

THE APOSTLES.

III. THE MINOR FIGURES.

How does Art contrive to define and quicken into life those minor characters upon whom she cannot bestow a large space or many touches? To one method, only too simple and obvious, many even among distinguished authors have been driven: the fixing a sort of label upon these personages, by which they may be known again. The fat boy in Dickens is always dropping asleep, and Mr. Buckett shaking his finger: Robespierre in Carlyle is always sea-green, and Buonaparte always bronze.

In greater writers than these we have not this repetition of one mannerism, or insistence upon one physical peculiarity, but in the place of a human being we too often find the incarnation of a quality. In Ben Jonson the minor characters are not boastful or boorish, self-indulgent or servile men, they are boastfulness or stupidity, luxury or adulation, dressed up as puppets and bidden to speak. Nay, even the supreme dramatic power of Shakespeare may, with a little attention, be caught in the workshop, and its methods detected by a study of his minor parts.

Speed is not very characteristic, except when he quibbles. Marcellus has no individuality, except so far as he forbodes public mischief (catching up this clue from Horatio), and when first discussing the apparition wants to know, "Why such daily cast of brazen cannon?" and again thinks, when the ghost reappears, that "something is rotten in the state of Denmark." Most readers can see the wires which move the clowns and pedants; and liveliness is given to the maidens in several plays by the device of making them copy closely the wiles and coquetries of their mistresses, thus reduplicating the effect which has already been elaborated.

Such things show that genius itself cannot easily vivify a character in a few strokes. And we must remember that the dramatist and the novelist have a great advantage, because they mould their incidents with a view to the unfolding and artificial display of human nature, while the historian must follow the actual course of events.

The gospel history has proved its fidelity in a remarkable way. For it has not condescended to gratify men's innocent curiosity by relating the slightest incident concerning many of the apostolic group.

It is a familiar evidence of the faith, that the Scripture is often most explicit where "the mind of the flesh" has no desire to learn, and at times most silent where men are so inquisitive as to imagine the answer which has been withheld from us.

The spurious gospels, with their wild accounts of the education of the Virgin, the childhood of Jesus, and the descent into hell, are well known specimens of the lines along which Scripture would have been impelled, if the motive power had been human curiosity and not Divine inspiration, if the gospel had been invented as an anodyne for the cravings of the intellect, and not given as bread for the hunger of the soul. And the same superhuman silence rebukes us, when we ask what supreme greatness it was, of service or of wisdom, which engraved on the foundation stones of the heavenly Jerusalem some of the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.

Concerning Simon the Cananæan, we only know what that name, and St. Luke's translation of it, tell us. He had been a Zealot. For a moment at least he had been drawn to that wild and unscrupulous movement which at last shook down his country. Was it while yet in the fever of such excited energies that he saw the wondrous works of Jesus, did homage to the zeal of God's house which ate Him up (John ii. 17, R.V.), and

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thenceforce yielded his soul to be gradually transformed by the milder ardours of the Christian faith? Or was it in some hour of sad reaction against the violence and guilt of his faction that he was drawn to the gentler Physician of bleeding souls, as one looks up, with aching eyes, from the glare of a conflagration to the silver light of heaven?

We know not; nor is any effort whatever made to fix our attention upon the fact, of more profound significance than perhaps the evangelists themselves were conscious, that the wild zeal of Simon was called into such close communion with the Lamb of God. Jesus never indicated more clearly that His Church was to embrace all phases and temperaments of human nature, and that He was Himself the Son of man, the Child of universal humanity, who could sympathise with high aspiring, even when it was ill-regulated and mistaken, with zeal toward God though not according to knowledge, than when He, the meek and lowly of heart, who should not strive, nor cry, nor lift up His voice in the streets, chose for one of His immediate followers the Zealot. Neither is any comment made upon the scorn of mere prudence which enrolled a follower so sure to be suspected. That it was so is recorded: the conclusion we are left to draw for ourselves. Nor do we read anything of the gallant labours by which Simon doubtless justified the choice. As he comes, so he passes away, in silence. We only know of him, because we know it of all, that he praised God when his Lord ascended, awaited the Comforter in the upper room, rejoiced when they were accounted worthy to suffer dishonour for the Name (Acts v. 41), and bore his part in the planting of the sacred seed in the broad field of the world. Yet there is no more tempting subject for legend or romance to work upon than the deeds of the Zealot in the cause of Jesus. But possibly his methods, however effective, were not the best to put on

record for the meditations of the Church. Beyond doubt they were outshone by the achievements of that other who was called, while breathing out threats and slaughters, to bear the name of Jesus to remote nations and to kings.

And thus, edification not requiring the record, not a solitary act or word of Simon Zelotes is preserved to us. It suffices him that his name is written in the one lasting roll of fame, the book of life.

We are in almost equal ignorance concerning James the Little in stature, miscalled James the Less. We do not certainly know that he was a different person from the brother of the Lord, although it will never be the opinion of unsophisticated readers that if one brother (or two, for Jude must follow the same ruling) were already among the Twelve, and had shared in the great confession of St. Peter, "Thou art . . . the Son of the living God," St. John could have written that, in the last period of Christ's ministry, "even His brethren did not believe on Him" (vii. 5).¹

No careful reader can be misled by the Authorized Version of Galatians i. 19, nor would this rendering itself establish the conclusion which has been drawn from it (*cf.* Lightfoot *in loc.*). And if it be objected that three persons of one name could scarcely have held prominent positions in the Church, we may well ask in reply whether it was the son of Zebedee, or the brother of Jesus and bishop of Jerusalem, who needed to be distinguished by the singular title James the Small.

Thus we are led to the conclusion that we have a second Apostle, concerning whose words or deeds not an echo of fame has reached us.

¹ The answer of Lange is surely enough to put his case out of court. "The brethren of Jesus, though still, when viewed in the light of the subsequent pentecostal season, unbelieving, *i.e.* self-willed and gloomy, could nevertheless be apostles" (*Life*, i., 336).

Nor does it appear, at first sight, that the case of Bartholomew is any clearer. His very name is uncertain, Bar-tholomew being only the son of Tolmai, BARTHOLOMEW. as Bartimæus is the son of Timæus. But an ingenious conjecture throws some light, though flickering and uncertain, upon the subject. The group of fishers in the closing narrative of St. John consists entirely of apostles, unless Nathanael be an exception (xxi. 2). But Nathanael was previously mentioned in the story of the calling of the first and greatest of the apostles, and there we read that he was found by Philip. Now it is pointed out, that the three catalogues in the synoptical gospels all join the name of Bartholomew with this same Philip. It is therefore a reasonable conjecture, so long as we remember that it is a surmise and no more, which makes Nathanael the son of Tolmai.

And this brings within our scope an incident delicately drawn. When a Nazarene is announced to Nathanael as the Messiah, local prejudice and the unfitness of such a hamlet for such honour make him dubious. And when Jesus pronounces him an Israelite indeed, because guileless, and therefore worthy of the better name of him who was at first a supplanter, he is still cautious, and asks, "Whence knowest Thou me?" And yet, in this question, the character given to him is justified. For he does not feel it to be misplaced: no hidden dishonesty causes the saying to jar upon his consciousness; rather, he asks how it comes to pass that he is known so well. And when Jesus answers by indicating some secret of his inner life, his guileless nature no longer hesitates to confess Him largely and amply, and the true Israelite does homage to his King: "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God" (whom the Baptist thus describes, ver. 34), "Thou art the King of Israel."

How often has our curiosity asked what it was that

Jesus saw beneath the fig tree, what temptation conquered, what good deed performed, what passionate prayer of the genuine Israelite for his forsaken land? But the tact of Jesus betrayed not what the simplicity of Nathanael would fain conceal. The Lord proceeds to stimulate his hope by a promise of greater things, in which all the group should have a part,¹ such a reunion of heaven and earth as was revealed to Jacob, ere yet his guile was burned out of him in the fire of affliction, the coming and going of angels as upon a ladder upon Him whom His disciples confessed to be the Son of God, but who loved to call Himself the Son of man (John i. 45-51).

The graceful reticence of Jesus with regard to Nathanael's innocent secret; the coyness of the intellect and the alacrity of the heart of the new disciple, and the title he gives his King, which virtually says, "If I be an Israelite, my fealty is Thine"; the reward promised to his faith, which is not a personal gain, but an ampler revelation; and the repeated allusion to the history of the patriarch,—all contribute to the effect of this sunny and delightful incident. And yet all we read afterwards of Nathanael is that he went a-fishing with Peter. And except by this conjecture we know absolutely nothing of the Apostle Bartholomew. So far is Scripture from idealizing even its greatest names.

One certain incident only brings Jude into a clearer light, since the same arguments which apply to James the Little show that he too was not the brother of our
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 Lord, the author of the Epistle of Jude.

From his position in the lists, we may be sure that he is the Lebbæus of St. Matthew and the Thaddæus of St. Mark; and perhaps these names were used, like the additions of the epithet, "brother (or son) of James," to separate him clearly from the infamy of his terrible namesake.

¹ "Believest thou? . . . ye shall see."

What we read of him is one thoughtful question, met by a full and deeply spiritual answer. "Lord, what is come to pass that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" To Jude we owe the great exposition how love leads to obedience, and attracts in return the Divine love which leads to manifestation; while they who love not Christ cannot keep His words (John xiv. 22-24).

Reassured then by the utter absence of all "tendency" from the narrative, which seeks not to create a wonderful career, nor spiritual achievement, nor intellectual distinction for the chosen ones, we return to those minor personages in the group of whom some few incidents are recorded. Putting these incidents together, we ask whether they indicate real character, life, individuality; and if so, whether there is any trace of artifice or self-consciousness in the indications.

Foremost in order and perhaps in interest is Andrew, the brother of the strong and impetuous Peter, and sharer of the family temperament.

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When he, with another, hears the Baptist's testimony, they promptly follow Jesus, who is hitherto unattended, and has apparently come back from the temptation to make a silent claim on His forerunner for the first elements out of which He will mould His Church. It was not for mortal to accost Jesus before He had begun His public work of grace. But when He asks, "What seek ye?" the answer is direct and brief: "Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?" From the lowly home of Jesus Andrew goes to Peter with the short and sharp utterance of an eager man who has no misgivings, "We have found the Messiah," so unlike the weighed and slow declaration of the same fact by Philip, who took seventeen words to announce what Andrew said in three. And here again the reticence must be observed which tells us nothing of the surprise of the two friends, confronted by a Messiah so unlike the national hope, in a

dwelling so unlike their dreams, nor anything of the earliest, wonderful discourse which sent forth Andrew, with his soul on fire, the first convert that ever led another to his Lord, and that other, the Peter of the keys. Does any one doubt that legend would have reversed the positions of Simon and Andrew in this narrative? ¹

When Jesus called the two brothers from their nets, Andrew was no less prompt than Simon to obey: "They straightway left the nets, and followed Him" (Matt. iv. 20).

In the miracle of the five thousand, when the disciples were bidden to see what provision was forthcoming, Andrew discovered the lad with the loaves and fishes; and St. John, who only has preserved this detail, so tells it as to suggest a suspicion that there was already some lurking hope of what should follow, the information being apparently ready, and Andrew's suggestive mention of this little store being contrasted with Philip's unenterprising calculation (John vi. 7, 8).

Still more characteristic is the story of the application of certain Greeks to the Apostle with a Greek name. Philip hesitates, knows not what to do; but the difficulty vanishes the moment that Andrew, as a helpful person, is consulted: Philip and Andrew went and told Jesus (John xii. 22). This is in exact harmony with all that we know of both; yet so undesigned and subtle is the coincidence, that even Dean Alford has overlooked it, and transposed the parts they play. "When certain Greeks wished for an interview with Jesus, they applied through Andrew, who consulted Philip," etc. (Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, Art. Andrew). It may safely be asserted that Andrew would have done nothing of the kind.

¹ Renan can of course explain the part they take by the simple theory that St. John was jealous of Peter, and sought to put him in a secondary place, even in this matter (*Vie*, p. lxvi., note 2; 15th edition). But most sceptics would find their positions gravely compromised indeed, if they brought back the Gospel of St. John so far as this unamiable theory demands.

Once more, when the three who formed an inner circle desired to ask a question of pre-eminent importance, when should the temple be destroyed, and what should be the sign, they associated Andrew with them in asking Jesus "privately" (Mark xiii. 3). All this is consistent, lucid, and natural: let us see how it agrees with the conduct of others.

We have already twice glanced at the contrast between the decision of Andrew and the greater deliberation of

PHILIP. Philip. A slow, and even hesitating circumspection is the distinctive peculiarity of this disciple. At the very outset he needs a direct impulse from the supreme Will; he is the first whom Jesus claims, and as it were seizes, saying, "Follow Me." In Smith's *Dictionary* he is described as repeating to Nathanael "the self-same words with which Andrew had brought to Peter the good news that the Christ had at last appeared." But the difference is far more significant than the likeness, and none would fail to distinguish the words of the brother of Peter, if shown for the first time the two sentences, one so concentrated, the other so cautious, so cumulative in its slow disclosure, so diplomatic in reserving to the very last the dangerous word which did actually startle his hearers. One said, "We have found the Christ": the other, "Him whom Moses wrote of in the law, and the prophets, we have found, Jesus the son of Joseph, Him of Nazareth." And when Nathanael questions further, Philip returns the unemotional, discreet answer, "Come and see" (John i. 43-47). It was to Philip, and specially to prove him, that Jesus put the question, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" And with his natural grave circumspection Philip calculates the sum necessary to give each of them a little (John vi. 5-7).

We have already seen him needing the advice of Andrew before venturing to tell Jesus of the application of the

Greeks (John xii. 20-22). And when Jesus declares that from henceforth His disciples know, and have seen the Father, Philip suddenly discloses a desire for more tangible evidence than even that of the voice which lately came, for their sakes, who needed it, from heaven. There is care, misgiving, the accent of a troubled heart in his answer, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us"; if we had seen Him these brooding anxieties would be at rest (John xiv. 8).

In him a different type of character finds a place among the Twelve, and even a place of honour; for the slow and cautious heart is often most loyal at the core. Philip is leader of the second of those three groups of four Apostles, into which we have seen that the Twelve are sub-divided.

Yet one cannot but feel that Clement of Alexandria has either preserved a fact, or else indicated, perhaps unconsciously, a striking resemblance of character, when he quotes the words as addressed to Philip, "Let the dead bury their dead, but thou follow Me." Was he not the very man to plead, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father"?

From Philip to Thomas is but one step, and that in the same direction; but the advance is real, and the characteristics, though similar, are discriminated as accurately as the melancholy of Jacques from THOMAS. that of Hamlet. Philip hesitates and considers, Thomas despairs. He is in sore danger of falling, and the hour will come when he must either conquer his besetment or perish. Yet he is kept by the fire of real love, which gleams through all the smoke of his despondency. For he is loyal when most hopeless, and his character is perfectly shown in the first event that is recorded of him. When Jesus would return to Judæa, where the Jews had lately sought to kill Him, and added to some obscure sayings about Lazarus the plain words, "Lazarus is dead, . . .

let us go unto him," Thomas readily inferred the worst. All was over now; nothing was left but either to forsake his Master or to share His fate. And yet the faithful heart conquered the gloomy temperament, and he said, with no parade of loyalty, not addressing Jesus Himself, but his comrades, Let us be true to the end; "let us also go, that we may die with Him" (John xi. 16). It is a saying which deserves the notice of those shallow critics who find only boastfulness in the professions of the last supper.

The same helplessness (brooding no doubt upon the solemn warnings which intervened, but unable to accept these with their stated limitations, and with the promise of ultimate triumph which accompanied them every one) reappears in the second incident recorded. It was when Jesus said, "Whither I go, ye know the way," that he seized the opportunity to confess his perplexities in the discouraging and despairing comment, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest: how know we the way?" (John xiv. 5.) He speaks for his brethren as well as himself; but Thomas was their spokesman in despair, as naturally as Peter in the confession of their faith.

Such joyless temperaments are given to solitude.¹ We know too little to rely upon the absence of any conjunction of another name with his, but there is much significance in the fact that he was not with the disciples when they solemnly assembled, with due precautions, in the evening of the resurrection day (John xx. 24). In what seclusion had he buried his woes, that all day long no rumour of the return of hope had reached him? Or in what obstinate despair had he repelled the tidings, and held aloof from the

¹ Jacques and Hamlet have just been mentioned. The former in his affectation of melancholy, says, "I thank you for your company; but, good faith, I had as lief have been myself alone." And the latter says, "Man delights not me, nor woman neither."

assembly, whose agitation and suspense would irritate his settled gloom? Accordingly no vision but his own will convince him; and even this he does not think enough, for it is not the sincerity of his comrades that he doubts, he would equally refuse the same evidence exhibited to himself. Such is the utter despair of love in its defeat, a love which broods over the list of the cruel wounds that have bereaved it, and requires to verify them all. And yet some unconscious hope relieved the darkness of the long week which followed, for he was not absent when Jesus reappeared.

This was the crisis of his life, when his character will be fixed, and he must either "become" faithless or believing (*μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος, ἀλλὰ πιστός*). And his glad avowal, for it is more than a cry, tells us that the victory is won. Thou art "my Lord and my God" (for *Ὁ Κύριός μου* is a confession; an exclamation would have been *Κύριε*).

We are surely entitled to claim these three various incidents as a revelation of consistent character, more perfect than any which the students of Shakespeare have found wrought upon as small a canvas.

Of the minor Apostles, only Matthew is left. And here the study is complicated, because we know more of his true nature from the character of his gospel (the authenticity of which is here assumed, as well MATTHEW. as the obvious identity of Matthew and Levi), than from what is told us directly of him. Something however is recorded, and we can compare the two sources of information.

From the fact that he had been a publican, we may infer that his feelings, if strong, would be silent and repressed, as are those of all whose position is equivocal and ill thought of. When Jesus called, "he left all"; but it is not he himself who joins this statement to the words "he rose and followed Him," nor who records the fact that

he made for Jesus "a great feast in his own house"¹ (Luke v. 28, 29). St. Matthew's expression was both unostentatious and natural from the man himself, "as Jesus sat at meat *in the house*" (Matt. ix. 10). Here, because they saw the acceptance of a publican, many publicans and sinners sat at meat with Him, and his gospel, which is accused of a specially Hebrew tone and of Old Testament sympathies, records that His discourse was of the futility of patching old garments, and putting new wine into old skins.

And this is all we know of him, except one striking inference. Although he was apparently the only man of business among the Twelve, and should naturally have been the treasurer, yet he was either content to yield the post to Judas, or submissive when supplanted by him.

Trained in the somewhat mechanical duties of an officer of customs, and repressed besides by the evil reputation of his calling, silent about his large hospitality, but careful to record his shame, and willing to stand aside when another would push before him, what sort of gospel should we expect from Matthew? His writing should exhibit order, an interest in numbers, a business-like attention to detail, accuracy rather than boldness or a fiery reproduction of passionate and striking scenes; and yet under all this the strong, deep feeling of the man who never forgot that the King of the Jews had called the toll-gatherer of the Roman to His side. Nor is it wonderful that his gospel should be the most Hebrew of the four, and more than the others careful to trace in the story of Christ all the fibres of connexion with that ancient system which his former calling had somewhat slighted.

And this is exactly what we find. At the beginning, he so arranges the genealogy that there shall be three sections,

¹ He alone, in the list of Apostles, adds to his own name the epithet of shame, "the publican."

each of fourteen persons, so that the Messiah comes in the seventh place after six sevens. It is from him alone that we learn that a second demoniac was healed at Gerasa, and a second blind man in Jericho (Matt. i. 17, viii. 27, xx. 30). And these two parallel cases entirely turn the edge of the somewhat clumsy railleries of Strauss, because Matthew alone mentions also that in the triumphal entry the ass accompanied her foal. It is in his manner thus to particularize, as if he were entering an account; it is not in that of either Mark or Luke.

If any one doubts the comparative absence of graphic and vivid delineation, he need only compare the three accounts of the fierceness and the cleansing of the demoniac (Matt. viii. 28, Mark v. 1, Luke viii. 26), or the two reports of that noble peroration, the falling of the house built upon sand, and the stability of the other which was built upon a rock (Matt. vii. 24, Luke vi. 47).

Yet when he comes to relate the suffering, the death, and the awful consequences of the death of his Master, it is this evangelist, elsewhere so calm and self-restrained, who rises to an epic grandeur and overwhelming energy, nor is anything in any other gospel even comparable to this astonishing narrative.

The four gospels have now been subjected to an elaborate and exhaustive cross-examination. Not one incident that is related of the more obscure Apostles, by which the slightest insight into character could be obtained, has been (consciously, at all events) passed over. And what have we found? Not a vestige of straining after effect, not the least desire to exhibit one of them as a hero or even as a saint, but human nature in all its varied phases, energetic, fearful, despondent, business-like, always vivid, consistent, lifelike.

Either the evangelists possessed a graphic and imagi-

native power equal to that of the greatest genius in all literature, enabling them, not once or twice, in three or four touches to create a distinct individual man, which power however they wielded quite unconsciously in the service of religion and not of art, or else they drew from life. One of these alternatives the sceptic is bound to choose. And when doing so, he must observe that he is dealing with one more strange phenomenon, in addition to so many others, a testimony of a different kind, reinforcing from an unexpected quarter the witness of history, of the Church, of the supernatural morality and the quickening spiritual power of Christianity, and above all, of the sublime and unearthly conception of Him who stands in the midst of this homely group, God manifested among these men of the people.

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THE IMAGE AND THE STONE.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR! At that dread name how terrible a form rises from its ancient grave! The mighty conqueror of the antique eastern world stands before us illumined by three brief but vivid flashes of Scripture history; otherwise he would be but a name. He built Babylon, adorned and fortified it so as to be the wonder of its time—of all time, as historians and travellers tell of its vastness and record its splendour; nevertheless the builder of Babylon would be of small interest to us had he not destroyed Jerusalem, that little hill city! Three times he laid his hands upon it, twice besieged it, again and again carried into captivity its kings, its princes, its priests. Some perished early on the dismal journey, slain before the stern conqueror at Riblah, slain before the eyes of the last Hebrew king, ere those