

are men of force, we rise to the occasion; we redouble our endeavours to subdue the evil that is in us, and to foster the good; we give ourselves with new zeal to the service of Christ, and of that world which He has redeemed: for a little while duty grows easy to us, self-sacrifice at least possible, and we are absorbed in our resolve to live a truly Christian life.

Alas, it is but for a little while! Our goodness is like the morning dew, which soon passeth away. But, thank God, like the dew, if it soon pass, it also leaves a blessing behind it, and helps to make our character purer, stronger, and more fruitful toward God than it was before. S. COX.

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*STYLE AND CHARACTER OF ST. PETER.*

IT has been suggested in a previous article<sup>1</sup> that the Gospel of St. Mark was written by one who drew his information from an eye-witness of the events which he records, and that this eye-witness was, in all probability, the Apostle St. Peter. If this be so, there ought to be found in other parts of the New Testament, where that Apostle appears as a principal actor, peculiarities of style similar to those we have noticed in the Second Gospel. The sentences recorded by the other Evangelists as the utterances of St. Peter are too brief to supply us with any material for such an inquiry. They have their own value in helping us to determine the character of the man, and to judge what form any teaching which he gave would be likely to assume, and they will receive

<sup>1</sup> THE EXPOSITOR, vol. ii. pp. 269-284 (October 1875).

notice hereafter. But in the Acts of the Apostles some incidents are recorded in which St. Peter was the principal, in some the sole, apostolic actor, and the narrative of which must, certainly in most of the cases, have been derived, in the first instance, from the Apostle's own lips. Here, then, we have an exact reproduction of the circumstances under which it is suggested that St. Mark wrote. Are the same characteristics of style to be found in these narratives as have been noticed in the Gospel?

Let us look first at the account (Acts iii.) of the cure of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. It is true that St. John was the companion of St. Peter on this occasion, and that the narrative might have been derived from him; but the beloved Disciple plays a part so subordinate in the scene, and is so little noticed by the historian, that we feel no doubt it is to St. Peter's more prompt tongue we are indebted for the form which the record assumes. And in the first sentence of it we find a note of the time of the miracle, exactly in accordance with the practice in St. Mark: "Peter and John went up together into the temple *at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.*" In the next verse the expression, "he was carried," is quite in the pictorial style of the Gospel (and even more graphic than the English is the Greek *ἐβαστάζετο*), making a scene in a single word, and is succeeded by a most animated description: "Whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms." Who-

ever gave these details of the event was one on whom outward circumstances and surroundings made a deep impression, and who could reproduce with vivid language every particular which he was so quick to notice. The whole description is teeming with life. And as we proceed the picture becomes even more vigorous. We have first, again quite in the manner of St. Mark's Gospel, the very words of St. Peter's two short speeches to the cripple, and then comes the picture-like description of the miracle: "He took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: and they knew that it was he which sat for alms." The narrator of this scene was one who made a mental photograph of all the attendant circumstances, and has been able to give to the historian a most life-like account of it. Some of the phraseology is much like what we have noticed in St. Mark. Compare *πιάσας αὐτὸν τῆς δεξιᾶς χειρὸς* of this narrative with such an expression as *οὐκ εἶμι ἱκανὸς κύψας λῦσαι τὸν ἱμαντα* (Mark i. 7), and we see that in *πιάσας*, as in *κύψας*, the graphic element of the story is greatly resident in a single expression. We may notice too the word *immediately*. St. Mark's Gospel abounds with that word, and though the Greek equivalent here is *παραχρήμα*, and not the *εὐθέως* and *εὐθύς*, so common in the Gospel, yet the employment of any word with this sense as a mark of time is a peculiarity of style which deserves attention, for it is very Petrine. It

occurs in the account of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v. 10): "She fell down straightway" (*παραχρῆμα*) "at his feet, and yielded up the ghost." Also in the narrative of the raising of Æneas (Acts ix. 34), where the first story must have come from the lips of St. Peter: "And he arose immediately" (*εὐθέως*) Again, in Chap xi. 11, where St. Peter is describing his vision before the Apostles and brethren in Judea: "And, behold, *immediately*" (*ἐξαυτῆς*), says he, "there were three men already come unto the house." And, once more, in Chap. xii. 10, the account of his delivery out of prison: "And forthwith" (*εὐθέως*) "the angel departed from him." This trick of language, slight though it be, is just one of those trifles which indicate, more powerfully than almost anything else could do, the close connection between the source of the narratives in the Acts and the writer of the Gospel of St. Mark. Nor is the variation of the word in the Greek a point which can at all disturb the force of the comparison: The vivid style is conveyed by each word alike, and in the mouth of a reporter they would be readily interchanged; while it is to be noted that in St. Mark one of these variants (*ἐξαυτῆς*) occurs (Chap. vi. 25) in the account of the death of John the Baptist.

Now we can easily see how much the form which this history of the miracle at the Temple gate assumes has been influenced by the character of St. Luke's informant, if we compare the notice thereof with that of another miracle of the same nature which he also records in the Acts, but of which he must have been informed by a very different narrator. When St. Paul visited Lystra (Acts xiv.) he restored a cripple afflicted in exactly the same way as was he that sat

at the Beautiful Gate. If St. Luke's informant had been the same in each case, or the composition of both accounts had been entirely his own, there was as much to call for graphic description in the one set of circumstances as in the other. But see how differently this narrative runs: "And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: the same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked." The particulars of the affliction and the cure are almost exactly the same, but how widely diverse is the way in which they are put before the reader! St. Peter's miracle is set forth with all its surroundings, so that we can call it up before our own minds as we are reading, while that of St. Paul is confined to the merest necessary detail. It is true that in the latter case there ensued a great excitement among the people of Lystra in consequence of the miracle, for they took the Apostles for Divine beings, and made preparations to offer a sacrifice unto them. But all this must have been only after the lapse of a considerable time. Oxen and garlands were not provided in a moment; and this part of the story can in no way be regarded as a feature in the description of the miracle of healing which concludes with the end of the quotation we have just made. And we see at once when the two accounts are put side by side how much the one narrator differed from the other in the power of graphic description.

There is, beside, very interesting artistic evidence of this. Raphael has made each of these miracles the subject of one of his famous cartoons. But in the case of the miracle at Lystra he has chosen for his picture not any point of time at which the miracle was wrought, but has selected the after-events of the intended sacrifice and the apostolic remonstrance, because in the actual account of the cure there were no details on which to exercise his pencil. But the earlier description of St. Peter's miracle has supplied him with all his materials. He has found an artist in the narrator, and has there made all the interest to centre on the moment when the cure was performed. So graphic is the entire story of what took place at the Beautiful Gate that there was nothing left for his imagination to elaborate.

Of a like character is the account given us (Acts ix. 36) of the raising of Dorcas. Here the description of what took place must have come, in the first instance, from the lips of St. Peter. And we need only read the story to see that we have in it all such circumstantial adjuncts as we should have expected the writer of St. Mark's Gospel to supply: "When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive." This account is the language

of a man most diligent in the use of his eyes, and who was able to store up and reproduce with much faithfulness the particulars of all he saw. And it is to be noticed how, artist-like, he makes the interest in all he narrates centre round a single point. He takes in no distant or unconnected details, but all that goes to make up the scene close around his eye sees and his mind registers with entire completeness.

For comparison we can again put the account of the raising of Dorcas side by side with the restoration to life of Eutychus (Acts xx.) at Troas, and we shall find exactly the same differences as before: "And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him." Here, in the midst of a Christian congregation, an accident happens of a most startling and appalling kind. There can hardly be a doubt that the dead man had many who were interested in him among the audience; nay, the very words of the Apostle shew that the accident was a source of trouble to the brethren; nor can we suppose that, on the part of the Apostle, there was lacking that earnest prayer to God for the restoration of the lost life which forms so touching a feature of the narrative of St. Peter's miracle. Yet of all this we have not a word, and the description is almost painful in its baldness and lack of warmth. There was a vast difference between the mental crucibles through

which these scenes severally passed, but the former has its counterpart in many a passage of St. Mark's Gospel,

Once more, in the account of St. Peter's vision, which must of course have been derived primarily from his own description, the wealth of detail is most striking. And still more remarkable are these features of St. Peter's style if we consider that they may not have come to St. Luke at first-hand. Yet, in spite of that, there was so marked a character impressed on the story at first that even passing from mouth to mouth has not been able to obliterate it. The precise and dramatic introduction forming the account of Cornelius is exactly in the manner of St. Mark's Gospel. Cornelius and his office and character are precisely described; the time carefully noticed at which the vision appeared to him; the interlocutions of the angel and the centurion recorded as a direct conversation. But it is when we come to the vision which was sent to the Apostle that his graphic characteristics are most shewn (Acts x. 9-16): "On the morrow, as they [the messengers of Cornelius] went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the house-top to pray about the *sixth hour*: and he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.



But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice; and the vessel was received up again into heaven." Here, all in one passage, we find such notes of time as those to which we have already alluded, dramatic casting of the narrative, and most picturesque description of the whole occurrence. And it is worth while to notice that the Apostle uses the word *ἄθόνη* for a sheet, a word which is often applied to loose bellying sails of ships, and it is most likely from his employment of this word that the form of vessel which appeared to him in his vision recalled an image most familiar to his previous life,—the wind-stretched canvas of the craft on the Lake of Galilee. Now compare this narrative with all that we gather, and it is no little, from the three accounts of St. Paul's vision on his way to Damascus (Acts ix. xxii. and xxvii.), and we shall once more be obliged to own that St. Peter's power of description was peculiarly his own.

We will take but one more of these examples, and that because we have a companion picture to place by its side. Compare the account of St. Peter's deliverance out of prison at Jerusalem with that of St. Paul at Philippi. In the latter (Acts xvi. 24-30) there is more fulness of description than is usual where St. Paul is concerned. The fettered prisoners, the midnight singing, the earthquake, followed by a general loosing of the fetters, the agony and terror of the gaoler, Paul's consolation of him, and his conversion, form abundant details; but we

see at once that but few of them are of the pictorial character which would be sure to be seen in everything that St. Peter narrated. For read the story of his deliverance, and you see it all in action (Acts xii.): "Now *about that time* Herod the King . . . proceeded further to take Peter also. . . . Peter, therefore, was kept in prison: . . . and when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and . . . when they were passed the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of its own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him." Here, likewise, the first narration must have been St. Peter's own, given that night in "the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark," and whose Gospel abounds with descriptions which bear the closest resemblance in style and character to those which must, in the first instance, have been told by St. Peter's own mouth, and which would be most likely, from the vigour which he infused into all that he said, to preserve their first form, in the main, till they were committed to writing.

Space forbids us to go further into detail, but we may briefly observe that it is like the writer of the Second Gospel to say, "These are not drunken, seeing it is but the *third hour of the day*" (Acts ii. 15); to tell us that "the disciples were put in hold *unto the next day, for it was now eventide*" (Acts vi. 3); to record (Chap. iv. 22) that "the man was *about forty years old* on whom this miracle of healing was shewed;" to mention (Chap. v. 7) that "it was *about the space of three hours after*" the death of Ananias that Sapphira came in; and to notice (Chap. ix. 33) that Æneas "had kept his bed *eight years*;" and to inform us (Chap. ix. 43) that *Peter* "*tarried many days* in Joppa with one Simon a tanner;" and that when the messengers of Cornelius came (Chap. x. 23) for him, he lodged them and "went away with them *on the morrow*," and "*the morrow after* they entered into Cæsarea."

In St. Mark's Gospel, narrations, where they can be so cast, are made dramatic by the introduction of the actual speakers, and by giving their direct remarks dialogue-wise. This is exactly what is done in the Acts in the account of the death of Ananias, in the history of the visit to Cornelius, in the delivery of Peter out of prison, and, notably, in the scene at the house of Mary while Peter was knocking for admission. Most of these must be St. Peter's own descriptions; probably all of them are so.

Once more, it exactly accords with such precise details as are given in St. Mark's Gospel to be told that Peter was delivered to *four quaternions* of soldiers to be kept (Acts xii. 4). It is exactly like

the descriptions in that Gospel to be informed (Chap. x. 25) that "Cornelius met Peter, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him;" and to have such a picture set before us as is given (Chap. v. 23) when the officers return to the High Priest and Council, and report, "The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within." It is quite in the style of that Gospel to add vividness to a description by a single word, as is done (Chap. iv. 10) in the sentence, "Even by Jesus of Nazareth doth this man *stand* here before you whole;" and to describe Christ's crucifixion as St. Peter twice does (Chaps. v. 30, x. 39), "whom ye slew and *hanged on a tree.*" Nearly all these characteristic features can be traced with certainty to the lips of St. Peter, and they harmonize entirely with the language and style of the Gospel of St. Mark. We are not warranted hereby in calling St. Peter the author of that Gospel, but the probability amounts to very little short of certainty that it was compiled under his superintendence and from his recollections at a time when they were most vivid; and that, whatever may have been the date at which this Gospel was given to the world, the records contained in it are some of the most nearly contemporary with our Lord's life that we possess.

Let us now turn to the notices of St. Peter that are to be found in the Gospels. From them we can learn nothing about his language or his style; but they give us great insight into the character of the man.

(1) And, first, we may notice here too how *keen-sighted* he was, and alive to everything which was passing round about him. He it is who, at the outset of Christ's ministry, is the first to notice (Mark i. 33) the increasing fame of Jesus and the gathering together of the crowds near the place where He was, and to announce it to his Master in his own hyperbolic manner: "All men seek thee." He, too, was clearly the observer and spokesman at the time when Christ's garment was touched (Luke viii. 45) by the woman who had so long been afflicted with an issue of blood. "Master, the multitude throng thee, and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" was a remark dictated by what appeared to his noticing eyes an inconsistency in his Master's question. He, too, is the first to observe the speedy fulfilment of Christ's curse on the barren fig-tree (Mark xi. 21); and the same characteristic led him to catch at once the sad gaze of the Lord when it was turned towards his fallen disciple at the moment of his denial (Luke xxii. 61).

(2) Nor is he content to notice all that passes. He is ever *ready to apply*, in a practical manner, all that he hears and sees to the case of himself and his fellows. Does Christ set forth the best method of dealing with a brother who shall trespass? St. Peter at once comes to him with the practical question how he might work out this lesson of forgiveness in his own life. Is Christ very pointed in his observations about the need for sacrifice on the part of those who would enter the kingdom of heaven? (Matt. xix. 27.) It is St. Peter's inquiry which attempts to apply the teaching of his Lord to their

own circumstances with the words, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" Exactly in the same spirit, and from a desire to make practical use of what has fallen from his Lord's lips on the subject of that which defileth a man, does he ask (Matt. xv. 15), "Declare unto us this parable." In the like manner he takes home to himself the remarks of Jesus on the coming desertion of all his disciples (Matt. xxvi. 33), and almost indignantly repudiates the idea that he could so grievously offend. The same readiness to apply what he hears is seen when he inquires, after the lessons on the duty of watchfulness (Luke xii. 41), "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" And when, in almost the last interview, Jesus foretells, in solemn words (John xxi. 18), the sufferings by which his now penitent and forgiven disciple should glorify God, St. Peter, in his wonted wise, asks, as he turns and beholds St. John, "Lord, and what shall this man do?"

(3) As we should expect from his quick and deep appreciation of all that passed, he was a man who *came to the front in everything that was to be done*. He was a man of action, and of prompt action. He is well characterized by the *εὐθὺς*, "immediately," of which he is so fond in his language. His active tendencies display themselves (Matt. xiv. 28) when he ventures on the stormy waves to come to Jesus as He is walking on the sea. Even in his astonished condition at the Transfiguration, his anxiety to be doing something is not checked (Matt. xvii. 4): "Let us make here three tabernacles." The natural impulse of the man breaks out even at this time,

when another Evangelist, who, as we believe, knew most about Peter's feelings (Mark ix. 5), tells us that he was sore afraid, and "wist not what to say." So, too, when the news of the resurrection was brought to the disciples by the women, though it is expressly stated (Luke xxiv. 11) that the "words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not," yet not the more on that account does the energetic disciple sit still. No; "Peter arose, and *ran* to the sepulchre," the narrative continues, as one bent on knowing for himself the verity of what he had heard. And though we read elsewhere (John xx. 4) that another disciple accompanied, nay, even outran Peter, yet there is added a notice which bespeaks his greater activity, for, though not arriving first, he was yet the first to venture upon entering the late vacated tomb. It is Peter who beckons to St. John (John xiii. 24) at the Last Supper that he should set their doubts at rest, by inquiring of Jesus who it should be that should betray Him. His sword was the only one that we hear of (John xviii. 10) as being drawn at the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Even in that sad period (and sadder than for all must it have been for him who was penitent, yet unforgiven) between the resurrection and Christ's appearance by the Sea of Galilee, the same active disposition must shew itself. His life consists in always doing something, and so we find him at this time betaking himself to his old occupation as a fisherman. And there is no lack of character in the brief remark (John xxi. 3) by which he announces his intention to the rest. He had been ready enough with words on most occasions,

but this was not the time for them, and perhaps he was learning to keep a guard over the tongue which had promised so stoutly and failed so terribly. He merely says, "I go a-fishing." And when the night's work was over, and the morning dawn shewed them Jesus on the shore, the energetic nature of Peter breaks forth as once before. That disciple whom Jesus loved was the first to recognize their risen Lord, and he "saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, for he was naked, and did cast himself into the sea," that he might be the first to present himself in his repentance to the Master from whom he had testified that it was death to be severed. Precisely the same longing to be wherever action was in progress brought him alone of the fugitive band of disciples back to the scene of the Saviour's trial. He had fled like the rest, but his nature was different from theirs, and, doubtless with a bosom filled with self-reproach at his cowardice, he turns after the beloved Disciple and makes his way into the hall where the inquest was proceeding, with a full resolve that his lately-given promise should not be proved utterly untrustworthy.

(4) Although St. Peter must have been a man of ready speech, he was *not argumentative*. He does not debate any question. When he and his companions are bidden (Acts iv. 18) to speak no more in the name of Jesus, his sole reply is, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." And on another like occasion (Acts v. 29), "We ought to obey God rather than men." Such a state-



ment once enunciated admits of no question in his own mind, nor does he consider further argument necessary for others. What God has directed, that he is bound to perform, and will persevere in, heedless of consequences. Similarly, when defending his conduct in going to Cornelius, he gives nothing but an outline of all the facts, concluding with the clenching question (Acts xi. 17), "What was I, that I could withstand God?" In like manner, in the Gospels, on the occasion of his call (Luke v.), he does not debate on the uselessness of returning in the day-time to renew the toil which had been so unproductive all the night long. And just so, in his reception into favour again after the resurrection, it is not argument that he employs to account for or palliate his fault, or to establish his penitence, but a simple appeal to the unerring knowledge of Jesus (John xxi. 17): "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

(5) Akin to this part of his character is his *impulsiveness*, amounting almost to self-will, in some of the incidents related. He not only did not discuss a matter in his own mind, but he did not wait to ask any advice. To this trait it may be that our Lord is alluding when (John xxi. 18) He says to his disciple, "When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest." The ready blow, the hasty speech, be it of earnest testimony to his Lord, or misunderstanding rebuke, or even angry curse—all tell us how much he was the creature of the moment. When Christ asks of his followers the question (Matt. xvi. 15), "Whom say ye that I am?" we see Peter ready, with noble fervour, to

reply at once : "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." But in the very same Chapter we find him with equal fervour, though less nobly displayed, beginning to rebuke the Master whom he had just confessed, because he spake to them of his approaching sufferings. So, too, when Jesus is washing the feet of the disciples (John xiii.) the impulsive character of Peter is shewn quite as strongly in his compliance as in his previous refusal. But Christ had work for his disciple to do which needed this element in his character. Perhaps no one else in the Apostolic band would have been ready to go and preach the Gospel to Cornelius except the formerly headstrong impulsive Simon. We know with what questioning the news of his visit was received in Jerusalem, and also how long the exclusive spirit prevailed in the early Christian societies, even to such an extent as to cause Peter on one occasion (Gal. ii. 11) to run counter to his first conduct, and withdraw himself from the society of Gentile converts. We may well conclude, then, that none but the impetuous and energetic Peter was found fit to receive his Lord's revelation concerning the reception of the Gentiles, because none else would so promptly carry out the new lesson into act.

Such are the chief marks of character that may be gathered from the notices of St. Peter in the Acts and in the Gospels. It remains hereafter to inquire what lessons would be most likely to be given by such a man when he himself became a "fisher of men." If in such an examination we can recognize the characteristics of St. Peter, tempered it may be and disciplined, but still the same in the Epistles as

in the History ; if we can find in the teaching of the Letters the necessary sequence and out-growth of the life which is sketched for us in the Gospels and the Acts ; and if, further, we can discern the same mind and character (modified only by circumstances of whose operation we are not left without evidence) in the Second Epistle as in the First, we may, from our inquiry, be better able to picture to ourselves something of the after-life of this chief of the Apostles, who so soon disappears from our view in the historical books ; and may also bind into somewhat closer unity all that in the New Testament is connected with the name of St. Peter.

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*THE EPISTLES TO  
THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.*

VI.—PHILADELPHIA. (*Rev.* iii. 7-13.)

THE city of Philadelphia, situated at the foot of Mount Tmolus, about twenty-eight miles south-east of Sardis, named after Attalus Philadelphus, King of Pergamos, and the centre of the wine trade of the region lying on the frontiers of Lydia and Phrygia, presented, so far as we know, the same phenomena of religious and social life as its nearest neighbours. There, too, there was a population mainly, of course, Heathen, but including at least three other elements distinct from it and from each other,—Jews, Jewish Christians, and converts from Heathenism. What its spiritual condition was we gather from the Message, and from that only. Three facts connected with it may, however, be briefly