

THE APOSTLE JOHN.

ALL ages and all writers appear to have been sensible of the singular difficulty of the task before them, when they have endeavoured to form and to express their conception of "the disciple whom Jesus loved." They seem to have felt that they were entering into a new region of existence, elevated far above that in which they had previously lived and moved, more sublime, more spiritual, more heavenly and incomprehensible. We can hardly wonder that it should have been so, for it is impossible to doubt that it was some special affinity of character to His own that made the Redeemer draw the beloved disciple so closely to His bosom; that knit Him to him by bonds even more dear and tender than the bonds by which He united Himself to those whom He called "not servants but friends"; that made Him find in him the deepest revealer of the mystery of His own Person, of the essence of His Gospel, and of the fortunes of His Church. Whatever may be said of St. John, in comparing him with the other Apostles of our Lord; or however, when we look at him in himself, we may feel baffled in our efforts to follow him in the depth of his perceptions, in the spirituality of his views, and in the profound contemplativeness of his character, this consideration alone must most of all fill us with a consciousness of our weakness to speak of him as we ought, that in him, more than ever in mortal man besides himself, there dwelt the mind of Christ,—the mind of One who "in the beginning was with God, and was God," and whom none but the Father knew (John i. 1; Matt. xi. 27). Before even endeavouring to

comprehend such a personality we must have learned, so far at least, to feel with him by whom it is exhibited. *Οὐ τὸν νοῦν*, says Origen, in beautiful allusion to the place allowed to St. John upon his Master's breast, and illustrating at the same time the fundamental law of all interpretation, whether of sacred persons or of Scripture truths, *οὐ τὸν νοῦν οὐδεὶς δύναται λαβεῖν μὴ ἀναπεσὼν ἐπὶ τὸ στήθος Ἰησοῦ*. There too let us rest, that, drinking from the same fountain the same waters of life, we may the better understand him who has done more than any other Apostle of the Lord for the highest forms of Christian theology in the past, and who is destined to do even more in the future than he has yet accomplished.

St. John was the son, in all probability the younger son, younger at least than his brother St. James, of Zebedee and Salome. Alford, indeed, founding upon the order in which the two names are mentioned in Luke ix. 28 and Acts i. 13, doubts whether this inference as to the relative ages of the two brothers is not hasty. But in all the catalogues of the Apostles, including St. Luke's own catalogue in chap. vi. 14, the name of James stands first. What is probably of still greater consequence in its bearing upon this point, he is also mentioned first in Mark x. 35, a passage in which we might naturally expect the order of age to be observed; and the general tradition of the Church favours the same conclusion. Of the father we know little. He was a fisherman upon the Sea of Galilee, who pursued that occupation along with his sons, and continued it even after they had been summoned, and had obeyed the summons, by Christ to follow Him. Of Salome we fortunately know more; and it is not without a pleasure which all will share that we must regard her as one of those mothers in Israel to whose example and training the world has so often owed its greatest benefactors and its noblest heroes. It is possible, though by no means certain, that Salome was a sister of

the Virgin Mary; for if, at John xix. 25, we adopt the view, apparently first suggested by Wieseler, that four and not, as commonly supposed, three women are named—"But there were standing by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene," a comparison of Matthew xxvii. 56 and Mark xv. 40, xvi. 1, makes it plain that the second can be no other than "Salome" or "the mother of the sons of Zebedee." It is unnecessary to investigate the point, because it would not help us to understand better the ties that bound Jesus to St. John. These depended, not on relationship by blood, but on spiritual sympathy: "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold, My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt xii. 48-50). Whether related to the Virgin or not, the piety of Salome appears in her constant waiting on Jesus, and ministering to Him of the substance which she possessed either as her own or through her husband (Mark xv. 40, xvi. 1; Luke viii. 3; comp. Mark i. 20); nor can we fail to recognise an exhibition of the same spirit, mixed though it may have been with earthly elements, when we are told that she came to Jesus with the request, "Command that these my two sons may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left hand, in Thy kingdom" (Matt. xx. 21). That was not an act of simply proud ambition, or she would have chosen a private, not a public, moment for her request. Fulness of Messianic hope and enthusiasm for the cause of One whom she felt to be worthy of her trust and love, as well as zeal for her children's good, were there. That the susceptible heart of the son should have been powerfully influenced by the character of the mother it is impossible to doubt; and the traces of the influence are before us in all that

we know of his later life and in his writings. To that fountain-head we may in no small degree trace, as streams to their source, St. John's passionate devotion to the higher spirit of Judaism; his striking familiarity, more striking in his case than in that of any other writer of the New Testament, with the figures, the symbols, and the essence of the Old Testament; as well as what has been too little recognised, his intensely moral, even while ideal, conception of the Christian faith. How much we owe to Salome we shall never in this world know.

In circumstances such as these John received his training in the faith of his fathers; and, as that receptivity which in after life formed one of the most distinguishing features of his character must have existed in the child and in the boy, we may be sure that, from his earliest years, he would imbibe in a far greater than ordinary degree the sublime recollections and aspirations of Israel. In the Jewish sense of the word, however, St. John was not a learned man. The people at Jerusalem looked upon both him and his fellow Apostle St. Peter as "unlearned and ignorant" (Acts iv. 13); that is, as men who could be regarded in no other light because they had not passed through the discipline of the Rabbinical Schools. Well for both of them, well at least for him who is always, and justly, considered the younger of the two, that it had been so. That discipline would have its value; but for one who was to act the part of the son of Zebedee a far more valuable education had been provided,—that of the family and the synagogue, of a busy occupation, of the silent stars as they shone by night upon the Sea of Galilee.

This special training again possesses for us, when we think of what would be the natural development of the Apostle, its own peculiar interest. The humble occupation and want of systematic education of St. John have often been represented as inconsistent with the idea that he could be

the author of the New Testament books that bear his name. To write them, it is imagined, would require the cultivated taste, the enlarged liberality of soul, the refined and gentle feelings which belong to the polished life of cities rather than the rude life of the country and the fisherman. Not so. It was St. John's very familiarity with nature rather than with man, his moving amidst her scenes of grandeur and beauty rather than amidst the conventionalities of a stiff and pedantic scholasticism, that fitted him to take into his fresh heart its impressions both of the personality of Jesus and of the lessons which He taught. Had St. John been a disciple of the school even of Gamaliel, to say nothing of lesser lights, we should probably have had from him neither the fourth gospel nor the Apocalypse. Inspiration does not confer new powers or alter the constitution of the mind. To each man is given "according to his several ability" (Matt. xxv. 15).

We first hear of John in the Gospels as connected with the Baptist, to whom it would seem that he had attached himself at the very beginning of his ministry (John i. 35). Upon him too the Baptist evidently made a deeper impression than upon any other of the evangelists who describe his mission. This may have arisen partly from the fact that John was a disciple of the Baptist, while they were not. But the explanation must be further sought in his ability to enter more deeply than they into the spirit of the Baptist's mission, and especially to appreciate more fully its higher evangelical aspects. This much at least is clear, that, while the other evangelists present, more distinctly than St. John, the Baptist as the great prophet of repentance, as the stern reprover of the sins of Israel, St. John presents him more fully in his more immediate relation to the Saviour, and in his appreciation of the inward power and glory of His coming. He not only omits such statements as those found in Matthew iii. 7-10, Luke iii.

7-14, but he alone gives us the three confessions of Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael, which unfold in a climacteric series the loftiest conceptions alike of what Jesus was and of what He was to do. "We have found the Messiah"; "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph"; "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art King of Israel." Nor is this all; for he alone records those closing words of his career in which the Baptist shows how deeply, from the Old Testament point of view, he had entered into the spirit of the Messiah's work, and had welcomed the life and light and joy which it was to bring to a redeemed world: "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease" (John iii. 29, 30). There is no good reason to suppose that, because such words have not been also reported by the synoptists, they are to be regarded as the creation of St. John. They are perfectly suited to the Forerunner. They are even implied in the consideration upon which he grounded his call to repentance, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii. 2); and that St. John remembered and gives them, while the earlier evangelists fail to do so, is but a proof, partly of the greater susceptibility of his nature, and partly of the manner in which he beheld all things, past present and to come, as they pointed to, existed in, or were to spring from Him who was the Light and the Life of men.

The Baptist was the first to direct John's attention to Jesus, and that in words which again the latter alone has preserved, "Behold, the Lamb of God" (John i. 36). In company with Andrew, he immediately followed Jesus, inquired of Him where He stayed, accompanied Him to the place, and remained with Him all that evening. What

the subject of conversation was we are not informed ; but the Divine Sower had scattered His good seed in the young, ingenuous heart then open to Him, and, although John returned at this time for a little to his ordinary work, the seed began to spring up ; and when, shortly afterwards, the formal call was given, he immediately left the employment with which he was occupied at the time, and followed Jesus (Matt. iv. 21, 22).

From this time onward until the close of his Master's earthly career John was the constant and close attendant on His ministry. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the nature of that relationship which was formed between them, and which, partly as a cause, partly as a consequence, enabled the disciple to enter more fully into the heart of the Master than any other of His followers. Not merely was he one of the chosen three, who alone were permitted to be present at the raising of the daughter of Jairus, at the transfiguration, and at the agony in Gethsemane (Luke viii. 51, ix. 28 ; Mark xiv. 33), even of that chosen band he was the most chosen, *ἐκλεκτῶν ἐκλεκτότερος*, as one of the Fathers calls him. He leaned upon Christ's breast at supper, not accidentally, but as the disciple whom Jesus loved (John xiii. 23). He and St. Peter alone of the Apostles, when their Master was betrayed and taken before the judgment seat, went in with Him to the palace of the high priest (John xviii. 15). He alone seems to have accompanied Him to Calvary ; and to him the Saviour's last charge on behalf of His afflicted mother was given, "Woman, behold thy son ! Son, behold thy mother !" (John xix. 26, 27.) He was the first on the resurrection morning, after Mary Magdalene had brought the tidings that the tomb was empty, to reach the sepulchre (John xx. 4) ; and, when Jesus appeared to His disciples at the Sea of Galilee, he was again the first, with that instinct which depth of affection gives, to recognise Him on the

shore (John xxi. 7). Throughout the whole of Christ's life on earth it is the same. St. John is ever nearest to Him; leaning upon His breast, not at supper only, but in spirit always, and meriting the beautiful name of *ἐπιστήθιος*, by which he was distinguished in the early Church.

And the Saviour met him in the same loving fellowship; not because he was the most talented, or because he was in all probability the youngest, the Benjamin, of the apostolic band; not even because he had most faith: but because he so leaned upon Him and clung to Him. He looked into the depths of that sensitive and sympathising nature, saw how wholly it was given up to Him, marked the trembling of its love, beheld the delight with which it drank ever larger draughts of grace out of His fulness and would fain even have lost itself in Him. He took that disciple therefore to His breast; and, so much did all feel the suitability of the fellowship, that no murmur was excited in them at the apparent preference. The appropriateness, the beauty, and the necessity of the union were seen by them. They could rejoice in beholding the soul of Jonathan knit to a far higher than the soul of David; and, like them, all after ages of the Church have thought of that Divine communion with a wonder and a joy unmarred by any trace of envy.

After the ascension of our Lord we have little information regarding St. John of any special interest. He is indeed several times mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as labouring and suffering along with the Apostle Peter, equally earnest, equally bold, equally ready to die in the cause of Christ. At a somewhat later date St. Paul found him at Jerusalem enjoying the high distinction of being regarded, along with St. Peter and St. James, as one of the pillars of the Church (Gal. ii. 9), a circumstance which, taken along with the fact that St. Paul thought it necessary to explain chiefly to them the nature of his work among the

Gentiles, would lead us to believe that at this period John must still have belonged to that portion of the Christian community which had not risen to the full conception of the entirely independent character of the Christian faith.

After this date the Bible is silent regarding St. John ; but the traditions of the Church, which are in his case less contradictory than they generally are, agree in the statement that the latter part of his life was spent in proconsular Asia and chiefly in Ephesus, which, late in the first century, became the great centre of eastern Christianity. At what time he went there indeed we do not know. It could hardly have been before St. Paul visited the city, for it was that Apostle's rule not to enter upon the field of other men's labours, and in the Epistle to the Ephesians there is neither mention of his name nor allusion to anything that might have been occasioned by his presence. The probability is that, deeply attached to Jerusalem, clinging to the memories which had become associated with it through the labours and death of Jesus, he lingered on the sacred spot till the time of its desolation approached. Then he may have wandered forth from a place upon which the judgment of God had set its seal, and found his way to Ephesus. There is no cause at least to doubt that he laboured there, or that he enjoyed there that honour and respect which Eusebius has commemorated by describing him as the high priest wearing the golden plate.¹ From Ephesus, according to a tolerably unanimous, if rather indefinite, tradition of the Church, which finds confirmation in the words of Revelation i. 9, he was banished for a time to the island of Patmos, a rock in the Ægean Sea, but was afterwards permitted to return to the scene of his labours in Ephesus. The days of the old Apostle were now however drawing to a close. The companions of his earlier life, those whose eyes, like his, had seen, whose ears had

¹ *H. E.* v. 24.

heard, and whose hands had handled of the Word of life, had all been long since gathered to their rest. They had fought out their battle, and won their crown. And his time too was come. With what joy may we imagine him waiting for his call to join the Master whom he loved, and from whose presence he had been separated for more than threescore years! How would he lift up his head as he beheld the hour of his redemption drawing nigh! He died, and was buried at Ephesus; and with him closes the apostolic age.

Such are the main incidents of St. John's life so far as known to us, and we have now to mark his character as a whole.

St. John's was one of those richer natures that belong less to the age in which they live than to the ages that follow them. If it be true, as a great poet of the present century has said, that it "needs the ideal to brush the dust an hair's breadth off the actual"; if it be not so much by men of action as by profound principles and ideas that the world is governed and its onward march guided: then it is the idealist in the highest and best sense of the word in whom the future as well as the present may most claim its share. Such an idealist St. John pre-eminently was. Of all the Apostles it was he who caught most the spirit of his Master, of that Divine Redeemer who, as the "Word made flesh," embodied the kingdom of heaven in the forms and modes of earth. Yet he caught that spirit upon its idealistic side, and it is with the eye of intuition, rather than with that of sharp defining intellect, that he gazes upon the glory which he beheld in Jesus. The idea itself in mystic grandeur rises before his view; it is for others to analyse and to define. He could not, like St. Paul, have separated the parts of that truth which had been revealed to him, nor could he have followed in all its windings the experience of different classes of individuals as they came into connexion

with the truths of God. The most general expressions therefore are those that are familiar to him, expressions which it is almost impossible to define, and the force of which is lost by the very effort to do so. Christ is "Life"; Christ is "Light"; Christ is "the Truth"; sin is darkness, is death. Let us try to define words like these; and, if we succeed, we are instantly out of the sphere of thought in which the Apostle moved. We have passed from the immediate contemplation of the spiritual and eternal, and have taken our place in the region of mental analysis and dialectic speculation.

Similar to this was St. John's relation to action. In restlessness of energy, in outward activity, in the power of applying means to ends, he could not have done the work either of St. Peter or of St. Paul. As it could not have been his to meet with the needful versatility of talent the wants of men of all the different nations of the earth, of Asia Minor, of Macedonia, at Athens, and at Rome, so neither could it have been his to open the door of faith to the Gentiles, and to combat for the application of the principles of the Gospel to many of the mixed questions of the time. It was not in action that his strength lay. At our very first introduction to him, when, along with Andrew, he had spent the evening with Jesus, it was Andrew and not he that ran to communicate to others what he had found (John i. 40). On those occasions, already noticed, when we find him associated with Peter, the latter at once takes the leading and commanding position. And hence, in all probability, the fact which at first sight seems so strange, that the Apostle who has left the deepest traces of his mind upon the Church of Christ should apparently have made so little impression upon his fellow Apostles. They did not fully comprehend his contemplative and ideal nature. They would have better understood him had he been foremost to speak like Peter, first to doubt like Thomas. But

he was neither ; and that eye alone which saw what was in man beheld the rich treasures buried under the "abounding sea" which swelled in His disciple's heart, till every bay and creek around its wide circumference was full. St. John can act, but he is not first in action.

Yet this shrinking from action arose from no indifference, from no shallow or superficial views, from no latitudinarian feelings, from no want of readiness to sacrifice himself in his Master's cause. His feelings, on the contrary, were keen and deep, absorbing his whole soul, burning within him as a fire. To this, in all probability, he owed that surname of Boanerges, which, in common with his brother James, he received from Jesus (Mark iii. 17) ; not a name to denote any power of startling eloquence, but rather that vehement temperament which a strong grasp of great ideas gives, and which, when afterwards spiritualized and refined in intercourse with Christ, was to sustain His disciple's otherwise gentle spirit in his long conflict with a world which was the enemy of God (Jas. iv. 4). From a soul like this storms may be expected to burst forth. "It is not surprising," says Stanley, "that the deep stillness of such a character should, like the oriental sky, break out from time to time into tempests of impassioned vehemence ; still less that the character which was to excel all others in its devoted love of good should give indications—in its earlier stages even in excess—of that intense hatred of evil without which love of good can hardly be said to exist."¹

On various occasions during our Lord's ministry we find this vehemence exhibiting itself, as when, *e.g.*, he would have called down fire from heaven upon the Samaritan village, and when he would have forbidden certain disciples to cast out devils in Christ's name because they followed not with them (Luke ix. 54, 49). We find it, though unmingled there with earthly elements, in the singular manner

¹ *Sermons and Essays on the Apostolic Age*, p. 250.

in which he alludes to Judas. Whenever he mentions him, he either quotes some strong expression of Jesus, or uses language of his own, portraying the repulsion with which he shrank from him. "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil" (John vi. 70), are words of Christ preserved by him alone. "This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and bearing the bag, took away what was put therein" (John xii. 6), is again a remark in connexion with the anointing by Mary made by him alone. He notices the relief which the departure of the traitor from the upper chamber in Jerusalem evidently afforded to our Lord: "When therefore he was gone out, Jesus saith, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him" (John xiii. 31); and, when he mentions the other Judas, he interposes the caution "Judas, not Iscariot" (John xiv. 22), in order that the chance of confusion between him and the traitor may be avoided.

As connected with this point, it may be well to notice for a moment in passing the remarkable manner in which St. John associates the name "Iscariot," not with Judas only, but with Simon his father. "Now he spake of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot"; "So when He had dipped the sop, He taketh and giveth it to Judas the son of Simon Iscariot" (John vi. 71, xiii. 26, later readings). There is nothing indeed remarkable in the fact considered in itself; for if, as is most probable, the meaning of "Iscariot" be "the man of Kerioth," the use of the term is not less appropriate in the case of the father than of the son. But why mention it? Kerioth was a town in the tribe of Judah (Josh. xv. 25), and the thought of Judah suggested the idea of "the Jews." Not only then is Judas a man of Kerioth, that town of Judah and the Jews, his father is so too. The principle of heredity is present to the Apostle's mind, and the double link seems to deepen the

thought of the existence in Judas of all that was most alien to the person and the work of Jesus.

These instances might of themselves sufficiently illustrate the strength of feeling with which St. John recoiled from the enemies of Christ. But the same thing appears in his language on many other occasions: "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar"; "If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works"; "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer"; "Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" (1 John v. 10; 2 John 10, 11; 1 John iii. 15, ii. 22.) And, lastly, if we come to the traditions of his later days, the truth of which there seems to be no good reason to dispute, we find a similar spirit in the story of Cerinthus and the bath, when, the moment that he discovered the heretic, the Apostle exclaimed, "Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall in, as there is within it Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth"; and when, suiting the action to the word, he sprang out of the bath-house, without having taken the bath. Still more does this trait of character appear in one of the most touching stories of Christian antiquity, that of St. John and the young robber. The story is given by Eusebius in the third book of his *Ecclesiastical History* (chap. xxiii.), upon the authority of a lost work of Clement of Alexandria. It is at once so beautiful and so illustrative of the character of St. John that it may be told again, though in the substance rather than the exact narrative of Clement. The scene is the neighbourhood of Ephesus, the time is after St. John's return from his banishment at Patmos, and the tale is introduced by Clement with the words "ἀκούσον μῦθον οὐ μῦθον ἀλλὰ ὄντα λόγον."

At one of his visits to the Churches near Ephesus, John, when he had finished his address to the brethren, was

struck with the aspect of one of his hearers, a youth of lofty stature, noble countenance, and ardent soul. He turned to the bishop, and said, "In the sight of Christ and His Church, I commend this youth to your care." The bishop accepted the charge, and for a time faithfully fulfilled it. He took the young man home, cherished, educated, and at last baptized him. Then however, as if no more were needed, he relaxed his care. Idle, dissolute companions immediately attached themselves to the young man; from one step in folly and sin to another they lured him on, until at length, believing that all hope was lost, he resolved to set no limit to his wickedness, formed his comrades into a band of robbers, placed himself at their head, and surpassed them all in violence, bloodthirstiness, and cruelty. Time passed, and St. John revisited the neighbourhood. When he had arranged all other matters, he turned to the bishop and said, "Come, restore to me my deposit which I and Christ committed to thee in the presence of the Church over which thou presidest." It was some time before the bishop understood him; but, when he did, he exclaimed with groans and tears, "The young man is dead." "How, and by what death?" said the Apostle. "He is dead to God," was the reply; "he has turned out wicked and abandoned, and instead of the Church he has beset the mountains with a band like himself." The Apostle on hearing this rent his garments, beat his head, ordered a horse to be instantly got ready, and hastened to the robbers' hold. He was taken prisoner, but not attempting to escape cried out, "For this very purpose am I come; conduct me to your captain." As soon as the latter beheld in the approaching prisoner the old Apostle, he was overcome with shame, and turned to flee. The Apostle however, forgetful of his age, pursued him with all his might, crying out, "Why, my child, dost thou flee from me, thy father, unarmed, old? Have pity on me, my child; fear

not. Thou hast yet hope of life. I will answer to Christ for thee if it be necessary. I will willingly die for thee as the Lord died for us. I will give my soul a ransom for thine. Stand, believe, Christ hath sent me." The young man was melted by the voice. He stood with downcast eyes, threw away his weapons, and burst into tears. Then when the old man came up with him, the youth took him in his arms, pleaded for himself with lamentations as he best could; "and was thus," says Clement, "in tears a second time baptized." Then St. John embraced him, assured him that he found mercy for him with Christ, entreated him to come, fell at his feet, kissed his right hand, which the young man had hitherto kept concealed, as cleansed from all iniquity, and led him back again to the Church. "Then," adds Clement, "praying with abundant prayers, contending along with him in many fastings, soothing his mind with constant and varied words, he did not leave him until he had completely restored him to the Church, affording therein a mighty instance of a true repentance, a mighty example of a new birth, a trophy of a visible resurrection."

In all these particulars then we see the vehemence of the beloved disciple, the holy fire which burned within him, that lion groundwork of character which, when accompanied with lamb-like gentleness in intercourse with men, wins more than any other combination of qualities that we can think of our admiration and our love.

What has now been said will throw light upon another conception often formed of the character of St. John, that he was soft and effeminate. Effeminate he was not; womanly he was. In his receptivity of disposition, in his gentleness and tenderness, in his desire to lose himself in Christ we see the features of the truest womanhood; but softness he had none. Everything told us of him speaks him rather firm and bold, and all his own language reveals

the same manly heart. "Hear how he thunders!" says one of the Fathers, speaking of the introduction to his Gospel; and throughout the whole of it there is the same decided step, the step of one whom no terrors would have shaken, and no threats of death appalled. He will not like Peter say to his Master, "I will go with Thee to prison and to death"; but when the time for going comes, and even Peter is faithless, he will press on unfaltering to the judgment hall and to the cross. Any softness therefore which we may think we mark in him is not natural timidity; it is love and gentleness, love and gentleness moulded after the pattern of Him who, while He witnessed before Pontius Pilate a good confession, would yet have gathered Jerusalem to Him as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing.

Perhaps the most marked characteristic of the Apostle John was his receptivity of disposition, his openness of heart for all that was true and beautiful and holy, and the delight with which he dwelt upon it in the inmost depths of his own soul, till it penetrated and formed his whole nature to a likeness with itself. Such is the uniform aspect in which his relation to the Saviour presents itself. His apprehension of his Divine Master was the result, not only of his intercourse with Him while He was on the earth, but of the constant, the deep, and the affectionate meditation with which he dwelt upon Him in long years afterwards. "Out of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," was the true expression of a lifelong intercourse, during which the fulness of Jesus rose gradually upon his view, not striking him suddenly, as outward glory strikes and blinds the eye, but coming in upon him like a calm, swelling tide, moment by moment covering each rock, and swallowing up each once separate pool in the grand volume of its waters. Hence the growth, which is so perceptible in St. John; partly in knowledge—"When therefore He was

risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them ; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said " (John ii. 22) ; " These things understood not His disciples at the first : but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him " (John xii. 16)—but partly also in his own spiritual feelings when the traces of harshness and severity that reveal themselves in his judgment on the Samaritan village and the forbidding of the casting out of devils in Christ's name disappear in his full-orbed love. Hence also, probably, the singular devotion of his heart to the person of Jesus ; for it was in Him more even than in His teaching that he found ever-increasing depths in which to sink himself. His love to his Master was emphatically love to what that Master personally was, as He revealed to him His glory, " the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. "

This love to Jesus, accordingly, has always been recognised as the distinctive feature by which we distinguish between the Apostle and the other members of the apostolic circle ; but it is essentially connected with the receptivity just spoken of. Not by force of talent, not even by strength of faith, but because he could give himself so wholly up to his Lord in receptive sympathy, could he better than all others comprehend One whose whole mission was love, whose whole soul melted with compassion for the wandering sheep He had come to search out and save. Thus it was that St. John was formed to love, and that, while the other Apostles whose writings have been preserved raise many a noble song of adoration to " Him who is over all and above all, God blessed for ever, " it was given to St. John alone to reveal the Son and the Father in the Son as essentially love : " God is love ; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him " (1 John iv. 16).

With this receptivity of disposition were connected other features of St. John's character that ought not to be omitted,—simplicity, sublimity, and pathos. His simplicity appears partly in the fact that he never names himself in his Gospel. This is the case even before his connexion with Jesus: "And the two disciples heard Him speak, and they followed Jesus" (John i. 37); after which we learn that one of the two was Andrew, but are not told who the other was, and can only infer from his general method of speaking that it was John. It was also the case afterwards, for he always mentions himself only as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and this he does so indirectly that it requires a considerably wider chain of particulars to ascertain that it is really himself he means. But this simplicity further appears in the whole structure of his Gospel, in the connexions of the sentences, in the constructions, and in the language which he employs. So extremely simple is he in these respects that, on first reading his Gospel, we are ready to imagine there is here nothing difficult to understand; and it is only when we come carefully to examine it, and to endeavour to attach a meaning to the words, that we find ourselves in the midst of the profoundest conceptions which can occupy the mind of man.

Out of this also arises St. John's sublimity. Not that there is any reason to suppose that he was naturally sublime in thought, but the object constantly before his eyes made him so. In the closeness of his fellowship with the eternal Word he passed into a far higher sphere than that in which the other Apostles moved. The sayings and discourses of Christ preserved by him have about them a mysterious grandeur far surpassing that of those recorded, except on one or two special occasions, by the other evangelists.

With this sublimity was closely connected the pathos of the Apostle's character. The two indeed can hardly be

separated from each other. A sublime religious faith contrasts to such a degree with what is actually around us, that it must awaken longings for the realization of its visions. And these longings will show themselves in a plaintiveness of tone which it will be impossible to conceal. Add to this the thought of the "still sad music of humanity," as, dimly realizing its present exile state, it longs after restoration to its home, and he who speaks truly to it and for it will always know something of what was at least a part of the burden of the Man of sorrows. How much then might we expect to find this in St. John! and it is there. There is a lyric sadness in such words as these: "He was in the world, and the world knew Him not"; "He came unto His own things, and they that were His own received Him not"; "But though He had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on Him" (John i. 10, 11; xii. 37). The beloved disciple mourns over the evil and the blindness that are around him, and longs for the hour when his Lord will come.

Such then was St. John in some, at least, of the features of his character, in his idealism, his contemplativeness, his receptivity of disposition; in his clinging devotion to his Lord, and desire to lose himself in Him; in his simplicity, sublimity, and pathos. There is much in the other Apostles that draws us to them with admiration, in the noble fidelity of St. James, the devoted energy of St. Peter, the unflagging zeal of St. Paul. St. John has claims on us wholly his own. He awakens awe as well as love; he makes us look at him as if he were a being of another world, even when he says to us, "Little children, love one another." The impression which he left upon the Church was probably greater than that made by any of the Apostles who did even more than he to convert the world to the Christian faith. In the hymns of the Middle Ages no one of them holds a more prominent place. And, if almost all the different branches

of the Reformed Church are now anxiously longing for a deeper and more living theology than that left them by the Reformation, it is from the thoughts of St. John, and from the manner in which the Lord Jesus Christ, the sum and substance of Christianity, is presented by him, that that theology will spring.

W. MILLIGAN.

WELLHAUSEN'S "HISTORY OF ISRAEL."

EVERY student of the controversies which now beset the "Hexateuch" is, for the time being, consciously or unconsciously, a Protestant. For no such question can ever be approached except upon the hypothesis that judgment is free, that we may not submit absolutely to the decision of authority, however venerable and however peremptory.

But when the new doctrine cries aloud in the market place, becomes popularized in reviews, and is delivered *ex cathedra* in encyclopædias, when the inevitable period of panic arises, another kind of protestantism comes into operation.

Plenty of readers who are not experts in the higher criticism, and who never will be qualified to become such, turn to a work like Wellhausen's *History*, not merely to ask, *How much revolutionary doctrine must be accepted?* but very emphatically to ask, *Why?* They want to know for themselves what is the nature of the new movement. Plenty of orthodox clergymen, and laymen too, who have not the slightest notion of rejecting anything which can be really proved, have just as little intention of letting go their old beliefs until the case is really made out to their satisfaction. There are many points of recondite research which they are quite content to receive upon the authority