

part of the country, especially when the words immediately following, instead of proceeding to define the new border more precisely, describe the action of the Danites: "And the children of Dan went up and fought with Leshem, and took it," etc. For נצ"י read צ"י, and the verse becomes at once consistent and clear: "And the border of the children of Dan *was too narrow* for them; and the children of Dan went up and fought with Leshem, and took it," etc. A close parallel, both for the use of צ and for the construction, is afforded by 2 Kings vi. 1, "The place in which we dwell before thee *צ כמנני is too narrow for us.*" The LXX., though their text is in some confusion and the rendering loose, appear to have had this reading before them: *καὶ ἔθλιψαν ἀπ' αὐτῶν τὸ ὄριον τῆς μερίδος αὐτῶν.* צ and its derivatives are represented by θλίβω in LXX., Jud. x. 9; 1 Sam. xxx. 6, and elsewhere.

S. R. DRIVER.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

TYCHICUS AND ONESIMUS, THE LETTER-BEARERS.

XXIV.

"All my affairs shall Tychicus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord: whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our estate, and that he may comfort your hearts; together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things that *are done* here."—COL. iv. 7-9 (Rev. Ver.).

IN Paul's days it was perhaps more difficult to get letters delivered than to write them. It was a long, weary journey from Rome to Colossæ,—across Italy, then by sea to Greece, across Greece, then by sea to the port of Ephesus, and thence by rough ways to the upland valley where lay Colossæ, with its neighbouring towns of Laodicea and

Hierapolis. So one thing which the Apostle has to think about is to find some one to carry his letter. He pitches upon these two, Tychicus and Onesimus. The former is one of his personal attendants, told off for this duty; the other, who has been in Rome under very peculiar circumstances, is going home to Colossæ, on a strange errand, in which he may be helped by having a message from Paul to carry.

This paper will not deal with the words before us, so much as with these two figures, whom I shall regard as representing certain principles, and embodying some useful lessons.

I. We may regard Tychicus as representing *the greatness and sacredness of small and secular service done for Christ.*

We must first try, in as few words as may be, to change the name into a man. There is something very solemn and pathetic in these shadowy names which appear for a moment on the page of Scripture, and are swallowed up of black night, like stars that suddenly blaze out for a week or two, and then dwindle and at last disappear altogether. They too lived, and loved, and strove, and suffered, and enjoyed: and now—all is gone, gone; the hot fire burned down to such a little handful of white ashes. Tychicus and Onesimus! two shadows that once were men! and as they are, so we shall be.

As to Tychicus, there are several fragmentary notices about him in the Acts of the Apostles and in Paul's letters, and although they do not amount to much, still by piecing them together, and looking at them with some sympathy, we can get a notion of the man.

He does not appear till near the end of Paul's missionary work, and was probably one of the fruits of the Apostle's long residence in Ephesus on his last missionary tour, as we do not hear of Tychicus till after that period: That stay in Ephesus was cut short by the silversmiths' riot—

the earliest example of trades' unions—when they wanted to silence the preaching of the gospel because it damaged the market for “shrines,” and “*also*” was an insult to the great goddess! Thereupon Paul retired to Europe, and after some months there, decided on his last fateful journey to Jerusalem. On the way he was joined by a remarkable group of friends, seven in number, and apparently carefully selected so as to represent the principal fields of the Apostle's labours. There were three Europeans, two from “Asia”—meaning by that name, of course, only the Roman province, which included mainly the western seaboard—and two from the wilder inland country of Lycaonia. Tychicus was one of the two from Asia; the other was Trophimus, whom we know to have been an Ephesian (Acts xxi. 29), as Tychicus may not improbably have also been.

We do not know that all the seven accompanied Paul to Jerusalem. Trophimus we know did, and another of them, Aristarchus, is mentioned as having sailed with him on the return voyage from Palestine (Acts xxvii. 2). But if they were not intended to go to Jerusalem, what did they meet him for at all? The sacredness of the number seven, the apparent care to secure a representation of the whole field of apostolic activity, and the long distances that some of them must have travelled, make it extremely unlikely that these men should have met him at a little port in Asia Minor for the mere sake of being with him for a few days. It certainly seems much more probable that they joined his company and went on to Jerusalem. What for? Probably as bearers of money contributions from the whole area of the Gentile Churches, to the “poor saints” there—a purpose which would explain the composition of the delegation. Paul was too sensitive and too sagacious to have more to do with money matters than he could help. We learn from his letter to the Church at Corinth that he insisted

on another brother being associated with him in the administration of their alms, so that no man could raise suspicions against him. Paul's principle was that which ought to guide every man entrusted with other people's money to spend for religious or charitable purposes.—“I shall not be your almoner unless some one appointed by you stands by me to see that I spend your money rightly” —a good example which, it is much to be desired, were followed by all workers, and required to be followed as a condition of all giving.

These seven, at all events, began the long journey with Paul. Among them is our friend Tychicus, who may have learned to know the Apostle more intimately during it, and perhaps developed qualities in travel which marked him out as fit for the errand on which we here find him.

This voyage was about the year 58 A.D. Then comes an interval of some three or four years, in which occur Paul's arrest and imprisonment at Cæsarea, his appearance before governors and kings, his voyage to Italy and shipwreck, with his residence in Rome. Whether Tychicus was with him, as well as Luke, we do not know, nor at what point he joined the Apostle, if he was not his companion throughout. But this passage shows us that he was with Paul during part of his first Roman captivity, probably about A.D. 62 or 63; and the language of commendation in these verses, “a faithful minister,” or helper of Paul, implies that for a considerable period before this he had been rendering services to the Apostle.

He is now despatched all the long way to Colossæ to carry this letter, and to tell the Church by word of mouth all that had happened in Rome. No information of that kind is in the letter itself, which, in that respect, forms a remarkable contrast to the affectionate abundance of personal details in another prison letter, that to the Philippians, and is thereby probably marked out as addressed to

a Church never visited by Paul. He is sent, according to the most probable reading, that "ye may know our estate, and that he may comfort your hearts"—encouraging the brethren to Christian steadfastness, not only by his news of Paul, but by his own company and exhortations.

The very same words are employed about Tychicus in the contemporaneous letter to the Ephesians. Evidently then he carried both epistles on the same journey; and one reason for selecting him as messenger is plainly that he was a native of the province, and probably of Ephesus. When Paul looked round his little circle of attendant friends, his eye fell on Tychicus, as the very man for such an errand. "You go, Tychicus. It is your home; they all know you."

The most careful students now think that the Epistle to the Ephesians was meant to go the round of the Churches of Asia Minor, beginning, no doubt, with that in the great city of Ephesus. If that be so, and Tychicus had to carry it to these Churches in turn, he would necessarily come, in the course of his duty, to Laodicea, which was only a few miles from Colossæ, and so could most conveniently deliver this Epistle. The wider and the narrower mission fitted into each other.

No doubt he went, and did his work. We can fancy the eager groups, perhaps in some upper room, perhaps in some quiet place of prayer by the river side; in their midst the two messengers, and a little knot of listeners and questioners round each. How they would have to tell the story a dozen times over! how every detail would be precious! how tears would come and hearts would glow! how deep into the night they would talk! and how many a heart that had begun to waver would be confirmed in cleaving to Christ by the exhortations of Tychicus, by the very sight of Onesimus, and by Paul's words of fire!

What became of him after that journey we do not know. Perhaps he settled down at Ephesus for a time, perhaps he

returned to Paul. At any rate, we get two more glimpses of him at a later period—one in the Epistle to Titus, in which we hear of Paul's intention to despatch him on another journey to Crete, and the last in the close of the second Epistle to Timothy, written from Rome probably about A.D. 67. The Apostle believes that his death is near, and seems to have sent away most of his staff. Among the notices of their various appointments we read, "Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus." He is not said to have been sent on any mission connected with the Churches. It may be that he was simply sent away because, by reason of his impending martyrdom, Paul had no more need of him. True, he still has Luke by him, and he wishes Timothy to come and bring his first "minister," Mark, with him. But he has sent away Tychicus, as if he had said, Now, go back to your home, my friend! You have been a faithful servant for ten years. I need you no more. Go to your own people, and take my blessing. God be with you! So they parted, he that was for death, to die; and he that was for life, to live and to treasure the memory of Paul in his heart for the rest of his days. These are the facts; ten years of faithful service to the Apostle, partly during his detention in Rome, and much of it spent in wearisome and dangerous travelling—all to carry a couple of letters.

As for his character, Paul has given us something of it in these few words, which have commended him to a wider circle than the handful of Christians at Colossæ. As for his personal godliness and goodness, he is "a beloved brother," as are all who love Christ; but he is also a "faithful minister," or personal attendant upon the Apostle. Paul always seems to have had one or two such about him, from the time of his first journey, when John Mark filled the post, to the end of his career. Probably he was no great hand at managing affairs, and needed some plain common-sense nature beside him, who would be secretary or amanu-

ensis sometimes, and general helper and factotum. Men of genius and men devoted to some great cause which tyrannously absorbs attention, want some person to fill such a homely office. The person who filled it would be likely to be a plain man, not gifted for higher service in any special degree. Common sense, willingness to be troubled with small details of purely secular arrangements, and a hearty love for the chief, and desire to spare him annoyance and work were the qualifications. Such probably was Tychicus—no orator, no organiser, no thinker, but simply an honest, loving soul who did not shrink from rough outward work, if only it might help the cause. We do not read that he was teacher or preacher, or miracle worker. His gift was—ministry, and he gave himself to his ministry. His business was to run Paul's errands, and, like a true man, he ran them "faithfully."

So then, he is fairly taken as representing the greatness and sacredness of small and secular service for Christ. For the Apostle goes on to add something to his eulogium as a "faithful minister"—when he calls him "a fellow-servant," or slave, "in the Lord." As if he had said, Do not suppose that because I write this letter, and Tychicus carries it, there is much difference between us. We are both slaves of the same Lord who has set each of us his tasks; and though the tasks be different, the obedience is the same, and the doers stand on one level. I am not Tychicus' master, though he be my minister. We have both, as I have been reminding you that you all have, an owner in heaven. The delicacy of the turn thus given to the commendation is a beautiful indication of Paul's generous, chivalrous nature. No wonder that such a soul bound men like Tychicus to him!

But there is more than merely a revelation of a beautiful character in the words; there are great truths in them. We may draw them out in two or three thoughts.

Small things done for Christ are great. Trifles that contribute and are indispensable to a great result are great; or perhaps, more properly, both words are out of place. In some powerful engine there is a little screw, and if it drop out, the great piston cannot rise nor the huge crank turn. What have big and little to do with things which are equally indispensable? There is a great rudder that steers an ironclad. It moves on a "pintle" a few inches long. If that bit of iron were gone, what would become of the rudder, and what would be the use of the ship with all her guns? There is an old jingling rhyme about losing a shoe for want of a nail, and a horse for want of a shoe, and a man for want of a horse, and a battle for want of a man, and a kingdom for loss of a battle. The intervening links may be left out—and the nail and the kingdom brought together. In a similar spirit, we may say that the trifles done for Christ which help the great things are as important as these. What is the use of writing letters, if you cannot get them delivered? It takes both Paul and Tychicus to get the letter into the hands of the people at Colossæ.

Another thought suggested by the figure of Paul's minister, who was also his fellow-slave, is *the sacredness of secular work done for Christ*. When Tychicus is caring for Paul's comfort, and looking after common things for him, he is serving Christ, and his work is "in the Lord." That is equivalent to saying that the distinction between sacred and secular, religious and non-religious, like that of great and small, disappears from work done for and in Jesus. Whenever there is organization, there must be much work concerned with purely material things: and the most spiritual forces must have some organization. There must be men for "the outward business of the house of God" as well as the white-robed priests at the altar, and the rapt gazer in the secret place of the Most High. There are a

hundred matters of detail and of purely outward and mechanical nature which must be seen to by somebody. The alternative is to do them in a purely mechanical and secular manner and so to make the work utterly dreary and contemptible, or in a devout and earnest manner and so to hallow them all, and make worship of them all. The difference between two lives is not in the material on which, but in the motive from which, and in the end for which they are respectively lived. All work done in obedience to the same Lord is the same in essence; for it is all obedience; and all work done for the same God is the same in essence, for it is all worship. The distinction between secular and sacred ought never to have found its way into Christian morals, and ought for evermore to be expelled from Christian life.

Another thought may be suggested. *The fleeting things done for Christ are eternal.* How astonished Tychicus would have been if anybody had told him on that day when he got away from Rome, with the two precious letters in his scrip, that these bits of parchment would outlast all the ostentatious pomp of the city, and that his name, because written in them, would be known to the end of time all over the world! The eternal things are the things done for Christ. They are eternal in His memory who has said, "I will never forget any of their works," however they may fall from man's remembrance. They are perpetual in their consequences. True, no man's contribution to the mighty sum of things "that make for righteousness" can very long be traced as separate from the others, any more than the raindrop that refreshed the harebell on the moor can be traced in burn, and river, and sea. But for all that, it is there. So our influence for good blends with a thousand others, and may not be traceable beyond a short distance, still it is there: and no true work for Christ, abortive as it may seem, but goes to swell the great aggre-

gate of forces which are working on through the ages to bring the perfect Order.

That Colossian Church seems a failure. Where is it now? Gone. Where are its sister Churches of Asia? Gone. Paul's work and Tychicus' seem to have vanished from the earth, and Mohammedanism to have taken its place. Yes! and here are we to-day in England, and Christian men all over the world in lands that were mere slaughterhouses of savagery then, learning our best lessons from Paul's words, and owing something for our knowledge of them to Tychicus' humble care. Paul meant to teach a handful of obscure believers—he has edified the world. Tychicus thought to carry the precious letter safely over the sea—he was helping to send it across the centuries, and to put it into our hands. So little do we know where our work will terminate. Our only concern is where it begins. Let us look after this end, the motive; and leave God to take care of the other, the consequences.

Such work will be perpetual in its consequences on ourselves. "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious." Whether our service for Christ does others any good or no, it will bless ourselves, by strengthening the motives from which it springs, by enlarging our own knowledge and enriching our own characters, and by a hundred other gracious influences which his work exerts upon the devout worker, and which become indissoluble parts of himself, and abide with him for ever, over and above the crown of glory that fadeth not away.

And, as the reward is given not to the outward deed, but to the motive which settles its value, all work done from the same motive is alike in reward, howsoever different in form. It was a law in Israel, that the division of the spoils of victory gave an equal share to him "that goeth down to the battle," and to him "that tarrieth by the stuff"—for all had contributed to the victory, and the fighters in the

front had no braver hearts than the rearguard that looked after the base of operations, and kept open the line of communications. Paul in the front, and Tychicus obscure in the rear, the great teachers and path-openers whom Christ through the ages raises up for large spiritual work, and the little people whom Christ through the ages raises up to help and sympathise—shall share alike at last, if the Spirit that moved them has been the same, and in different administrations they have served the same Lord. “He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet”—though no prophecy come from his lips—“shall receive a prophet’s reward.”

II. We must now turn to a much briefer consideration of the second figure here, Onesimus, as representing the *transforming and uniting power of Christian faith*.

No doubt this is the same Onesimus as we read of in the Epistle to Philemon. His story is familiar and need not be dwelt on. He had been an “unprofitable servant,” good-for-nothing, and apparently had robbed his master, and then fled. He had found his way to Rome, to which all the scum of the empire seemed to drift. There he had burrowed in some hole, and found obscurity and security. Somehow or other he had come across Paul—surely not, as has been supposed, having sought the Apostle as a friend of his master’s, which would rather have been a reason for avoiding him. However that may be, he had found Paul, and Paul’s Master had found *him* by the gospel which Paul spoke. His heart had been touched. And now he is to go back to his owner. With beautiful considerateness the Apostle unites him with Tychicus in his mission, and refers the Church to him as an authority. That is most delicate and thoughtful. The same sensitive regard for his feelings marks the language in which he is commended to them. There is now no word about “a fellow-slave”—that might have been misunderstood and might have hurt.

Paul will only say about him half of what he said about Tychicus. He cannot leave out the "faithful," because Onesimus had been eminently unfaithful, and so he attaches it to the half of his former commendation which he retains, and testifies to him as "a faithful and beloved brother." There are no references to his flight or to his speculations. Philemon is the person to be spoken to about these. The Church has nothing to do with them. The man's past was blotted out—enough that he is "faithful," exercising trust in Christ, and therefore to be trusted. His condition was of no moment—enough that he is "a brother," therefore to be beloved.

Does not then that figure stand forth a living illustration of the *transforming* power of Christianity? Slaves had well known vices, largely the result of their position—idleness, heartlessness, lying, dishonesty. And this man had had his full share of the sins of his class. Think of him as he left Colossæ, slinking from his master, with stolen property in his bosom, madness and mutiny in his heart, an ignorant heathen, with vices and sensualities holding carnival in his soul. Think of him as he came back, Paul's trusted representative, with desires after holiness in his deepest nature, the light of the knowledge of a loving and pure God in his soul, a great hope before him, ready for all service and even to put on again the abhorred yoke! What had happened? Nothing but this—the message had come to him, "Onesimus! fugitive, rebel, thief as thou art, Jesus Christ has died for thee, and lives to cleanse and bless thee. Believest thou this?" And he believed, and leant his whole sinful self on that Saviour, and the corruption faded away from his heart, and out of the thief was made a trustworthy man, and out of the slave a beloved brother. The cross had touched his heart and will. That was all. It had changed his whole being. He is a living illustration of Paul's teaching in this very

letter. He is dead with Christ to his old self; he lives with Christ a new life.

The gospel can do that. It can and does do so to-day and to us, if we will. Nothing else can; nothing else ever has done it; nothing else ever will. Culture may do much; social reformation may do much; but the radical transformation of the nature is only effected by the "love of God shed abroad in the heart," and by the new life which we receive through our faith in Christ.

And that change can be produced on all sorts and conditions of men. The gospel despairs of none. It knows of no hopelessly irreclaimable classes. It can kindle a soul under the ribs of death. The filthiest rags can be cleaned and made into spotlessly white paper, which may have the name of God written upon it. None are beyond its power; neither the savages in other lands, nor the more hopeless heathens festering and rotting in our back slums, the opprobrium of our civilization and the indictment of our Christianity. Take the gospel that transformed this poor slave to them, and some hearts will own it, and we shall pick out of the kennel souls blacker than his, and make them like him, brethren, faithful and beloved.

Further, here is a living illustration of the power which the gospel has of binding men into a true brotherhood. We can scarcely picture to ourselves the gulf which separated the master from his slave. "So many slaves, so many enemies," said Seneca. That great crack running through society was a chief weakness and peril of the ancient world. Christianity gathered master and slave into one family, and set them down at one table to commemorate the death of the Saviour who held them all in the embrace of His great love.

All true union among men must be based upon their oneness in Jesus Christ. The brotherhood of man is a consequence of the fatherhood of God, and Christ shows us

the Father. If the dreams of men's being knit together in harmony are ever to be more than dreams, the power that makes them facts must flow from the cross. The world must recognise that "One is your master," before it comes to believe as anything more than the merest sentimentality that "all ye are brethren."

Much has to be done before the dawn of that day reddens in the east, "when, man to man, the wide world o'er, shall brothers be," and much in political and social life has to be swept away before society is organized on the basis of Christian fraternity. The vision tarries. But we may remember how certainly, though slowly, the curse of slavery has disappeared, and take courage to believe that all other evils will fade away in like manner, until the cords of love shall bind all hearts in fraternal unity, because they bind each to the cross of the Elder Brother, through whom we are no more slaves but sons, and if sons of God, then brethren of one another.

ALEXANDER MACLAREN.

*SURVEY OF RECENT OLD TESTAMENT
LITERATURE.*

It is sad to see Old Testament criticism played at, though sadder still to see it misused in the interests of party. This reflection is suggested by two books on the Pentateuch which claim to be noticed, one of which might be hastily put down as a specimen of play, the other of reckless misuse. It would be unfair, however, to judge of Lenormant's textual analysis of the Book of Genesis by the very unscholarly introduction of the translator, and of Kuenen's critical researches into the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua in the spirit of the *Quarterly Review's* attack (October, 1886, p. 484) on Wellhausen and his English admirers. Lenormant's devout spirit would have been shocked at the irrever-