

MEN OF THE DAY. No. 16.

THE REV. CHARLES SPURGEON.

SINCE the old Methodist times there has been no preacher so capable of influencing masses of people as the Rev. Charles Spurgeon. Born in 1831, at Kelvedon, in Essex, he was only a cub of sixteen when he left the paternal den, and began to stalk the religious desert. He belonged to a family of Independents, some of whom were preachers, and has always been very independent himself; but, like a shaggy young Newfoundland, he took to the water at the first sight of drowning souls, and became a Baptist from conviction. His full-toned voice soon woke the echoes of the wilderness, and as early as 1852 people gathered, *sub jove crudo*, or elsewhere as it happened, to hear his warning voice. In 1853 the fame of his fine natural oratory had won for him the position of Minister in New Park Street Chapel, which soon overflowed with his audiences, so that the narrow streets were blocked, and the public-houses were crowded with those who could not find room in the chapel, or who, on leaving it with an awakened sense of sin, felt it like a relief to quench the spirit in a mug of beer. To widen the fold for the sake of these stray lambs, theatres and concert rooms were converted into meeting-houses, the pulpit was exchanged for the platform, and a row of reporters below the footlights gave the utterances of this original and powerful preacher to the press. In his religious use of the grotesque, he resembles the old Puritans; and as chemists have made rum and sugar out of rags, he extracts edification out of slang. "I do not ask how are your poor feet," he began on one occasion, "but how are your poor souls?" No other preacher has succeeded like him in sketching the comic side of repentance and regeneration. Like the Primitive Methodist in Mr. Browning's "Christmas Eve," he would prove the Trinity from the three baskets on the head of Pharaoh's baker. Lately, however, either because he is developing new faculties, or his huge congregation at the Metropolitan Tabernacle has been worked down to the more orthodox level of steady-going Churchmen, the world has heard less of these eccentricities, and such dissertations on justification as "Hooks and Eyes for Believers' Breeches," and the like, do not flow so freely from his pen. But he is still, and long may he live to be, a smiter of the Philistines; honest, resolute, and sincere; lively, entertaining, and when he pleases, jocose; a straight hitter at such "twopenny-ha'penny divines" as Dr. Cumming; and a sworn foe of such Jesuits as Mr. Whalley and the Pope. Sound in his theology, according to the orthodox standard, he has the advantage of a powerful voice, a clear intellect, and a vivacity of diction but too rarely met with among popular preachers. His utterances are a singular mixture of realism and religious fantasy; but he is also a hard worker in his vocation; and whether he wields the Sword or the Trowel he always works in earnest. The Church of England owes him a deep debt of gratitude; and, if he would stoop to the office, would profit still more largely by making him Bishop of Southwark and St. Giles's. It would be a curious experiment, in the mingling of such ingredients as salts and senna, to try the Rev. Charles Spurgeon in St. Martin's Church, and the Rev. W. H. Humphrey in Mr. Spurgeon's Tabernacle, by way of exchange. Will the Archbishop of Canterbury please make a note of it?