

Year.	Total Number of Marriages in England and Wales.	According to Rites of Church of England.					Total.
		By Special License.	By Ordinary License.	By Banns.	By Supt. Registrar's Certificate.	Not Stated.	
1880	191,965	43	13,920	119,819	3381	498	187,661
1881	197,290	62	13,505	123,267	3637	524	140,995
1882	204,405	75	13,280	128,761	3517	469	146,102
1883	206,384	63	12,981	129,734	3740	482	147,000
1884	204,301	68	12,188	128,107	3523	458	144,344
1885	197,745	69	11,551	124,387	3399	507	139,913
1886	196,071	48	11,072	123,643	3324	484	138,571
1887	200,518	21	10,654	126,100	3451	381	140,607
1888	203,821	23	10,378	128,302	3296	364	142,863
1889	213,865	24	10,261	135,372	3327	372	149,354

Year.	Not according to Rites of Church of England.					
	In Registered Places.		Quakers.	Jews.	Civil Marriages in Supt. Registrar's Office.	Total.
	Roman Catholic.	Other Christian Denominations.				
1880	8210	21,394	57	463	24,180	54,304
1881	8784	21,922	56	484	25,055	56,295
1882	9235	22,768	70	513	25,717	58,303
1883	8980	23,260	58	539	26,547	59,384
1884	8783	23,726	61	601	26,786	59,957
1885	8162	23,130	49	640	25,851	57,832
1886	8220	22,969	47	674	25,590	57,500
1887	8611	23,259	57	649	27,335	59,911
1888	8632	23,667	51	799	27,809	60,958
1889	8988	24,302	73	867	29,779	64,509



ART. III.—NOTES AND COMMENTS ON ST. JOHN XXI.

No. 2.

SO the seven disciples set out for their evening's fishing, and spent that summer night in vain efforts on the lake. "And that night they took nothing." No doubt many a well-known favourable place was tried, now the nearer now the further shore, the deeper and the shallower waters. Most of them were experienced fishermen, and they were at work where the prey was then, as now, abundant. But "that night they took nothing."

It was not an unprecedented disappointment. Some three years before they had passed a similar night (Luke v.), the

night which ushered in the day when some of them received from their Friend and Teacher the call which changed their whole after-life:—"Master (*ἐπιστάτα*), we have toiled all the night and taken nothing; nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net." There was *that* precedent at least to be remembered; and perhaps there were other occasions when they had borne the burthens of a fruitless night, though the emphasis with which these two experiences are recorded seems to say that such a night was not an ordinary incident. It was as it were part and parcel with the miraculously fruitful morning.

Certainly it was a providential preparation for it. The true Son of Man (Psa. viii. 4) ruled the waters and their tribes all that night through. "The fishes of the sea, and whatsoever walketh through the paths of the sea"—of them we read in that Messianic oracle that they are part of His dominion. Let us remember, as most certainly St. John means us to do, that it was He who that night willed the hours of frustration and failure. The providence and decree of Jesus Christ deliberately and effectually disappointed His dear disciples' hopes and efforts. The weary hands, the aching eyes, the baffled skill, He had to do with it all. It was the Lord.

It is well worth our while to bear this in mind for our own help. Not seldom the servant of God is called upon to use his best skill and strength *apparently* in vain; to labour unmistakably in vain as regards *immediate* successes. Not always, indeed; in many cases not very often; but certainly, upon the whole, not very seldom. Such experiences should always lead us to self-searching, to see what may perhaps be the reason of failure in *us*, in our spirit toward others, or towards the Lord, or in our ways and means of labour. But when, as in His presence, we may humbly believe that in these respects His will is being done in us and by us, and yet we seem to "spend our strength for nought," then let us remember the night spent on the Galilean lake, and be reassured. We shall yet find that the disappointment is in providence as much a blessing as the success is; in fact, a part of the success, its prelude and preface.

Could the Seven have foreseen, however dimly, their Master's presence the next morning, and realized, however faintly, that He was in those dark hours already acting upon them and around them, would it not have lightened all the burthen indescribably? All vexation would have vanished out of the delay, simply because of their consciousness of the life, the will, the love of their Saviour and their God.

It would seem however (ver. 4) that they had no such forecast: "*When daybreak was now come, Jesus came and stood*

on the beach (the eastern beach, as we gather from the evident solitude of the place); *the disciples however did not know that it is Jesus.*" No; they did not know it, even John did not know it, till the miracle, the *σημείον*, was fairly done. We gather that the undefined transfiguration of our Lord's appearance, so often hinted at in the Resurrection narratives, was here also operating to delay their recognition. But we may also infer that their minds as well as eyes were at fault; they were not on the *qui vive* to see Him; or surely the first sight of any solitary figure on the beach would have at once suggested the question, Is it not the Lord?

We can do little more than note this peculiar unconsciousness of the Apostles. Like other instances of their oblivion or "slowness of heart," it speaks truth and fact by its very unlikelihood *a priori*, and by the perfect *naïveté* of the record of it. It is precisely unlike an invention. If an invention, it would be of course the invention of a later generation, when these fishermen were already viewed with the deepest reverence as the builders and rulers of the Christian community. Would an artificial picture of their conduct, drawn at such a date, have taken the line which the Gospels do take, the line of freest description and criticism of their slowness and fallibility of perception? The thoroughly human, imperfect, provincial character and conduct attributed as a fact to the Apostles in the Gospels has thus a precious value as internal evidence of the genuineness of the record. Again and again be it said, the picture is not a composition, it is a photograph. It is not an ideal; it is life.

So here we have not a company of non-human beings, seen in "the light that never was on sea or land"; their every faculty always awake to Christ and to heaven. We have a group of men, engrossed for the time with the expectations and disappointments of common work, toiling on from hour to hour, very tired no doubt by the morning, their senses all strained and aching, bewildered and forgetting.

Ver. 4. When now it was dawn, then in the pale rising light, where the eastward hills rise ridge over ridge towards Trachonitis, throwing their deep and misty shadows towards the water, then and there the Risen *Jesus stood upon the beach, had come and stood upon the beach*, the *αἰγιαλός*, the pebbly or sandy margin of the crystal water. How had He spent the night? Had He walked upon the deep, as long ago, though now unseen? Or had He been traversing in the quiet hours the scenes which in the days of His mortality He had frequented with His blessed presence? How total our ignorance is before such a question! The reality, the literality, of the life of the Risen One we know; blessed be the name of His

Father. We know that our Redeemer lived, and liveth. But of the conditions of that life of His literal and bodily Resurrection we know, in detail, almost nothing. It is enough, however. The holy narratives lift the veil high enough to show us a Saviour present, accessible, identical, perfect God, perfect Man; alive in all His love and power, and saying to us, "Ye shall live also."

He stood upon the shore, a solitary figure, seen over the white water, a hundred yards or so from the larger boat. Peter and John were in that boat, and saw, but neither of them recognised. Busy perhaps with some last haul of the empty net, or listless and inobservant with fatigue, "they knew not that it is Jesus."

Ver. 5. "So Jesus says to them, Children, you have not any fish?" *Μή τι προσφάγιον ἔχετε*; The *μή* implies the supposition that they had not taken anything.

Παιδία, "Children." The word is used almost as "lads" might be used now, importing (as some similar phrases amongst our poor people do) only neighbourhood and friendliness, not necessarily a paternal superiority. We may observe that it is not "my children;" and that scarcely ever, if ever, does the Saviour—at least in the days of His flesh—address His followers as *His children* at all; John xiii. 33 is not an exception.¹ They are His brethren. "He is not ashamed," hard as it sometimes is, for joy, to believe it, "to call us brethren;" His *Father's* children. This, however, is by the way. The word *παιδία* here would be understood as merely a kindly expression on the part of the unknown visitor.

St. Chrysostom, who tends as an expositor to a very simple and even homely explanation of details, thinks that Jesus may have put this question meaning to speak as *an intending purchaser* (*ὡς μέλλων τι ἀνεῖσθαι παρ' αὐτῶν*). It may be so. But the other suggestion seems to fit more naturally into the scene—that the question was as from a man looking with friendly interest on what was manifestly a moment of fruitless toil. Faint and disheartened those boatmen may well have looked, as they trailed the slack net. "So you have had no success, then?"

Thus the voice came from the shore, audible and articulate as ever it is over water. "They answered Him, No," the brief reply of tired men.

Ver. 6. "Then He said to them, Throw your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find."

The two men acted at once upon the words. No doubt

¹ In Heb. ii. 33 the "children" are *God's* children entrusted to His Son. See the context.

there was a spell upon them; for when JESUS speaks it is more than words. But the supernatural spell acted, as is almost always the case, through nature. Partly the non-resistance of fatigue, partly the faint hope of success by any means; partly and perhaps chiefly the thought that the stranger from his standpoint might see a cause for his confident words which they could not see—these may have been the motives. Possibly too there came over them a vague and indefinable sense (we all know what that is like) of a previous occurrence of the whole event; each step was in the footmarks of the past.

"So they threw; and now strength failed them to draw, such was the quantity of fish." Here, by the way, is an incidental touch of accuracy. This inability to draw in a net which though full was not extraordinarily full (ver. 11) shows that the hands were few; and it perhaps suggests that the hands were also tired.

Only two pairs of hands—only Peter and John.

Wonderful pair of friends! More and more, in the narrative, do they appear together. Essentially different in natural character, they are now however drawn irrevocably side to side. Each has a brother, who is also a chief Apostle; but Peter and John are somehow more than brothers to each other now. We shall see yet more striking proof of this before the chapter closes; but let us here note the fact. And let us remember how affectingly all these records of the loving union of Peter and John, *written by John*, answer that shallow and trivial insinuation of the sceptic that this chapter was written with the poor purpose of making Peter less and John more prominent than before.

And now these two men, drawn thus together, made thus for ever one in the love of Jesus, go on to act, each in his way. John sees, and Peter moves.

Ver. 7. "*So that disciple whom Jesus loved says to Peter, It is the Lord.*" He saw that it was Jesus. Probably his eyes saw nothing new; it was the same figure standing there, the same just visible face. But the σημεῖον waked his soul to conscious insight with his eyes; and he knew who it was—THE LORD.

In passing we may notice that title, as sweet as it is reverently solemn, which after the Resurrection seems to become the habitual designation of the Risen One, THE LORD. Let us note the word, as thus employed by the beloved one, by John; by him who delights to tell us, with holy simplicity, that Jesus had been pleased to admit him to a peculiar personal intimacy. Yet even for John Jesus is THE LORD. And will it not be ever thus with us also, as we grow in

knowledge and in love of Him? Intimacy between sinner and sinner may often lead to diminution of respect; intimacy between the redeemed sinner and Jesus Christ, the more He is known as He is, can only lead to a deeper, a more unreserved reverence and adoration. Dost thou very dearly love Him? Hath He very wonderfully made manifest to thee His love for thee? Then surely to thee above all others He will be known and worshipped as THE LORD.

Thus John beheld Jesus. He saw the Son of God. He was conscious of His Person and Presence, which but for that insight were but the person and presence of a chance passer-by upon the lonely beach.

"So Simon Peter, hearing that it is the Lord, girded on his outer coat, for he was naked, and threw himself into the lake."

He heard who it was; he did not look, it seems, to verify the hearing. The tone of John spoke for itself, and this was what, for Peter, brought the soul to look, to see the Son of God. Are we not reminded that often, very often, the calm, happy certainty shown by some beloved and trusted friend with regard to the Saviour's life, and love, and power, proves to the soul (perhaps in some hour of perplexity or bitterness) its own truthfulness? It shines out direct, an evidence of Christianity, a manifestation of Christ. "He knoweth that he saith true, that ye may believe."

Peter now acts in his own way upon the words of John. Two sides of his remarkable character come out; an almost impetuous devotion to his Master, and a most keen consciousness of his personal unworthiness to be in his Master's presence. He was naked, γυμνός. That is to say, in all probability, as frequent usage illustrates the meaning, half-clad, wearing nothing but an under-tunic. However, he was so attired that he could not choose to appear so before "the Lord." And he wraps the outer coat around him, the ἐπενδύτης, the large overcoat for storms, and cold nights. And "he girt it well round," διεζώσατο. It was a simple but true expression of profound reverence, the same spirit which had once (Luke v. 8) prompted him to cry, "Depart from me." But that spirit was more enlightened now, for Peter's resistless impulse now is to draw near. He knew now, not that Jesus was less awfully holy, but that His very holiness made it necessary, and blessed, for Peter to be quite near Him. And it is so still. Jesus Christ would not be the SAVIOUR were He not infinitely holy. But He is the Saviour, and being so He must be actually approached, actually touched, by the sinner who so much wants Him. And the sinner now, as Peter of old, as he comes and touches will remember both truths—that indeed His name is Holy, and that to come

actually to Him, to nothing intermediate, but to Him, is not rashness but obedience, not presumption but salvation.

"*He threw himself into the lake,*" leaving John alone in the great boat, while the other disciples, now close beside that boat in the tender, the *πλοιάριον*, were hauling the net to shore. He threw himself in, and crossed the hundred yards of water, swimming and wading (we seem to see the silver spray of the plunge and the eager passage), to find himself as soon as he can be at the feet of the Prince of Life. Yes, he must be as near as possible, and as soon as possible, to Him whom he had denied a few weeks ago, over and over, but who had nevertheless gone on to die for him and rise again.

What that first moment's interview was, we are not told. The whole group of seven were now on land. The five had assisted John to bring boats and net to the shore; and then apparently at once, without hauling *up* the net, but leaving it fast to the boat, full of its struggling prize, they had stepped out and drew near the Lord.

And now, in the solitary place, beside Him, they see a meal already preparing. A fire, a coal fire, was already there; and beside its ruddy flame fish was set for eating, and the bread was ready. Manifestly there was mystery, if not miracle, in this provision, and He near whom they stood had something to teach them by it. Was it not the lesson of His independence of them, and yet care for them, and fellowship with them? It is this at least. And now He bids them add their own to His—their own, which however was His also; for what they had just caught He had by His will given them. They were to bring it, however: "*Bring some of the fish which you have just taken. So Simon Peter got up*" (from the beach into the boat), and standing there hauled the net in. It was quite full, quite full. And all the fish were large. And Peter counted the number over; we seem to hear his voice as he "tells the tale"; a distinct and definite report, no round number—"one hundred and fifty-three." It was a large haul for that one cast-net; and yet "*the net had not been torn.*"

St. Peter's work and his account of it is done; and then again the solemn reticence of the Lord is broken, and He calls them to a meal around Him.

The details of ver. 12 and those which follow on it we must consider another time. All I attempt to do now as we shut the book once more is to recall the reality of the blessed scene. We look on it once more; the sun comes up over the hills, and turns the gray waters into gold. And there—look along the shore from where we stand—there is that group around the flame under the steep slope above the beach. Eight persons; seven mortal men, sitting down to their food,

and in the midst of them One who is also, and supremely, Man; visible, palpable, no illusion; the risen, the ever-living Jesus.

Let us turn away thankful, if we have again indeed seen HIM; Him living then, and therefore "alive for evermore"; alive now, loving, watching, present, now. I well remember, though long years have passed, how at a time of great mental and spiritual trial I found by God's great mercy peculiar help in just this way from this very scene, as it invited me to realize afresh this mysterious but actual personal life and presence of Jesus Christ.

There, in the sight of Him, is peace. To see and know Him living, living after He had for us "poured out His soul unto death," is the solution of doubts, the banishment of fears, the conquest of passions, the strength of the soul. From amidst that group of disciples He still says, to us to-day, "Fear not; you indeed are mortal, sinful, feeble, helpless; but I am the First and the Last; I am the Living One. I was dead, but behold I am alive for ever, alive for you, with you, in you, to the endless ages."

Jesus, such His love and power,
 Such His presence dear,
 Everywhere and every hour
 With His own is near;
 With the glorified at rest
 Far in Paradise,
 With the pilgrim saints distress
 'Neath these cloudier skies;
 With the ransom'd soul that flew
 From the cross to heaven,
 With the Emmaus travellers two,
 With the lake-borne seven.
 Lord, Thy promise Thou wilt keep,
 Thine shall dwell with Thee,
 And, awaking or asleep,
 Thus together be.

H. C. G. MOULE.

ART. IV.—THREE RECENT HISTORIES OF ISRAEL.¹

THE movement of Christian thought in the last few years has resulted in placing Old Testament questions very much in the forefront. Either in deference to argument or yielding to the drift of the time, men of all shades of Christian opinion have been repeating the demand that old views require

¹This article is adapted from a paper read before the Cambridge University Clerical Society in 1890.