

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

they shudder at Sankey's hymns, and are suspicious of all enthusiasm. You may listen for a year to their preaching and never hear any appeal to sinners to be converted. There are many Protestant preachers who never preach evangelical sermons.

Let us combine the two methods as far as our own particular gifts enable us. There are times which require the law to be preached in all its terrifying sternness; other times need the Gospel with its winning sweetness. We must warn and win. In the history of every parish and of every individual soul there comes a time when there must be an awakening, a revival; but the soul cannot live and grow upon this. Quiet instruction must follow. Our Lord first awakened Jairus' little daughter by the summons to arise, and then He commanded that something should be given her to eat.

Some people see very clearly that Christians belong to an organized body with special ministers and rules. They recognise the corporate life and action of the Church almost to the exclusion of the individuality of the soul. Others see that each man must separately and individually make his peace with God, and are so impressed with their personal relation to God that they ignore the Body of Christ, called the Church, in which we are not only members of Christ, but also members one of another.

So I plead for more charity in our judgment of one who differs from us; for more humility in our estimation of ourselves, who differ so much from Christ; and for more wisdom, that we may not only hold fast the truth that we have gained, but also discover the truth which our brother sees.

S. BLACKETT.



ART. V.—THE SMACK AND DINGHY THEORY.

Περὶ πλοίων καὶ πλοιαρίων.

AN article of mine, pleading for a distinction of meaning between the words *πλοῖον* and *πλοιαρίον* in the Gospels, which appeared in the *CHURCHMAN* for last August, has evoked an unexpected criticism from the pen of the Rev. A. C. Jennings. His article on the "Boats of the Gospel Story" was published in the *CHURCHMAN* for last October. It has produced no substantial alteration of opinion on my part, but it lays me under the obligation of replying to his strictures, as well as of reviewing those three passages from the Gospels which are said to be subversive of the distinctions involved in the "smack and dinghy" theory. The whole

subject of the discussion turns upon the relative uses to which "smacks and dinghies" were practically put for performing fishing operations. If, on the one hand, they were used for the same particular purpose, then their identity is completely established; but if, on the other hand, the *dinghy* functioned as a *tender* to the *smack*, then they are two distinct words, and represent two materially separate substantive ideas. This article will endeavour to demonstrate, from the nature of the fishing methods described in the Gospels, that "smacks and dinghies" were used for distinctly different purposes, and therefore that they are several words, conveying two specific technical ideas, and that, moreover, they cannot be used interchangeably.

The Greek nouns, which my first article ventured to translate "smack" and "dinghy" respectively, may now be further explained as *parent-boat* and *attendant-boat*. This idea underlies the word "tender," which is there used to describe the latter. They both have a common root, πλέω or πίμπλημι. But there is a marked contrast between them. They stand to each other in the relationship of a noun and its diminutive. This connection involves notions of magnitude and use. If it be postulated that the larger boat and the lesser boat are equivalent in meaning (and therefore in size), then it may be replied that the greater equals the less, which, as Euclid tells us, is absurd. But if there is any distinction at all between them, then, indeed, with strict regard to language, as a vehicle for the perpetuation of ideas, one word cannot be substituted for the other or equated with it in meaning. The indigenous history and philosophy of human thought and the philology of language connects one mental conception with one substantive noun. It persists through the art of writing. When one root generates two words, though a generic unity connects them, yet a specific divergence differentiates them; nor is it always easy to discover the cause of the bifurcation of sense, though it is probably situated somewhere in the region of applied ideas. Πλοῖον is chronologically anterior to its diminutive πλοῖάριον; therefore the later noun supposes that some modification of design, size, or use should, in the process of time, have originated its introduction into the Greek language. As a possible explanation of its appearance there, it may be remembered that all trades and occupations have their technical phraseology, and that nautical terminology is more obscure than others. The force of diminutive words is more apparent and expressive in the Irish Gaelic than it is in English. A few examples will illustrate my meaning; but, as they are selected from the dialect spoken on the south-west seaboard of Ireland, all

responsibility for their orthography is repudiated on the ground that they may merely be local colloquialisms. The diminutive form of the Irish noun is made by suffixing the termination “-een” to the major stem. Thus “copal,” a horse, becomes “copaleen,” a pony; “bor,” a highroad, becomes “boreen,” a byway; the adjective “dhu,” black, becomes “dhudeen,” a little black thing; *i.e.*, a clay pipe blackened by the influence of tobacco.

The present writer, when recently visiting the westernmost parts of County Kerry, had occasion to find an Irish equivalent for “cigarette.” Remembering that the local Irish word for *smoke* was “gel,” he added the diminutive ending “-een” to that noun, the result being the formation of a new word, “geleen.” Its meaning was easily understood by the country people, and was so perspicuous that local retailers of these delicacies of civilization adopted it to procure a ready sale for an article that previously had been foreign to the tongue and taste of the native population. “Cigar” and “cigarette” are similar instances of a noun and its diminutive in English; perhaps when it becomes a dead language attempts will be made to show that they are interchangeable terms.

Nautical language is replete with technical expressions. Landsmen and sailors, though they possess but one vocabulary, attach different meanings to its words. We must therefore ascertain the precise shade of meaning implied by the evangelist's use of *πλοῖον*. Luke contrasts it with *πλοῖάριον* (adopting Tischendorf's reading) in chapter v. 2, 3; and with *σκάφη* in Acts xxvii. 16, 30; and with *ναῦς* in Acts xxvii. 41. We will firstly examine those passages in the Acts, and leave for future investigation those in the Gospels till they can be scrutinized and elucidated by the information meanwhile obtained. When narrating the circumstances of St. Paul's shipwreck, the third evangelist informs us that the Apostle of the Gentiles intended to sail to Italy in a ship of Adramyttium (*πλοῖω Ἀδραμυττηνῶ*). *Πλοῖον* is a merchant ship; *ναῦς*, a man-o'-war; *σκάφη*, a ship's cutter, in ordinary nautical language. These renderings are not pressed as being in every respect accurate translations of Greek ideas into modern thought, but they are only suggested as suitable terms for differentiating the notions contained by those words respectively. In Acts xxvii. 41 the *πλοῖον* of ver. 2 is described as *τὴν ναῦν*. It is not contended that the two words are used indifferently or that one mental conception is common to them both, for they spring from two distinct root ideas. Nor is it likely that two separate vessels were intended by the author. In what sense, then, could the “ship of Adramyttium” be called a “man-o'-war”?

There was a practice prevalent in the early days of the Roman Empire that has persisted till the present time of merchant ships being chartered by the Government authorities for use as military transport ships. When thus temporarily transferred from one service to another they are reckoned, as far as international law and accuracy of designation are concerned, as, for all practical purposes, "men-o'-war." Thus, the merchant ship (*πλοῖον*) that conveyed Paul and his party and Julius and his soldiers was accurately described as a military transport (*ναῦς*). Nor is any confusion of narrative introduced by the change of nomenclature for one and the same vessel. The relative magnitude of the ship in question is partly surmised by the fact that it carried a complement of 276 persons—passengers and crew—together with a cargo of wheat. It was also able to hoist its *σκάφη*, or ship's cutter. There is, however, no record in the Gospels that the Galilean fishing *πλοῖα* hoisted their attendant *πλοιάρια*, as has been attributed to the "smack and dinghy" theory.

Reflections on the *πλοῖα* of the Acts, together with some misapprehension on the relative functions of smacks and dinghies, seem to have inspired the inflated conceptions of the Galilean fishing craft that the "Boats of the Gospel Story" describes. Serious thoughts, however, soon dissipate the expressed exaggerated notions desiderated in that article. The following quotation from it, if uncorrected, might leave a lasting misrepresentation of what the "smack and dinghy" theory pleads for: "We are presented with a picture of the Apostles plying 'fishing smacks' large enough to be served by (and therefore to carry) dinghies." The premise is true, but the deduction—the clause within brackets—is an unwarranted inference, and raises false issues. This slight correction will render the superstructure based on a hypothetical foundation innocuous to my contention. The *πλοῖον* on the Lake of Galilee could only carry some twelve or fourteen persons, and was liable to sink under an exceptionally large haul or freight of fish. The establishment of a specific difference between "smack" and "dinghy" does not suggest that "the Apostles' fishing operations were on a scale of magnificence," because it affirms nothing as to the size of either. A "dinghy" was designedly defined as a "tender" to a smack. A gunboat in the royal navy is called a "tender" to her parent ship with which she is associated, but this does not warrant our assuming that she is hoisted and carried by the larger vessel. No conjecture was contained in my former article of the comparative size of, or any contrast between, a *σκάφη* and a *πλοιάριον*. These two words describe two distinct classes of boats. When this practice of classification

is applied to the boats of the Gospel story the two words used by the evangelists will fall into their relative positions as regards magnitude and use. But if we only look at dead words apart from the living ideas that underlie and inform them, we shall be apt to attach merely an academic significance to them. The Gospel *πλοῖον* was properly a merchant ship to the Galilean fishermen. It carried one or more nets, according to the needs of the day's fishing, and it was associated in its operations with a "dinghy" as a *tender*.

A short digression explanatory of the description of nets used in fishing operations will materially assist in demonstrating the use which the *tender dinghy* would be made of relative to the *smack*. Three words for net are found in the Gospels, but the most frequent term is *δίκτυον*. It is connected with the verb *δικεῖν*, of which there are only a few tenses in use. It is also germane to the Latin root "*jac*," and means *to throw*. Thus the *δίκτυον* seems to have been what fishermen now technically call a *striking-net*. It is thrown into the current and is carried down with it. Fish push up against the current, and entangle themselves by their gills in the netting that obstructs their progress. They become prisoners in its meshes, and, being carried down with the current, they are drowned. The net is kept in a vertical position in the water by means of weights attached to the line that runs along its lower selvage, as well as by buoys fastened to the one that sustains the upper selvage. A net used for inshore fisheries must fish both top and bottom if it is to kill fish. When a fish strikes a net it instantly seeks some means of escape, round fish by getting over the floating line, and flat ones underneath the sinking line. Striking-nets are kept extended longitudinally by having one end attached to a large floating buoy and the other made fast to the smack. Thus net and smack drift together with the current: hence in some districts these nets are called "drift-nets." But there is an alternative mode of using a striking-net. One end of it is made fast to an anchor, which is put in shallow water; the smack then pays out her net, and stations herself at the other end. While the net is thus fixed, a dinghy is rowed about above it and "plunges" with oars, which action is supposed to have the effect of frightening the fish into the concave side of the net. When this process is deemed to be completed, the smack and dinghy pick up both ends of the net simultaneously. But practically fishermen find one net too short to take any considerable amount of fish, and one continuous sheet of netting of sufficient length would be too cumbersome and unwieldy to work. They therefore resort to the expedient of having a number of lengths of net, which are temporarily

joined together when fishing, and separated as soon as they are cleared of fish; hence the contrast in the Gospels between τὸ δίκτυον and τὰ δίκτυα. Ranks of nets of this device are sometimes nearly a mile in length, either worked as drift-nets or as fixed engines. When the former course is adopted, it is necessary that some smaller boat of shallow draft of water should co-operate with the smack. Nets often fasten themselves on some submerged projection, and unless they can be speedily liberated, their sweep (or curved form) is destroyed and the draught spoilt. It would be impossible for the smack which keeps the chain of nets at the required tension to proceed to the spot where the fastening occurred, so a dinghy is used as a tender. There are also indications that it drew less water than the smack, because from John vi. 22 it was apparently used for embarking into the smack, and in John xxi. 8 for disembarking from it. The idea of a fishing smack towing her dinghy, or carrying it on board amongst all her nets, could not possibly occur to anyone who had any practical experience of working one. A smack could not simultaneously tow a dinghy and shoot a net. To sum up what has been already said on the classification of ships and boats, to note the comparative sizes of those mentioned in the New Testament, to reflect on the special purposes for which they were used, to especially consider the relative functions between smacks and dinghies (whether on the Lake of Galilee or elsewhere) while engaged in working drift or striking nets, and to apply the aggregate of the evidence now adduced and arrayed to those three passages of the Gospels which are supposed to be subversive of the "smack and dinghy theory," will be the object in view of the remainder of this present article.

I. *Luke v. 1-11.*—This paragraph records the first miraculous draught of fishes. There is a *varia lectio* in ver. 2 between δύο πλοία and δύο πλοῖα. Tischendorf receives the latter reading into his text, while Westcott and Hort retain the former. It would far exceed the limits of the present article to discuss the respective claims of these two readings, and to estimate the reasons why these learned editors should be at issue on the point. Tischendorf's text has been accepted as the working basis of the theory, as well as of the objections that have been made against it. It has been contended that if πλοῖα be the preferential reading in ver. 2, then its meaning must be identical with ἐν τῶν πλοίων in ver. 3. This contention is grounded upon the supposition that if St. Luke really meant to convey the notion of "dinghies" in ver. 2, he has been guilty of an unprecedented instance of a want of perspicuity and confusion of sense.

The real meaning of the sentence depends upon the word admitted into the text. The imaginary confusion is commensurate with the mental attitude, preconceptions, and amount of information on fishery matters that the individual reader brings to bear on the evangelist's narrative. If, on the one hand, the passage now under review is simply regarded with a view to elegance of diction, then the two words in the Greek may be rendered by one in the English; but if, on the other hand, microscopic accuracy of language and technical detail of expression were the objects of the third evangelist, then on this occasion also he has manifested himself to be an historian of the first order. If it is, moreover, clear, from considering those other passages in the New Testament where *πλοῖον* and *πλοιάριον* are in juxtaposition and contrast, that each class of boat had its own several and particular use, then it is probable (not to say certain) that in this passage also the same technical distinctiveness of meaning also prevails. There is admittedly not sufficient evidence in the third Gospel, considered apart from the other three, to confirm and establish the particular contrast and difference of meaning that is advocated by the "smack and dinghy theory"; but the care that St. Luke has shown in collecting the materials for his works leads us to suppose that he would not be at issue with the other evangelists. Assuming, then, for the purpose of the present stage of the inquiry, that the distinction in meaning between *πλοῖον* and *πλοιάριον* may be proved from those other passages in the Gospels where those words are contrasted, and using Tischendorf's text as a basis, we will endeavour to detect the supposed confusion involved by this contradistinction.

To advert to the detail of the Gospel narrative. When the Lord was standing on the shore of the Lake of Galilee, the first and nearest objects that would arrest his attention would be the "dinghies." They would be nearer to the land than the "smacks," or larger vessels. The fishermen had left them to wash their nets. The nets were sometimes landed in the "dinghies," as we learn from John xxi. 8. The dinghies on the occasion of the first miraculous draught of fishes might have been thus used, and the fishermen may have cleared the nets on the shore, as they did in the second similar draught of fishes. Luke's diction is quite free from any confusion if the respective functions of smacks and dinghies be remembered and associated with the exigencies incidental to the use of a striking-net. If any anterior uncertainty as to technical methods of working fishing boats and nets resides in a reader's mind when approaching the Gospel narrative, then that uncertainty is read into the passage, and its meaning becomes confused to his apprehension. My attention has been called to the use of

ἕτερος. In Luke xxiii. that pronoun is contrasted with and refers to the noun *κακοῦργοι* and *κακούργων* in vers. 32, 39, and 40 respectively. In Luke v. it is contended that it refers to *πλοιάρια*, *πλοίων*, *πλοίων* in vers. 2, 3, and 7 respectively. There is an imparity of grammatical construction in these two passages. In Luke v. the pronoun is said to serve as a "catena" or "vinculum" between the nouns *πλοιάριον* and *πλοῖον*. Far be it from me to say that this use is without precedent in Luke's writings, but no similar instance presents itself to my mind at the moment. But even granting all that may be argued from a synthetical figure, the figure is subordinate to the mental conceptions of the words with which it deals. It is a vehicle of expression rather than a definition of terms. The relevancy of the mention of dinghies in ver. 2 depends (apart from questions of textual criticism and pronominal constructions) upon the technical uses to which the smaller boats were put. It may also be further remarked that some small degree of light is thrown upon the subject by contrasting the uses of *καὶ* and *δέ* in the section under consideration. The former is a copulative particle used for joining words and sentences; it never really has an adversative force. The latter is used to call attention to the fact that the word or clause with which it stands is to be *distinguished* from something preceding, and usually having an opposing or adversative force. It frequently is used to pass from one thing to another, when it may be rendered *and further*. These considerations, derived from reliable sources, led me to paraphrase Luke v. 3: "He next observed some smacks." Objection is taken to this exposition on the ground that it introduces a chasm that needs to be bridged over. This chasm vanishes, however, when the distinction between the particles is observed. As my former article suggested nothing respecting the relative sizes of "smacks and dinghies," the criticism that the Apostles' fishing operations were conducted on a scale of magnificence is devoid of meaning. The introductory remarks to this article are intended to remove any erroneous impressions that may remain. The fact that an exceptionally large haul of fish was capable of disturbing the floating conditions of a Galilean fishing smack has not much bearing on the case, because we are not told what the gross bulk of the freight was, other than that it was of miraculous magnitude. The expression "began to sink" need not mean more than that the boats in question were heavily laden, and consequently were lower in the water. The loading of ships depends upon a law of nature, which has remained unaltered and unalterable from St. Luke's time till now. If a single haul of fish had any perceptible effect on a

Galilean fishing smack, it goes to prove my conjecture that this class of boats would not contain more than about fourteen persons, and some of these would probably be in substitution of the ballast the smack would usually carry. Matters of nautical detail, and of circumstances springing therefrom, seem to have been overlooked in "Boats of the Gospel Story." That article affords the *prima facie* impression that it regards boats from a landsman's point of view.

II. *John vi. 15-24.*—This passage may be divided into two sections: (a) The journey of the disciples from Bethsaida Julias to Capernaum in vers. 15 to 21, with which we have the parallels Matt. xiv. 22-33, Mark vi. 45-52; and (b) the observation of the miraculously-fed multitudes near the former place and their journey to Capernaum in quest of the Lord. In the first section (a) there are no variant readings of any importance in the passages recording the event. We discover from them, coupled with others, that the Lord seems generally to have employed a *πλοῖον* when crossing the Lake of Galilee, possibly because it was less affected by weather and afforded better accommodation for Himself and His party. These passages have further interest in that they afford instances of the use of a "smack" and a "dinghy" on one and the same occasion. The voyage in question was performed in a *πλοῖον*. The course steered was in a westerly direction. A storm arose, blowing from the west. During the time it was prevailing—before 6 a.m.—the Lord walked on the water and abated it. On the morrow (*i.e.*, after 6 a.m.) the multitudes left at Bethsaida Julias observed that there was no other "dinghy" there except the one that the disciples got into. Here we are introduced to a "smack" and a "dinghy" in association. The former had gone away the previous night to Capernaum; the latter was left behind at Bethsaida Julias, possibly because it was owned by some resident there. On this occasion there is no suggestion of the *smack* carrying its dinghy, or of towing it either, for this latter course would have greatly impeded its progress, a circumstance which would not be uppermost in the mind of a critic who was not familiar with practical navigation and seamanship. (b) We now come to examine *John vi. 22-24*. Here we have no parallel in the synoptists. Their evidence, from the accounts they give of the events under the preceding section (a), establishes the fact that when the disciples were leaving Bethsaida Julias there were two boats there—viz., the dinghy they left behind and the smack they went away in. We are further informed that they entered into the dinghy. We can but reasonably conclude that they did so to embark into the smack. If "smack" and "dinghy" are interchangeable terms, the result of the passage

would be that they got into a vessel and then got into another similar one. Fishermen are not in the habit of making these venial mistakes, but they are in the habit of borrowing the first dinghy that comes to hand to ferry themselves to their own smack, and leaving the dinghy at the place where they borrowed it from. This passage is one of those vivid touches of real life and everyday experience that would convince a fisherman that the fourth Gospel was written by a fisherman. St. John, then, in this section illustrates one of the purposes for which a dinghy was employed, and also differentiates its use from that of the smack. It matters not to my contention whether the people who arrived from Tiberias came in dinghies or smacks, as we have no means of making a comparison between them in this section of the narrative, and comparison is the basis of opinion. It may be noted, however, that the westerly head wind that impeded the progress of the Apostles' *smack* would assist the craft that came from Tiberias. It is not a remote thought to apprehend that a practical boatman like the fourth evangelist would probably be moved by considerations other than those of elegance of diction in selecting words to express his ideas. While indicating one of the uses to which the dinghy was applied, he has not told us that the smack was ever similarly employed. The circumstance that the multitudes were conveyed in dinghies from Bethsaida Julias to Capernaum affirms nothing as to their dimensions, nor does the distance traversed by these smaller boats afford any information as to their seaworthiness.

My remarks on the identification of the site of Bethsaida Julias have called forth a reference to the late Dean Farrar's "Commentary on St. Luke's Gospel." That book was known to me when writing. But as the topographical history of Palestine is an extensive subject, of which my knowledge is only superficial, dictates of prudence restrained me from committing myself to any positive statement. Archæological discoveries are sometimes misled by an enthusiasm which confuses probable evidence with direct proof.

III. *John xxi.* 1-11.—These verses give an account of the second miraculous draught of fishes. Here, again, we have a picture of a "smack and dinghy" in association on the same occasion. Seven of the Apostles, including the narrator of the events, were returning from a night of unsuccessful fishing. The "smack" seems, from his account, to have been nearing the place where she had left her "dinghy." A stranger hailed them from the beach just as the day was breaking, and St. John recognised His sacred personality. St. Peter instantly waded ashore out of the "smack," a

distance of about one hundred yards. Sunrise is often the coldest part of the day, so the impetuous Apostle girt his fisher's coat about him; *i.e.*, he kept it out of the water while wading. The *ἐπενδύτης* was a linen blouse or overall, worn, probably, to preserve the underclothing from contact with the wet net and the slimy fish. The remaining six Apostles seem to have brought their "smack" alongside the "dinghy." From the combination of these circumstances we may conjecture that the "smack" would draw about three feet of water, while the "dinghy" was easily beached; in fact, it might have been almost flat-bottomed. St. Peter would not be reluctant to wade, because the temperature of the water at sunrise is often much higher than that of the surrounding atmosphere. On one occasion with a thermometer I registered in the water ten degrees of heat in excess of the air. While St. Peter was wading the others came ashore in the dinghy towing the net. They would have anchored the smack, and not allowed it to have gone adrift, as has been suggested. There is no need to suppose any transfer of the fish from the smack's decks to the dinghy's bottom, because the net was not cleared till it was on the beach, and after some conversation had intervened between the risen Redeemer and His Apostles. The boat-line of the net could easily be transferred from the smack to the dinghy. St. Peter himself drew it up on to the beach and removed 156 large fish from it. This circumstance convinces me that it was a drift-net, in which the fish were caught by their gills, otherwise they would have escaped as soon as the tension of drawing had been removed. The possibility of its being a *σαγήνη*, or draught-net, is similarly excluded; and, moreover, upon that supposition it would have been cleared of fish necessarily on the beach, and there would have been no occasion for St. John to have specified its being specially taken there. Striking-nets are usually cleared into a boat, and draught-nets, or seines, on the beach.

When sufficient reasons are adduced for the need of the association of two boats (*πλοῖον* and *πλοιάριον*, a larger boat and a lesser boat) for duly conducting fishing operations, the phantom difficulties suggested in the "Boats of the Gospel Story" disappear. The statement that "such insignificant verbal variations are characteristic of this Apostle's (St. John's) writings" is merely an assumption based on the hypothesis that they are insignificant. The "smack and dinghy" theory attaches a specific meaning and purpose to each word. If the *ipsissima verba* of the New Testament, and the indigenous notions they convey, are to be evaporated whenever a point of technical acumen is needed to explain them, then that

volume would cease to be an actual record of facts. If a desire "to secure euphony and avoid tautology" be dominant with the sacred writers, then their writings have little more than a vague and semi-poetic signification. Matters of elegance of diction are subordinate to those of accuracy of expression. Questions of "subtle euphonic influence" and of conjectured indifference of meaning are out of place amongst technical nautical terms. The work of a generation of textual critics and learned editors is dissipated by such theories. The especial work of the Reformation in the department of theology was the recovery of long-buried and long-forgotten Greek. Previously tradition, supplemented by a Latin version, was the only means available for ascertaining the actual events that took place during the Lord's earthly life and ministry. Considering all that that movement accomplished, my readers will probably acquit me of any hostile intentions when I contend for something more than mere elegance of style and euphony of diction when writing about the records which the sacred writers have bequeathed to us. The faith of future generations is founded on facts, not fancies. Possibly no question of immediate vital importance is involved *per se* in the "smack and dinghy" theory; but it does entail as an ultimate consequence the technical accuracy of the evangelists, which places them upon a higher platform than those writers who merely make literary perfection the leading feature of their work. The four Gospels are unique. They present the unilateral impressions that inspired their authors respecting the Lord's life and person. The evangelists wrote regardless of human criticism, because their mental vision was concentrated on truth and heaven.

J. E. GREEN.



ART. VI.—STUDIES ON ISAIAH.—II.

HISTORICAL SURVEY.

THE writings of a prophet such as Isaiah, with their wide historical and political allusions, will be but ill understood by the reader, and especially by one who desires to make their contents intelligible to others, without some idea of the condition of the world at the time at which they were written. We may defer the consideration of the state of the less imposing nationalities, such as Syria and Moab, until we come to the chapters in which reference is made to them. But the drift of whole chapters will be imperfectly apprehended unless we have some idea of the position of the great