

reached his fifty-second year when a fall from his horse proved fatal to his already failing and faltering health. Yet how much was produced in that one short life is epitomised in the massive volumes of commentary that grace, and have graced, the shelves of generations of ministers and preachers, and the people of God everywhere. This *Exposition of the Whole Bible*, of course, was only a part of his literary work in things spiritual, but it overshadows everything else he wrote. 'And now', Mr Spurgeon seems to be saying as he takes a deep breath at the commencement of recommending expositions in his First Lecture in Commenting and Commentaries, 'First among the mighty for general usefulness . . . Matthew Henry.' Few would disagree with him. How often, when a passage has been exegeted in the study, expounded precisely to our minds, overlaid with all the science of hermeneutic and textual evidence, have we still lacked one thing needful - that clothing of the whole with warm flesh and blood - and have found it in the pages of Matthew Henry! And that is precisely what he intended his work to be. 'When the stone is rolled away from the well's mouth', he says, 'by a critical explication of the text, still there are those who would both drink themselves and water their flocks; but they complain that the well is deep and they have nothing to draw with; how then shall they come by this living water?' So, he explains, 'Some such may perhaps find a bucket here, or water drawn to their hands; and pleased enough shall I be with this office of the Gibeonites, to draw water for the congregation of the Lord out of these wells of salvation.' That office has been well discharged, as the testimony of generations of able men witness: Isaac Watts, Philip Doddridge, John Ryland, William Romaine, Adam Clark, Robert Hall, would all gladly take their stand on that. Robert Hall's biographer relates how that eminent pastor, 'for the last two years [of his life] read daily two chapters of Matthew Henry.' Whitefield read through the commentary four times, and often on his knees; while Spurgeon designates William Jay of Bath as 'Matthew Henry preaching.' 'The great Mr Henry', Whitefield called him, and all should want to add an Amen to that.

The last two years of Matthew Henry's life were spent in the pastorate of the Independent church at Hackney in London. To this he had moved in 1712 after much heart-searching and heart-rending in leaving the people at Chester. At Hackney he completed the fifth volume of the *Exposition - Gospels and Acts* - but died before he could complete the final part of the work. He had, of course, left much material in preparation for the last