

THE SUNDAY AT HOME

O DAY MOST CALM, MOST BRIGHT! . . .
THE WEEK WERE DARK BUT FOR THY LIGHT.—*Herbert.*



A FAVOURITE BOOK.

"Well, it be talking of marriages. I've something to tell thee about another of them," answered Mike, blushing like a girl, "and I feel a bit afeared too, Tom, lest thee feel as I'd done thee an ill turn by it."

Tom's wits were quick enough to jump to conclusions. He read in a moment all Mike would say, and a broad smile beamed over his face.

"Thee means thee is to be married thyself, Mike, and to Meg Dawson, I doubt not? Nay, lad, why should I take it amiss? I wish thee joy, and her too, with all my heart. She is a good lass, and a bonny one, and she will make thee a good wife. Thee needn't be afraid to tell me about it. I——"

"I was half afeared thee might be thinking again on her theeself," said Mike; "I know there was a time when thee and she were courting. And——"

"She would tell thee that I never said no serious word to her of marriage, save once, and then she would not listen. No, no, Mike, I've known this long time that my work isn't work for women-folk. I don't mean to think of marrying this many a year yet. May be, I'll never have a wife at all. I have plenty to do without, and I can do more work for the Lord

when I have but myself to keep. I'm right glad thee will have such a good wife, Mike, and I doubt not I'll have a welcome at thy fire-side of a night when thee has a house of thine own. I'd like to see thee and Meg in housekeeping together, but I've got other things to think of myself."

Tom's eyes looked away over the sweep of the hillside where the stone quarries and their clustering huts nestled together beneath an overhanging crag, and Mike saw an expression steal over his friend's face, the meaning of which he could not fathom, and which, therefore, awed him a little.

"There be a power of work to do in this world, Mike," said Tom thoughtfully, almost dreamily. "It be some men's work to marry and bide at home and keep the village life going, and there be others called out for something different, but they can all be doing the Lord's work together. I be main glad to hear what thee has told me to-day. I'll tell Meg so when I see her next. I like to think of thee and she in that little home you'll have together. But I don't need a home like that. I want to be free to follow where the Lord leads, and when I die I should like to be there, found at my post."

REMINISCENCES OF MR. SPURGEON.

THE last time that I looked upon the face of the great preacher, was on the occasion of his addressing a number of colporteurs on a Monday afternoon of May, or only a few days before he was attacked by that influenza which was really the commencement of his last illness. As a hardy band, who do most laborious Christian service, Mr. Spurgeon always had the most ardent admiration for his colporteurs, justly thinking that their books and homely talk represented the most direct method of reaching the common people both in town and country. What at once struck me in listening to his general advice and directions to such men, was the genuine interest with which he ever listened to the details of their work and adventures; and then, as it were, while speaking to them, placed himself in their situation. Many of these men who carry a heavy pack of books from village to village, are local preachers; and not one of the band who listened to his last address to them will ever forget the force and affection with which he urged them to become pattern ambassadors. They were encouraged to spread abroad their books because books would speak where they as men became silent; but while they preached the gospel to all, they had to do their very best, and they would ensure freshness by keeping to their text. That was the President's way of getting his men to keep close to Bible-teaching. So long as they did that, he did not care even if they rambled a

little because it was all holy ground from Dan to Beersheba, though beyond that into Egypt and Arabia it was not advisable for any one to ramble.

Mr. Spurgeon came upon the scene, as it were at a bound, like a sudden phenomenon, as the late Mr. William Olney described it. A great impression was produced by the first sermon given by the Essex youth in New Park Street chapel in the fall of 1853; and after the second sermon in the evening, the congregation was so excited that they lingered about the chapel. Mr. Olney had far more to do with bringing Mr. Spurgeon to London than is generally supposed, and some time before his death he supplied me with many facts which might otherwise have been lost for ever. The young preacher was at that time the tutor of several boy pupils, such teaching being a chief source of income. The giving up of these boys appears to have been a serious obstacle to coming at once to London; and seeing where the shoe pinched, Mr. Olney sent his friend a cheque to make good any loss which such action might involve. "I am very deeply indebted to you for your most generous offer," wrote back the Waterbeach pastor; "I shall not keep the boys any longer. You are throwing the web around the fly; your kindness binds me to you." The writer then added: "Happy is the church which has in it members who consecrate their wealth unto the Lord." Mr. Olney used to

describo that letter as being the first which Mr. Spurgeon had ever written relative to coming to London. He treasured the original for many years, until it was soiled and worn. He then gave it to me, and it is now among my most prized possessions.

The hitherto little-known Cambridgeshire pastor had no sooner settled in London than the crowd assembled in overwhelming force wherever

passing through his mind while preaching, what a study for the pencil of a Reynolds or a Millais, the full round face of that Essex youth would have been!

What new sensations were awakened when one listened to him for the first time! Will it not be a matter of lasting regret that no portrait of this great man by an artist of the first rank was ever painted? He himself had no ambition in this direction. His lowly opinion of himself, or rather total freedom from what is commonly called pride, was all along very striking.

When his preaching seemed to be strangely awakening all classes in the country, and his name was in everybody's mouth, he sold the copyright of his first book for 50*l.* If the honorarium had been 5000*l.* the bargain would no doubt have been a profitable one to the purchaser; but the young author had had no experience in publishing; and he never dreamed that his name could possibly be at a premium in Paternoster Row. When, many years afterwards, I asked him how he came to sell his ms. for such a sum, he replied, "Why, at that time I thought 50*l.* to be a good deal of money." He was a very ready learner, however, in the school of experience; he never repeated a mistake any more than he ever forgot anything he ever read, though he would go through a book at lightning speed.

Almost from the outset of his London career he became associated with his present publishers, Messrs. Passmore & Alabaster, the former being a member at New Park Street chapel when Mr. Spurgeon first settled there. It was at Mr. Passmore's suggestion that the weekly issue of the sermons commenced with the first week of 1855. For long past an average of five numbers a month have been issued; but as every discourse preached by the pastor has been taken down in shorthand, the weekly publication may be expected to continue for at least ten years to come. Mr. Spurgeon always expressed the greatest regard for his publishers; and the fact of Mr. Alabaster's being a Churchman, never occasioned the slightest hitch in the harmony of their Christian fellowship.

Though I was so well acquainted with Mr. Spurgeon as a preacher, any personal acquaintance did not commence until I wrote two articles for "The Sword and Trowel" in 1868. In March of the following year, I called at the Tabernacle one week-day afternoon, and had a first interview with the Pastor. He appeared to be selecting books for the Sunday-school library, in the secretary's room, but he at once led the way upstairs into his own vestry, and showed how by his *bonhomie*, he could at once make a stranger fool at ease. A small tray with tea and bread-and-butter had been placed on the table; and filling the cup intended for himself and handing it to me, he used a glass tumbler for



C. H. Spurgeon

At the Age of 21. From the Picture at the Pastor's College.

he preached. The largest buildings were too small; and that matchless voice, of which no one had ever heard the like, appeared to be capable of reaching with ease any number of persons who might assemble in the open air. Those who are old enough to remember Spurgeon at this period will have vivid and delightful memories of the singular phenomenon he then was to them. We had all heard of the preacher having characteristics peculiar to himself; but the reality exceeded all expectations. Some spoke of his features being heavy; but when lit up with the train of ideas

himself. He had accepted other articles of mine for the magazine, and such was his handsome appreciation of anything that was done for him, that was really worth accepting, that no literary worker could have gone from his presence without being conscious of a fresh accession of work-

satisfy the curiosity of anyone who wished to look over the place. He would not be quite himself if Mrs. Spurgeon happened to be away; for as he once remarked at his own table when this was the case, "When a man's wife is not at home, everybody is out." He would be as light-

hearted, entertaining at his own table, as though no care or burden of arduous service pressed heavily upon him; but otherwise he seemed to be always at work. I have accompanied him home after the ordinary Monday prayer-meeting at the Tabernacle to reach the house at 10.45 P.M. After supping in the study I have retired, leaving him still at work; but by six, or soon after, on the following morning, he would again be at his desk. He once confessed that, in a sense, there was misfortune in having so much to



Bathplace of C. H. Spurgeon.
Helsdon, Essex.

ing capital. Even when conferring a favour, he seemed evidently to be dissatisfied with himself unless he conveyed the impression of receiving one.

At this time he had not long removed to the new manse in Nightingale Lane, Clapham, and an opportunity presented itself of studying his home life. Having charming grounds, the house was very pleasantly situated, but it was no doubt too low-lying to suit one who was subject to rheumatic attacks. The study, approached by one flight of stairs, and overlooking the garden, was the best room in the house, where the apartments were all good. The dining-room, also struck a visitor as being particularly pleasant, for a half-glass door at either end led into what was really a lovely aviary and green-house combined. If, as some would aver, Mr. Spurgeon had no critical eye for architecture, and some other forms of art, he had great taste in gardening, while he loved birds. No gun might ever be discharged in that garden at Nightingale Lane. His horses also had good reasons for being satisfied with their situations; for he took care that handsome treatment was accorded them. The favoured animal which had to accomplish the journey to the Metropolitan Tabernacle on the Sabbath, was regarded as living under the law of works; and hence, on no account would its Saturday's rest be broken.

The first time that I saw Mr. Spurgeon at home was in 1869, when, at his invitation, I went to breakfast. He seemed to be as charmed with his home, as visitors were who went to it; while with the utmost good-nature he would

do, that for weeks he hardly had time to take a turn round his garden.

Nevertheless, he found great delight in his garden, and was not satisfied if anything whether under glass, or in the open, was not well looked after. A friend associated with the Metropolitan Tabernacle tells me a good story which illustrates this point. Mr. Spurgeon, on one occasion, showed him through the gardens, and explained how, under certain gardeners, he had employed, things had gone wrong in the vinery and elsewhere. While they were professors of Christian "perfection," the men had neglected their work, and the grape-vines especially had got into



MR. SPURGEON'S RESIDENCE, WESTWOOD.

a deplorable condition. "You see, these men were so holy that they did not get here till eight in the morning when they should have been here at six," remarked Mr. Spurgeon; "and therefore I discharged them and took on sinners in their place." The change at once brought about an improved outlook.

But what was the chief charm to those who

associated with Mr. Spurgeon at home, was the entire absence in him of the airs of "the great man." He was fully conscious of his powers, and vast influence; but he always made visitors feel at ease. When he confessed, "You know, I'm not the Reverend gentleman," you saw instinctively that he meant it. He could give you rare entertainment by the hour together, in conversing about preachers who belonged to "the gold-headed cane era," in which to encounter a minister was to involuntarily exclaim, as Mr. Spurgeon once remarked, "How dreadful is this place," but he would have disowned such an ancestry.

In a Christian sense, he acted as though he thoroughly believed in equality, so that humble Christians, in common with the more influential, had a warm place in his regard. Thus, when I called at Nightingale Lane on a certain summer Saturday afternoon, he was in a very cheerful mood, and mentioned two Christian coachmen, employed at houses in the neighbourhood,

picture he remarked, "If we could only grow in grace like that."

It was the general rule to reserve Saturday from callers; but to more privileged persons that was the day more especially set apart for their reception. I have often seen Mr. Spurgeon at home on Saturday afternoons in the midst of a circle of friends who knew that they might then call; and the talk with which he regaled us was surely never surpassed in quality at the Literary Club itself in Dr. Johnson's palmiest days. Our host's fund of general knowledge was vast; while his recollections of his own early days and adventures, as well as his reminiscences of eminent personages, appeared to be inexhaustible. His power of mimicry was also perfect; and an affecting anecdote at one time would be succeeded by something sufficiently comical to provoke roars of laughter. Byron said that Sydney Smith was the loudest wit he was ever deafened with; but I do not believe that even in this respect, the famous Dean of St. Paul's was equal to Spurgeon. His wit seemed to be not only spontaneous, it was always as kind as it was brilliant. Any everyday incident, or the mention of anything which struck him, would call it forth at a moment's notice.

There was a manifest desire to make everything redound to highest purposes; but at the same time, nothing could ever be allowed to encroach on the time set apart for preparation for the pulpit. When Mr. Gladstone, then Premier, invited the pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle to dine with him after attending one of the services, the invitation could not be accepted because it was for a Saturday evening. Otherwise, the meeting might have come off, and it would have been an high occasion indeed. The Saturday afternoon gatherings at Clapham or Norwood were thus never prolonged. Family prayer

succeeded tea, and after that the pastor would need to be alone in his study. What his general method was in regard to the preparation of his sermons, I seem to have a tolerably clear idea. Heart culture at the throne of grace, was no doubt chiefly kept in view. When the text was chosen, many writers or commentators might be referred to: the library available being in this respect very well chosen and full; but the rich stores of the preacher's own mind must have sufficed for the most ample illustration. Whatever he read, or whatever he saw, found its place in that great treasure-house; and being stored away in complete order, everything was ready to be brought forth at any time when it could be used with best effect. Hence, when in a great company of professors, ministers and students at the Pastor's College, Mr. Spurgeon held up the notes of one of his sermons on a piece of paper four inches square, anyone would have made a great mistake who supposed that he did not laboriously prepare his discourses. He worked in accordance with the methods best suited to



THE BOY PREACHER AND HIS DEACONS AT PARK STREET.
(From a Photograph.)

whom he had entertained in a summer-house until nearly ten o'clock in the evening. These worthies had come up from the country, where one had been a deacon, while both had been noticed and esteemed in a small way. In London, things were of course very different; for while religious privileges might be more abundant, they appeared, as it were, to be lost sight of in the crowd. Hence their satisfaction at being noticed and entertained by so eminent a man as Mr. Spurgeon was extraordinary. Elation of spirits had the effect of making them correspondingly garrulous, and they had almost all of the talk to themselves. "Did they not allow you to say anything, then?" I asked. "Well, sometimes they did," he replied, adding that he wished I had been there.

It was his custom to have a photograph of his two sons taken once a year. Beginning with early infancy, these were continued until the twins were of age, the twenty-one pictures being included in one frame which hung on the dining-room wall. When I was once looking at this

his genius. He probably never fully wrote out a sermon in his life; and in his own study he

time and talent to this service without any pecuniary remuneration; but though he had compensation of another kind, he seems to have always anticipated his annual address as President with some nervous misgiving.

When I heard him for the first time at the



STOCKWELL ORPHANAGE.

once confessed to me that he would rather be hanged than do such a thing.¹

His favourite institution was the Pastor's College, in the management of which, as well as in the pastorate of the church itself, he was for about a quarter of a century assisted by his brother, Mr. J. A. Spurgeon. Between eight and nine hundred men have already passed through the college, and a large proportion are now engaged in pastorates or in other kinds of Christian work in the four quarters of the world. In Spain, in Morocco, in Africa, and elsewhere; some of these have shown genuine daring enterprise; and nothing delighted the pastor more than to hear from their own lips, in a great meeting at the Tabernacle, of the successes of these evangelists.

It was at the annual conference in each successive spring, however, that Mr. Spurgeon appeared as the great leader whose unselfish ambition was to inspire the entire band of ministers with his own enthusiasm. All the year round he gave

Annual Conference, he was not forty years of age, and was, therefore, at the height of his power. With what force he exhorted the preachers to avoid all of the mere tricks of oratory; reminding them by the way that to be misty was not to be profound, and that empty wells always appeared to be deeper than such as were filled with good, clear water. Then, with what inimitable art he

brought forth illustrations, which no one could ever forget, for the enforcement of great truths. Take, for example, the preacher's duty in regard to the control of temper. As all possessed a



THE PASTOR'S COLLEGE.

¹ In the early days of his ministry we remember his saying to the late Dr. S. Manning, that if he could not "break" his text to his use in an hour, it would be all over with him.—ED. S. H.

brought forth illustrations, which no one could ever forget, for the enforcement of great truths. Take, for example, the preacher's duty in regard to the control of temper. As all possessed a

temper of some kind, it was not to become like a mere old shoe—too easy and of little worth: but if it ever chanced to boil over like an angry kettle, they should take care that no one was scalded save the devil. At that time the late venerable George Rogers—who died only a few months since, aged ninety-one—had recently celebrated his golden wedding, that fact naturally suggesting to Mr. Spurgeon that he should be introduced to one of the meetings as “this young fellow.” A complete volume of no small interest might be made up of reminiscences of the eighteen conferences I was privileged to attend, and at which this great man presided. Such a flow of wit and wisdom we may not expect ever to hear again. A large proportion of the time was always devoted to prayer; and to many the time was one of special blessing. It was then that Mr. Spurgeon always appeared to be at his best, and in his happiest mood. The meetings became larger year by year, and one wondered whereunto the thing might grow. Thoughts of this, at times, also crossed the late pastor’s mind. “They will get more and more,” he once remarked to me in the conference-room; and then added, “until I am gone, and then they will get less and less.”

For years, when health permitted, Mr. Spurgeon was accustomed to spend Christmas Day at the Stockwell Orphanage. The hilarious enjoyment of the hundreds of orphans seemed to afford him the rarest of pleasures. He would say a good word to the children; in the afternoon he would distribute Christmas gifts to the members of the staff, complimenting them on their efficiency and not forgetting to let them know how greatly he valued their services. These bygone Christmas Days that I was thus privileged to pass in Mr. Spurgeon’s company are now among the happiest memories of life. A quarto volume by himself given in 1874 and a table ornament in 1881, are now among my mementoes of those festive occasions. The Christmas Day, on which he dined at the Orphanage for the last time, was in 1884, and that was the only occasion on which Mrs. Spurgeon ever accompanied him. Ever after that he had to be content with sending a letter; but even a letter never failed to call forth the children’s loudest cheers. Very sincere mourners for their beloved president will be found among the orphan boys and girls of the Stockwell Institution.

Among the festivals which were chiefly enjoyed by Mr. Spurgeon himself, as well as by tutors of the college, students and friends, was the reunion of the entire college at the opening of each successive August. All were supposed to have returned from their summer outing; and the custom was for Mr. Spurgeon to accord the freshmen admitted some words of welcome and advice after which the day was given up to *al fresco* recreations. Cricket, bowls, or lying at ease on the greensward, &c., might be indulged in; but the day would begin and end with prayer, while at dinner, and after dinner, and after tea, some good addresses would be given. The place of meeting was not always the same. More than once we met at Broomfield, where the philan-

thropist Wilberforce had lived and entertained his friends; and the room was to be seen in which the late Bishop of Winchester was born. Mr. Spurgeon thoroughly enjoyed these occasions, and no doubt chiefly did so because they afforded him an opportunity of being useful to students.

When he was in the prime of his strength and ardour, no rarer earthly treat could be had than to accompany him on a long railway journey. What memories I have of excursions of this kind which I was privileged to take with him as a working journalist. I went with him to the Toller Centenary at Kettering at Michaelmas 1875, when he preached to an immense multitude in the open air. It was at Bristol, in 1877, however, that the eagerness to secure tickets for a service at Colston Hall exceeded anything of the kind I ever witnessed. Then one alone who has experienced it, can possibly realise the charm of visiting Silchester, the English Pompeii, in company with Mr. Spurgeon. He would also enjoy looking over any historical mansion. “The Queen’s rooms” at the Duke of Wellington’s seat at Strathfieldsaye, greatly interested him; but the obliging housekeeper who showed us over the place seemed to be quite unaware of the quality of her visitor. Referring to the aristocracy, it was here that I remarked to him, “Well, after all, these people are not so much better off as they appear to be than we are.” “Not a bit,” he replied; “they can’t eat any more, and they can’t wear any more clothes than we can.” Once, when visiting the ruins of Basing House, Basingstoke, his Puritan sympathies seemed to be awakened as he recalled to mind how Cromwell had reduced the place which no one else could take—“Storming like a fire-flood!”

He always seemed to have an exhaustible fund of anecdotes relating to his own adventures in preaching up and down the country. No man before ever received so vast a number of applications to preach; and once he explained to us how, as a preacher, he believed in the Statute of Limitations. He was once requested to fulfil an engagement to preach, which it was alleged he had made. At first, the fact of having ever made such an engagement was denied; but notwithstanding, the other side maintained its ground. “You said that when we got a new chapel you would preach for us, and now the building is up,” it was urged. Still, no promise of the kind could be remembered. Then it occurred to Mr. Spurgeon to ask, “How long was it ago?” “How long? Oh, twenty years!” “Twenty years!” exclaimed Mr. Spurgeon, much relieved. He then explained that such a promise was given under totally different circumstances from those under which they were then living. “I believe in the Statute of Limitations.”

I close this chapter of reminiscences, not through want of material, but through want of space. The Pastor is dead; but may we not pray that his influence still may deepen? He was always generous enough to confess that no man was ever surrounded with a more efficient band of helpers. Chief among them was his wife,

who, in the most comprehensive sense was "a help meet for him;" and his brother, Mr. J. A. Spurgeon, who as co-pastor did an immense deal to relieve the burden pressing upon the great preacher's shoulders. The most effective way of

showing affection for the memory of the departed is to stand by these friends, and to take care that institutions for which they are responsible are not allowed to suffer.

G. HOLDEN PIKE.

SAVED BY AN ALBATROSS.

SOME years ago there appeared in the SUNDAY AT HOME, the narrative of a sailor's life being saved by an albatross. The huge bird had attacked him when in the water, and he managed to seize its leg, and to hold on till relief came. The case was well attested, and any lingering incredulity may be removed by the following incident, lately related in the "New York Ledger."—"A vessel was ploughing through the waters of the South Atlantic when the cry of 'Man overboard!' was heard. The man at the wheel brought the ship up in the wind, and boats were lowered, but by the time this was accomplished the sailor was a quarter of a mile astern. He kept up, however, and as the boat approached a big albatross was seen to dart at him, and the next moment to struggle; then away went the bird, flapping violently, towing the sailor along at the surface. The men had to pull hard to gain upon it, and then it was found that the sailor was uninjured, and had been saved by the bird. He was almost exhausted when the albatross flew over him in evident curiosity, and as it passed he seized its feet. The bird, in its fear and terror, was strong enough to tow him along the surface at a rapid rate, though not able to lift him out of the water."

The great white albatross attains a prodigious size, the spread of the wings sometimes reaching fifteen feet from tip to tip. There are several species, but this is far the largest. It is sometimes called the "Wandering Albatross" (*Diomedea exulans* of Linnæus). Usually it is seen far out at sea, soaring in solitary state over the waves in the fiercest storms; but at other times they seem to be gregarious.

The colour of the bird varies chiefly according to its age. There is little distinction in the plumage of the sexes. Some have the wings above brownish black, with the abdomen white; in others the head is white, and the rest of the plumage brown. They all grow lighter in colour with age, the birds which have given the designation of the "White" albatross to the species, being the oldest. It is certainly the grandest and most notable living object in an ocean view. Power and gracefulness, without any appearance of effort, are displayed in all its movements. With much elegance it sails along, cleaving the air obliquely, slightly inclining from one side to the other; then rapidly descending till near the surface of the waves, which its huge pinions seem almost to touch. Then it soars aloft again, with equal boldness and facility of action, using

the wings as sails; and the changes are made with marvellous rapidity. Roaming incessantly over the wide seas, whether in calm or storm, the albatross may be said to live in the air, except during the season of incubation, when the land is sought. These birds never seem to know fatigue, their structure being wonderfully adapted to their habits and their necessities. In proportion to their size they have an enormous supply of air-cells, capable of voluntary inflation, whereby muscular power is economised, and they are enabled to sustain the long continued flights of their wandering life. The bony skeleton of a bird of twenty pounds weight, scarcely weighs two pounds, and the hollow bones freely communicate with the large air-cells in various parts of the body, contributing to diminish the specific gravity of the whole mass. This confined air is also preserved at a temperature far above that of the cooler surrounding atmosphere, thus rendering the body lighter than the apparent bulk would lead us to expect. Moreover, the dense and warm plumage is suited for the cold tempestuous latitudes which they chiefly frequent.

The food which they seem to prefer, is the squid or cuttle-fish, shoals of which they are observed to follow, with the pintados or Cape petrels acting as their jackals.

At Marion island, in the Southern Ocean, they nest in great numbers, their white shapes, dotting the plains and forming conspicuous objects. The nest is a low mound, a foot and a half at the least in diameter at the top. The base of the nest is concave, to prevent the egg rolling out of its place. The colour of the egg is white, a little larger than a goose egg, and of peculiar shape, being an elongated oval, nearly equally thick at both ends. Twin eggs are very rare. The female sits on the nest, the male standing beside her, both refusing to move when approached, simply snapping their bills together violently. The most remarkable feature is that often when a bird is taken from the nest no egg appears, and for a long time it seemed difficult to find one. The secret was that the albatross conceals its egg as if in a pouch, in its webbed feet, so that it can actually carry it. During the time of incubation the birds do not fly, being apparently helpless. The birds are affectionate lovers, the male being a self-appointed guardian, standing by the nest, spreading his tail and wings, throwing his head in the air, and all the time uttering a curious cry, to which the female responds.

Every one knows the superstitious fear generally