

ART. II.—NEW TESTAMENT SAINTS NOT COMMEMORATED.—AQUILA AND PRISCILLA.

PART II.

WE have seen reason to infer, from St. Luke's account of their first meeting with St. Paul, that Aquila and Priscilla were not at that time converts to the faith of Christ. It was community, not of religion, but of race and occupation and circumstances, that first brought them together. Out of the common coincidences of human life, ordered to that very end by the never-failing providence of Almighty God, arose that higher relationship between them which we now proceed to consider.

Of St. Paul's inner life his historian, St. Luke, tells us very little. The fact that he was acquainted with and practised a trade is only once mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. And then both the fact itself and the nature of the trade are mentioned rather in explanation of the new and, as it proved, important acquaintance which he formed, than as items of information with reference to himself. How unselfish the aim, how unremitting the toil with which he plied that trade, we are left to learn from his own letters. Even there we are not told explicitly, what, however, in the fervency, the frequency, the range of his intercessory prayers, and in his widely extended sympathies, we find abundant reason to conclude, that his busy occupation did not, during the long hours devoted to it, engross his whole attention. That mechanical and unskilled labour taxed severely the physical energies of his attenuated frame. But it left his spirit free; free for high communion with his Lord in heaven; free for earnest prayers on behalf of churches and individuals; free as this history, if we have rightly interpreted it, teaches us, for wise and fruitful efforts for the conversion and salvation of his fellow-workmen. There was "joy in heaven" over that humble workshop in Corinth, and it stands forth as an example to all ages of the noble ends to which a servant of Christ may turn his common relations with his fellow-men.

We cannot doubt that for the eighteen months or more¹ of his stay at Corinth the Apostle continued to "abide" with Aquila and Priscilla. "The son of peace" was in that house, and therefore he would not leave it.² How truly they were "a comfort unto him"³ in all his "affliction and distress,"⁴ when

¹ Acts xviii. 11, 18.² Luke x. 5-7.³ Coloss. iv. 11.⁴ 1 Thess. iii. 7; compare 1 Cor. ii. 3.

the Jews "opposed and blasphemed" and "set on him;"¹ how oft they "refreshed"² him by their sympathy and encouragement, when he returned home weary with effort and contention; how soothing he found that ministry of woman, which his Lord, as very man, had accepted and honoured³—extended to him as it was by one, who if not, as some have thought, of noble birth,⁴ was yet, despite her mean occupation, of intelligent and cultured mind, we can readily imagine. Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that these, his "fellow-workers in Christ Jesus,"⁵ as he himself calls them, rendered him valuable assistance in making known the Gospel message, not only in Corinth itself, but in other towns and villages in the neighbourhood of the capital.⁶

When St. Paul left Corinth on a journey to Jerusalem, Aquila and Priscilla—or, as St. Luke now writes, Priscilla and Aquila—accompanied him as far as Ephesus.⁷ A busy mart, and the metropolis of Proconsular Asia, Ephesus would afford a promising opening for the exercise of their craft. Here, then, they appear to have remained, till, after the interval of a year or two, the Apostle came there again. The interval was marked by another signal, though, as before, unobtrusive

¹ Acts xviii. 6, 10; 12-17. Compare 1 Thess. ii. 14-16, written from Corinth about this time,

² 2 Tim. i. 16.

³ Luke viii. 2, 3.

⁴ Dean Plumptre, "Bible Studies," p. 422.

⁵ Rom. xvi. 3.

⁶ "As regards the province of Achaia, we have no reason to suppose that he confined his activity to its metropolis. The expression used by St. Luke (*ἐκείσε*, Acts xviii. 11) need only denote that it was his headquarters, or general place of residence. Communication was easy and frequent, by land or by water, with other parts of the province. Two short days' journey to the south were the Jews of Argos, who might be to those of Corinth what the Jews of Beroëa had been to those of Thessalonica. About the same distance to the east was the city of Athens, which had been imperfectly evangelized, and could be visited without danger. Within a walk of a few hours, along a road busy with traffic, was the seaport of Cenchrea, known to us as the residence of a Christian community (Rom. xvi. 1). These were the 'churches of God' (2 Thess. i. 4), among whom the Apostle boasted of the patience and faith of the Thessalonians, the homes of 'the saints in all Achaia' (2 Cor. i. 1), saluted at a later period, with the church of Corinth, in a letter written from Macedonia."—Conybeare and Howson, i. 482. "Paul, like Wesley, 'regarded all the world as his parish,' and it is little likely that his restless zeal would have made him stay for nearly two whole years within the city walls."—Farrar, "Life of St. Paul," i. 565.

⁷ Acts xviii. 18, 19. The same order of the names is observed in verse 26 (Revised Version), and by St. Paul in Rom. xvi. 3 (compare his order in 1 Cor. xvi. 9). The most probable reason for the change is, perhaps, the greater activity or higher Christian character of Priscilla. The idea that Aquila's name is placed last in Acts xviii. 18, because the clause "having shorn his head," etc., is intended to apply to him, and not to St. Paul, has nothing to commend it.

service rendered by them to the cause of the Gospel. It is clear that they maintained friendly relations with the synagogue at Ephesus. It is not improbable that here, too, they justified the title of St. Paul's "fellow-workers" by availing themselves of the spirit of interest and inquiry which his brief visit had awakened, and by endeavouring to build on the foundation which he had laid.¹ At all events, when Apollos—a Jew like themselves, and, like them, a convert to the faith of Christ, though as yet knowing only the imperfect teaching of the Baptist—came to Ephesus and "spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord," Aquila and Priscilla were among his hearers in the synagogue.² With no envy of his splendid gifts, with no contempt for his imperfect knowledge, in a spirit not of selfish criticism or jealous partisanship, they listened and resolved and acted. A brother's place in heart and home was opened to him instinctively. "They took him unto them"³ with all the cordiality of Christian affection. Recognising fully what he possessed already, they added to it what as yet he lacked. He knew "accurately" what he knew; they expounded unto him "more accurately" what he knew not.⁴ At Ephesus, as at Corinth, their lowly dwelling was a school of theology, though now, from humble scholars, they had become the teachers of no mean teacher. To the woman, it may be, owing to her larger sympathy and keener intelligence,⁵ he was most indebted. Cheered by their sympathy, enlightened by their instruction, supported by a letter of commendation, in which we may well believe they bore a leading part, he went forth to continue in the blaze of day the work in which they had filled an unrecorded place in Achaia.⁶ And they remained behind to fall back into obscurity again; but by "receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet," having earned for themselves "a prophet's reward."⁷

That St. Paul found Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus, when he returned there on his third missionary journey, is rendered more than probable by the salutation, hearty as we should expect it would be, which they sent in the letter which he wrote at that time from Ephesus to Corinth.⁸ When, however, a little later he wrote from Corinth his Epistle to the

¹ Acts xviii. 19-21.

² *Ibid.* verses 25, 26.

³ προσελάβοντο αὐτόν, Acts xviii. 26.

⁴ ἀκριβῶς, verse 25; ἀκριβέστερον, verse 26.

⁵ Which, as has been said, may account for her name being placed before her husband's.

⁶ Acts xviii. 27, 28.

⁷ Matthew x. 41.

⁸ 1 Cor. xvi. 19, ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς ἐν Κυρίῳ πολλά.

Romans, we find that they are no longer with him, but have gone back again to Rome.¹ That he then describes them as his "fellow-workers in Christ Jesus," has been thought to indicate their co-operation with him in his spiritual work throughout the exciting scenes at Ephesus recorded in the 19th chapter of the Acts. That here, too, he may have lodged and worked at his trade with them, as he did formerly at Corinth, is not improbable, for we have it on his own testimony that at Ephesus, as at Corinth, his own "hands ministered to his necessities, and to them that were with him."²

Once only again are Aquila and Priscilla mentioned in the New Testament. In his latest Epistle, on the eve of his "departure," St Paul sends, as the crown of his enduring friendship, a last salutation to them.³ As the Epistle was probably addressed to Timothy at Ephesus, it would seem that whether in the course of business, or, as we should prefer to think, in obedience to the call of the Gospel, they had gone thither again.

From the two brief notices of them in the Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians, we learn that both at Ephesus and at Rome they had a "church in their house." And from these, which are no isolated examples, we may confidently conclude, that as it pleased Almighty God at the first to make His own institution of the family the germ and type of the Church, so it is not by setting aside and disparaging, but by assimilating and sanctifying the sacred relations of the family that He will have His Church now to grow and prosper.

One remaining fact is preserved to us in the history of these devoted servants of God. On some occasion, which it seems impossible to identify, they had both put their lives in peril to rescue the Apostle. Better that they both should die, than that that burning and shining light should be quenched in blood. They were martyrs in will but not in deed; but for that heroic act of self-sacrifice, not the Apostle alone, but all the churches of the Gentiles, whose Apostle he was, owed them gratitude.⁵

The incident may serve to point the lesson which all we know of these uncommemorated Saints seems designed to teach us. It is a lesson which in an age so demonstrative and showy as our own needs especially to be pondered. "The first shall be last, and the last first." Quiet work, unobtrusive

¹ Rom. xvi. 3, 4.

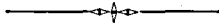
² Acts xx. 34; compare 1 Cor. iv. 11, 12. ³ 2 Tim. iv. 19.

⁴ See Acts xii. 12; xvi. 15, 32-34; Philemon 2.

⁵ Romans xvi. 4: "Et nos adhuc quodammodo gratias agere debemus Aquilæ et Priscillæ, vel olim agemus."—Bengel.

work, how precious it may be! To be "great in the kingdom of heaven," in position, in influence, in gifts, in opportunity—you covet it earnestly and murmur that it is beyond your reach. To make another great in the kingdom of heaven, by sympathy, by help, by instruction, by self-sacrifice, by imparting to him your little store that he may use it unacknowledged for the common Lord—is this not within the reach of all of us, and will it not bring its exceeding great reward? The crown to be given at that day, the day of "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God,"¹ is "a crown of righteousness."² All its glory is the reflected brightness of the "Sun of righteousness,"³ whose rays, like a perfect mirror, it receives and gives back. But in nothing shall its *righteousness* be more apparent than in the exact proportion of its brilliancy to the work of righteousness that has gained it. The cup of cold water shall not then lose its reward. "Each," however humble, "shall receive his own reward, according to his own," however uncommemorated, "work."

T. T. PEROWNE.



ART. III.—SUSSEX—NOTES OF SCENERY, ARCHÆOLOGY, AND HISTORY.

PART II.

IN a former paper I endeavoured to attract the reader's attention to the value of the associations connected with the scenery, the archæology, and the general history of Sussex. I now propose to add a few remarks on some of the great deeds which have been done, and some of the most remarkable events which have occurred, during the development of South-Saxon life.

There is an excellent adage which was addressed to the Spartans of old: "Spartam nactus es: hanc orna:"⁴ "Sparta is the lot of your inheritance; see that you adorn it." This is a good motto for anyone who tries to direct the thoughts of his readers to the claims of local history, and to the inspiring memories of local greatness. In this case I wish to remind the men of Sussex that they are not only citizens of Chichester or burgesses of Hastings, or Lewes, or Brighton; but that they are the present representatives of the old English race of the South-Saxons, and are bound to discharge their own task

¹ Romans ii. 5.

² 2 Tim. iv. 8.

³ Malachi iv. 2.

⁴ "Erasmii Adagiorum Epitome," p. 542, ed. 1663.