literary friends tell me that I must work in

as many picturesque touches as I can, and that is my only excuse for making some extracts from this article. An autobiographer cannot directly write about his personal appearance and personal peculiarities, nor is he as competent an authority on these subjects as an outsider may be. Yet these are the very things, I am told, which perhaps most interest readers.

With these apologies, then, let me say that this leader-writer described me as "elegant in form and manner, and as genuine and unsophisticated a son of nature as ever the mother of us all gave to the world." My eyes were described as "rather large, darkly hazel, bright and liquid, wells of light and life," and my countenance was labeled "agreeable and winsome." "The secret of his power," continued the writer, "is his simplicity, pathos, eclecticism, concentrativeness, and intense earnestness. Besides these, he is aided by freedom from all the meretricious airs and graces of pedantry which stick like excrescencies to a studied and unnatural rhetoric. He is as simple as a child, as tender as a sister, and as mellow and merry as a nightingale." The writer concluded by saying that I had the power of maintaining "that reverence and attention for the truth in an unconsecrated building crowded with good, bad, and indifferent characters which only a few ecclesiastical authorities could maintain in a sacred edifice. And a man who in himself can so elevate the gipsy as to be deservedly envied by an archbishop, is the man for the masses." I confess it had never occurred to me in my wildest and most sanguine dreams that I might be the envy of an archbishop!

The story of my first visit to America begins in this wise. In 1886 I made the acquaintance of Mr. B.F. Byrom, of Saddleworth, near Oldham, a cotton spinner and woolen manufacturer. Mr. Byrom was residing in Torquay for the benefit of his health while I was conducting a mission there, and that is how we came to meet. A close friendship was soon formed between us, a friendship to which I owe a great deal more than I can ever tell. No man has been more fortunate than I in the number and the staunchness of his friends. Mr. Byrom took a holiday in Palestine and Egypt in the early months of 1887, and while on his travels became intimate with two American Congregational ministers and Dr. R.S. Macphail, the well-known Presbyterian minister of Liverpool. He spoke to them about his friend, the gipsy evangelist, and told them all that he knew about my life and my work. They were deeply interested, and the American ministers expressed a strong desire that I should undertake an evangelistic tour in their country. Mr. Byrom, on his own responsibility, gave some sort of pledge or promise that at some future time I should. When he came home to England he told me he felt I ought to go; but I was finding abundant and fruitful employment for all my energies in England, and I did not feel that I was called to go to America. In short, I shrank back altogether from the enterprise. In the mean-time, letters were passing between the two American ministers, Mr. Morgan and Mr. Kemp, and Mr. Byrom. It was Mr. Byrom's firm faith that I should not only be made a means of blessing to the American churches, but also that the visit would be to me a further education and would supply me with help, material, and suggestion for my own work in the old country. I could hold out no longer, and in the autumn of 1888 I decided to go to America. Mr.

Byrom generously guaranteed me against loss.

But at the last moment obstacles rose up in front of me, like great rocks out of the ocean. When all the preparations had been made and my passage taken, word came that Mr. Kemp had suddenly passed away and that Mr. Morgan found some local difficulties which prevented him carrying out his proposals on my behalf just then. And so the way seemed blocked by obstacles which we had not anticipated. But having once made up my mind to go, I was resolved that nothing should hinder me. I had still time to secure letters of commendation and introduction from some of the leading Nonconformist ministers and other persons who knew me and my work. I felt sure that these would procure me a good starting opportunity on the other side.

Among those who supplied me with letters were the Rev. Charles Garrett, Rev. D. Burford Hooke, Rev. S. F. Collier, Rev. Andrew Mearns, Dr. Henry J. Pope, Mr. William Woodall, M. P., the Mayor of Hanley (Mr. Henry Palmer), the Hanley Imperial Mission Committee, Dr. Charles A. Berry, Rev. T. Kilpin Higgs, M.A., Dr. Keen, and Mr. Thomas W. Harrison, Secretary of the Staffordshire Congregational Union. The words that touched my heart most were those of my Hanley Committee. "We cannot," said the signatories, "allow you to leave for America without expressing our deep gratitude for the noble work you have done among us during the last seven years. You came a stranger but soon worked your way into the hearts of the people, and hundreds of the worst characters in the town were converted to God. Hundreds of once wretched but now happy homes thank God that Gipsy Smith was ever sent to our town. The work has spread, the churches have been quickened, and at the present time, in most of the towns and villages of the district, successful mission work is carried on."

I set sail from Liverpool on board the Umbria on the 19th of January, 1889. A gipsy uncle–a brother of my mother–who, having no children of his own, was very fond of me, traveled a hundred miles that morning from his wagon to see me off. I took him, attired in his gipsy costume, on board the vessel, and at once all eyes were on him. When the simple man felt the movement of the vessel and saw the water, his eyes filled with tears, and turning to my wife he said, "Annie, my dear, I shall never see him again." He had never been on a ship before–he may, indeed, never have seen one–and he feared that it could not live in the great mighty ocean. The thought in his mind was not that he might die before I came back, but that I should probably be drowned. He asked me, too, if I thought I should have enough to eat on the way, and I managed to assure him on that point. Presently I took farewell of him (the tears rolling down his cheeks), my wife, my sister and her husband, Mr. Byrom and several other friends. I felt as we slowly sailed away that I was venturing out on a great unknown, but though my confidence in myself was poor and weak enough, I was very sure of God.

The voyage was without incident. I am a poor sailor, and during the passage across the Atlantic I was deeply moved! I landed in New York on a miserably wet Sunday morning, a perfect stranger, not knowing, to the best of my belief, a single soul on the whole vast content. I took up my quarters at the Astor

House–Mr. Byrom had advised me to go to a good hotel–and sat down to think what I should do. I cannot say I was feeling at all happy or confident, but I girded up the loins of my mind and plucked up some little courage.

On Monday morning I presented myself at the New York Methodist Episcopal Ministers' Meeting, a gathering which is held on that day every week. I had a letter of introduction to the President, Dr. Strowbridge, from the Rev. Charles Garrett. I was received most cordially by the assembled brethren, who all rose to signify their welcome. On Wednesday morning I went to see Dr. James Buckley, the editor of the Christian Advocate. Dr. Buckley was absent, but Dr. Clark was acting as editor for the time. I explained to him who I was, what was my object in coming to America, and asked him to look at my letters of introduction. He read a few of them and inquired whether I was ready to begin work at once. I replied that I was ready, but that I had no desire to start right away because I thought a rest would do me good and give me time to look round. "Well," said Dr. Clark, "Dr. Prince, of Brooklyn, was asking me the other day if I knew of a man who could help him in some special services." Dr. Prince was the pastor of Nostrand Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, the second largest in Brooklyn, a brilliant scholar and preacher. Dr. Clark offered to send me with a note to Dr. Prince. I was greatly pleased and delighted by the editor's kindness, because Dr. Clark was known to have very little sympathy with the ordinary professional evangelist. I flattered myself that he had taken to me. The note to Dr. Prince ran thus: "The bearer of this note is Gipsy Smith, an evangelist from England. His letters are all that can be desired. You were asking me about a man to help you in your church. If I were in need of a man I would engage him on the strength of his papers." Dr. Clark was continuously kind and fatherly to me during this American campaign. His little comments on my work in the Christian Advocate helped me as much as any of the press notices I received in America.

When I went to see Dr. Prince in his handsome parsonage, adjoining his church, the door was opened by Mrs. Prince. The busy doctor was in his study, and his wife–faithful guardian of his time and energies–put me through a set of questions before I obtained admission. When at last I was ushered into the presence of Dr. Prince, I felt somewhat awed and hushed. I handed him the note from Dr. Clark. He put on his gold pince-nez and, after reading the note with a rather severe expression of countenance, he took them off, and looking me hard and full in the face, said in a decisive voice:

"Well, brother, I guess I don't want you."

I returned his gaze calmly, and replied, "Well, doctor, I think you do."

He smiled, pleased rather than offended at my cheek, and I went on. "I am no adventurer. I ask you to read these before I leave you," handing him my letters of introduction. Finally he promised to talk to some of his official brethren that night about the matter at the close of a service which was to be held.

That service was attended by from two to three hundred people (of whom I was one), gathered in the lecture hall. I was told that this was the third week of nightly prayer-meetings, that a great spirit of supplication had taken possession

of the Church, and that neither the pastor nor the officials felt that they dare close the meetings. They were praying for a revival. The service that night was most earnest, solemn, and impressive. Dr. Prince came in towards the close of the meeting and spied me among the congregation. Without speaking to me or giving me any warning he said : "Friends, we have a real live gipsy in the house to-night." The people at once looked round in search of this presumably desperate character, and Dr. Prince continued: "But he is a converted gipsy. I will ask him to talk to you." I addressed the people very briefly, just long enough to know that they were thoroughly interested and anxious for me to go on. While they were bowing their heads for the benediction I slipped out. They sought for me, but I could not be found.

While at breakfast the following morning the colored waiter informed me that Dr. Prince and two gentlemen desired to speak to me. They told me they wanted my help, and I must go forthwith and stay with Dr. Prince in the parsonage, for they believed that God had sent me across the seas specially for their Church. And I believe with all my heart that it was so. The prayer meetings had started before I left England, and by supplication and consecration the people had been getting ready for my coming. They did not know it, and I did not know it. But God, who brought us together, did. This interview took place on Thursday morning, and it was arranged that I should begin on the Sunday. An announcement to that effect was put in the papers, including also a few extracts from my letters of introduction. The letter which helped me most was that from the late Dr. Charles A. Berry, for he had only recently refused the call to succeed Henry Ward Beecher at Brooklyn. These short newspaper notices were all the advertisement that was employed.

Mr. Ira D. Sankey, of never-dying Moody and Sankey fame, took me for a long drive on the Saturday before my first service. I asked him if he remembered that during the campaign at Burdett Road, Bow, he was driven out one day to a gipsy encampment in Epping Forest.

"Yes, I remember it very well, and I remember meeting the converted Gipsy Brothers who were doing a good evangelistic work up and down your country."

"One of these brothers, Cornelius Smith, is my father, and he is still doing the same work."

Mr. Sankey was pleased to hear this.

I further asked him: "Do you remember that some little gipsy boys stood by the wheel of the trap in which you were driving, and that, leaning over, you put your hand on the head of one of them and said, " ' The Lord make a preacher of you, my boy'?"

"Yes, I remember that, too."

"I am that boy."

Mr. Sankey's joy knew no bounds.

A little incident illustrating the famous singer's true kindness and solicitude on my behalf took place on this same drive. In those days I wore a frock coat of unimpeachable cut, I hope, and a white shirt and front of unblemished purity and snowy whiteness, I know, but no tie. The reason of this omission I cannot tell. I suppose I felt that I was dressed enough. Said Mr. Sankey to me all at

once:

"Brother Smith, why do you not wear a white tie?"

"I really do not know."

"Well, Brother Smith," said Mr. Sankey, "I guess you would do well to buy some tonight, and wear one tomorrow."

Mr. Sankey was very anxious that my first impression upon the people should be as favorable as possible, and even a white tie would count for something.

The mission was successful from the beginning. The Nostrand Avenue Church, which seated fifteen hundred people, was crowded at the first service and at every service during the three weeks. Between four hundred and five hundred people professed to have found the Lord. The Methodist Episcopal churches do not use the inquiry-room. The penitents are invited to come forward to the communion rail and there settle the great transaction. My way was made in America. I next proceeded to the Central Methodist Episcopal Church, Seventh Avenue, New York, the church of which General Grant was a member while he lived, and which is now the center of the New York Methodist Forward Movement over which the Rev. Dr. Cadman presided for so many years. The same scenes were repeated here. Then I went to Trenton, New Jersey, where I had the exquisite happiness of meeting a great many persons from the Potteries who had settled there, who knew me well, and some of whom had been among my personal friends.

I saw a congregation of colored people for the first time in Philadelphia. It was a communion service, and about eight hundred of my ebony brethren were present. As far as I could observe I was the only other-colored person in the audience. The opening prayer of the dear old pastor contained many passages characteristic, I believe, of his class: "O Lord, thou knowest dat this be a well-dressed congregation; help 'em to remember dat when de offerings ob de Lord are made. O Lord, bless de official bredren. Sometimes at their official meetin's they fall out and they quarrel. And, Lord, before they take these emblems dis afternoon, Lord, they want reconverting. Come down and do it, Lord."

At this stage, one big black brother, not one of the official bredren, cried out in a loud and zealous voice:

"Amen, amen! Press hard on dat point, bruder; press hard dere!"

And the pastor went on: "Lord, go up into the choir and convert the organist!"

The organist, who was sitting just behind me, sniffed and said, "Umph!" It was whispered into my ears that he was the pastor's son-in-law. No one took offence at these very direct petitions, not even the official brethren, or the choir, or the organist. They all heartily responded "Amen." They loved and trusted their old pastor, and did not think less of him for the faithfulness of his dealings with them.

I was greatly delighted and impressed by the singing of the congregation. I heard the Fisk Jubilee Singers, who came to this country and enraptured us all, but this negro congregation excelled even that famous band in the sweetness and grandeur of their performance. I shall never forget how they sang the hymn,

"Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home." It seemed to me at the moment as if the roof of the church must open and the chariot descend into our midst, the singing was so grand and yet so artless–as natural as a dewdrop. I shall carry the memory of that service with me into eternity.

Some of my most interesting experiences during this trip befell me in Cincinnati. One little incident, trifling in itself–one of those trifling things which one does not soon forget–occurred at the house where I was a guest. On the morning after my arrival, when I came down-stairs, I found a little daughter of the house lying in a hammock swung in the hall, daintily dressed and waiting to receive me. Her father and mother had talked about me to her, and she knew I was coming. I talked as sweetly as I could to the little maiden. I said, "What a nice girl you are!" She answered nothing. Then I said, "What nice hands you have! what beautiful hair, what lovely eyes!" Still she did not speak. I could not make it out. I knew she was very intelligent, because I could see the brightness of her spirit in her eyes. I tried once again. "Oh, my," I said, "what a nice frock you have! what a lovely dress!" Still not a sound. At last, looking at me with impatience, not unmingled with disgust, she pushed her little feet prominently out of the hammock and said, "Ain't you stuck on my new slippers?" This was the compliment she was waiting for.

During my stay in Cincinnati I visited a gipsy encampment close at hand, the Cunnninsville Colony. An account of this visit given in a local paper was so interesting that I reproduce it:–

A ROMANY RYE.

Gipsy Smith, the Evangelist, in the City. A Romantic Scene at the Cumminsville Colony.

"There was a rare and decidedly romantic scene enacted at the Gipsy encampment at Cumminsville yesterday afternoon. Shortly before five o'clock a dashing team of bays, with bang-tails, landed upon the street leading into the center of the Romany village, with much life. They drew behind them a handsome landau occupied by four gentlemen, and as they came to a halt in front of one of the several tents of this nomadic race there was a shout in the weird language of the gypsies. Instantly there was a warm note of recognition from several men with the brown-hued countenance peculiar to that race standing near by, and a number of female heads, bedecked with gay colors, a weakness of the Romany woman, appeared from the folds of the canvas home.

"A neatly-dressed gentleman, with dark complexion and raven-black hair, leaped from the carriage, hat in hand, and for a few minutes the air was full of the nattiest kind of conversation in that strange tongue which men have for years tried to collect, as he shook hands most enthusiastically with those about him.

"The new arrival was Gipsy Smith, the famous British evangelist, who twelve years ago gave up the wandering life of his family and turned his attention to preaching the Gospel in his native land, and is now conducting a revival at the Trinity M. E. Church.

"There was a striking contrast between this civilized Romany Rye and the untamed ones that soon gathered around him. He was attired in a three-button

cutaway black coat and black and gray-striped pantaloons, and a white tie peeped out from under a turned-down collar. Surrounding him was a motley gathering of men, women, and children. All gazed upon him with great curiosity, but he soon relieved them, and each eagerly tried to talk with him. The young men wore rather shabby attire, with the never-absent colored handkerchief about their necks. They had but little to say, but one middle-aged, stoutly-built man, as fine a type of the Gipsy as mortal man ever looked upon, was unusually friendly.

"'I belong to the Smiths,' said the evangelist.

"'What, from England?'

"Yes, my father was Cornelius Smith'; and he rattled off a list of the James Smiths that completely threw in the shade the long line of the same noted family in this country.

'Well! Well!' replied the big fellow, 'I am a Lovell, and my mother was related to the Smiths. Here is my wife,' as he pointed to a matronly-looking female, enveloped in a faded calico dress, with a white cloth about her head. She took great interest in the stranger, and was soon questioning him about various members of her family.

"We have been in this country twenty-three years, but we hear continually from the old 'uns. Times among us over there wasn't very good. My poor mother stood it nearly three years in this country, when she died,' said he of the Lovells.

"Peeping into the tent, the evangelist espied a dark-hued woman sitting tailor-fashion upon the ground. She was a perfect specimen of the Gipsy fortune-teller of romance. Her ears were ornamented with lengthy pendants of gold, to all appearance; long braids of rich black hair hung over her shoulders. Her head was covered with a wide hat with a brilliant red lining, and in her lap was a young baby with a complexion the richness of which was in striking contrast to the dark olive hue of the mother.

"Laughing loudly, Smith said in Romany tongue, 'What a thorough Gentile baby!'

"The mother smiled, and a sturdy man who stood near by did not relish the utterance a bit. He was the father, and was marked in not having the least resemblance to the race.

"Smith explained that it was the title always given a child born of the Gipsy wife of a husband not a Romany.

"Lovell and his wife were the only ones in the colony who had ever been abroad, and gradually the talk was confined to them. The others, naturally retiring gradually dropped out of sight and disappeared either into the shambly tents or walked away to Cumminsville. The little children–and there were two-score of them–several of whom were perfect beauties, with their dark features and curly hair, returned to their play, and soon had forgotten the distinguished caller.

"'Where are all your horses?' was asked of Lovell.

"'Oh, the camp is lighter this week than it has been for a long time. Most of our folks are out on the road, and many of our boys and girls will not be back

for an hour,' was the reply.

"Won't you come down and take a bite with us?' was asked of the evangelist; and he looked anxiously at the iron crane stuck in the ground under which was the smoldering embers of a fire.

"'Oh, yes.'

"'Make it Sunday?'

"'I would like to, but I have three meetings that day.'

"'All right; we will try and get some of the boys to come down and hear you.'

"Say, Lovell, did you ever hear the people say we dyed our faces?" continued the evangelist.

"'Oh, yes.'

"'What foolish talk! I can account for the dark complexion. It is due to the long-continued contact with the sun and elements. The poor Gipsy is a much-maligned individual.'

"The trio rehearsed many interesting matters about old forests, celebrated Romany retreats in England, and noted leaders who had passed to their long rest, and after an affectionate farewell the evangelist got into the carriage, in which were Dr. Henderson, of Trinity, and T. A. Snider, of Clifton, and was driven away.

"He was highly delighted with the visit, and said that such meetings gave him new zeal in his work. Referring to the baby, he said: 'A birth in camp is made the occasion of great festivities. The new arrival is baptized, a minister is always summoned, and the whole ends with a fine meal.' Just then two gaudily attired Gipsy girls passed on their way to the camp.

"'Where have they been?'

"'Out fortune-telling; and I want to tell you a funny part of the talk I had with the women at the camp. I was explaining to Lovell's wife about the death of my mother, and said the only thing that she regretted was about her telling fortunes, which were all false. It worried her.'

"'Yes, that is so; they are all lies,' replied she. 'But then,' continued Smith, 'the women will do it, the money temptation being too great for them.'

"'What did Lovell mean by saying that business was bad abroad?'

"'Oh, you see, the British government is very severe with our women in the matter of fortune-telling, and fines and imprisons them. This has driven hundreds of them to this country, and there are not as many families over there as of old.'"

Back I went to New York, where I enjoyed the rare privilege of hearing Dr. Talmage in his own church. From all I could gather from friendly and unfriendly critics, Dr. Talmage is never heard at his best in England, either as a lecturer or as a preacher. His power over his great audiences in America is simply enormous and overmastering, and I felt at New York, for the first time, what a priceless gift the American churches had in this mighty preacher.

I could fill many interesting pages, I think, with extracts from the American papers concerning me. Some of them afforded me the greatest amusement. They were all kind and helpful. But though I am not shy now, I could hardly read

them, even in private, without blushing deeply. My readers, I think, may be interested with a few specimens of American journalism. One Cincinnati paper said: "Gipsy Smith speaks as if composing cable dispatches at a cost of a dollar a word for transmission. As a forest tree laughs at the pruning-knife, so he would be spoiled if trimmed into a decent uniformity by grammar and rhetoric. His words are vascular; cut them and they would bleed. Sometimes, like an auroral light, he shoots up a scintillating flame of eloquence, and is always luminous. At times his voice mellows down until his words weep their way to the heart."

Another journal dealt with me in a more critical, yet not unkindly manner. It informed the world that I was "not very beautiful, and not of commanding presence," but "modest and unassuming." The writer further said that I was a very quiet preacher, though not an ordained minister of the gospel. He informed his readers that I had never read any book but the Bible, but that I knew that by heart from cover to cover. I wish the last statement had been, and even now were true. The writer further spoke of General Booth as Field-Marshal Booth. He said that I had been presented to such men as Mr. Gladstone, John Bright, the Prince of Wales, and other celebrities; and while a stanch English patriot, I was neither a Jingo nor a Chauvinist. I need not say that the journalist gave me too much honor. I was never presented to Mr. Gladstone, John Bright, or the Prince of Wales. It is true that I have been the guest of the last mentioned, but not an invited guest. It was in the days when we sometimes stood our wagon and pitched our tent on a piece of land on the Prince's estate at Sandringham.

I was quite a known character before I left Cincinnati, and my name was used–without my authority, of course as an advertisement by the keepers of stores. One advertisement ran thus:

"He has good taste.

"Gipsy Smith is creating a great sensation in church circles just at present, and wherever he holds forth the edifices are crowded. He is a great entertainer, and that he is posted in city affairs is shown from the fact that when he attends a church festival he always wants the ice-cream and strawberries to come from–."

During this first tour in America I visited Philadelphia. Among other places of interest there, I was shown through Girard College, a college for the upbringing and education of one thousand five hundred boys. This, I was told, is the wealthiest corporation in the whole city. The will of the Girard College is not a corporation but a part of the estate of Stephen Girard, who was, in his time, the wealthiest man in America.

The founder stipulated that no minister of the gospel should enter it, but that the highest code of morals should be taught. The trustees decided that the highest code of morals was taught in the Bible. Hence, every day these boys read the sacred scriptures and engage in prayer. I was shown over the whole building, but in accordance with the trust deeds, I was not permitted to address the boys.

I had also during this trip a brief interview with Mrs. Parnell, the mother of the famous Irish leader. The Pigott forgeries had just been exposed, and the old lady, very proud of her son, was delighted to talk about this matter, and was eager to hear news from England. Two American ministers accompanied

me on this visit, and the old lady at once asked impatiently when we entered the room, "Which is the one from England?" We talked with her only a few minutes, because she soon became excited, and her friends thought it advisable to bring the interview to a close. She was a sweet, gracious lady, with a face that bore tokens of much suffering, and I shall never forget that interview.

The American people treated me in a very kind way, and from the time of this first visit I have always cherished the warmest feelings towards them. They are a religious race, a nation of church-goers. Their religious life is marked by a fervor and an outspokenness that one would like to see more of in our churches at home. The men of America are in the main well read, educated gentlemen, with whom it is a liberal education to associate. I was much struck by the almost sacred regard that is paid to prayer-meeting night and the week-night services in America. It is to me one of the saddest and most depressing features of church life in England that the week-night prayer meeting is so painfully neglected. Many ministers whose Sunday services are attended by congregations of from eight hundred to one thousand people, find themselves face to face at the weekly prayer meeting with a congregation of from a dozen to thirty and would be mightily surprised and delighted if the attendance should one night reach a hundred. It is not so in America. The week-night services are almost as well attended as the Sunday services. Religious Americans would not think of accepting invitations to social functions on that night. Not only does absence from the week-night service offend the religious feelings, it is also contrary to their sense of good form. Many people in this country seem to think that it would be bad form to attend a prayer-meeting. There is more friendliness, more brotherliness, in the church life of America. You will see more hand-shaking after one service in America than after ten in this country. In England, when the benediction is pronounced, we rush for the door; in America they rush for one another. They are very good to their ministers. If a worshiper in an American congregation feels that he has derived special benefit from a sermon he tells his minister so.

They have beautiful churches, beautifully furnished. The floors are laid with Brussels carpets no shabby strips of coconut matting in the aisles of American churches. The schoolrooms, church-parlors, and vestries are all in keeping in this respect with the church. I once asked a lady and her husband how it was that they spent so much money on their churches in making them luxurious. They replied: "We make our homes beautiful; why should we not make the house of God beautiful?" The equipment of their Sunday-schools is much superior to that of ours. The children are studied in every possible way. The schools are often divided into many classrooms, and the children are given seats in which they can listen in comfort to what their teacher has to say. The Americans, in short, have caught the spirit of the age. They believe in adaptation, and they believe that the church ought to have the best of everything. We are now learning the same lesson in this country. We are giving our best men, our finest buildings, and our sweetest music for mission-work in the great centers of population, and the results are justifying these methods.