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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.

G. A. CHADWICK.

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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

eyes were quenched for ever. It is a fearful story. To the custody of such a man the sacred people are consigned; but their sacredness immediately enwraps him as with a sacred vesture. He has received from heaven that high guardianship; he becomes forthwith God's minister. The Most High casts over him the shield of the Divine protection; nay, more, He visits him with visions of the night. To Nebuchadnezzar is revealed in a dream, and in its interpretation, the future of the world—the coming of the kingdom of Heaven!

Let us look at the story as it has come to us. The great king dreams, but he wakes with the terror of a vision that he cannot recall. He rages at his inability. He rages all the more that the accredited revealers of secrets, with all their costly paraphernalia of divination, cannot help him. They shall not put him off with any subterfuge. They shall die. If, as they say, none can show the thing except the gods, whose dwelling is "not with flesh," why, is it not their business to consult such powers? For what other purpose are they there but to deal with the occult, the mysterious, the awfulness above and around,—with those, whoever they are, whose dwelling indeed is "not with flesh," but whom their incantations should be able to reach and to compel? A suspicion of falsity, of long-sustained imposition, breaks upon his mind, and drives him to fury.

But there has been sent to dwell within his palace walls one of the greatest heroes of the Hebrew faith, one destined to be from time to time the organ of Divine communication with this greatest of earthly potentates. Now for the first time, the captive Daniel, involved with his companions in the fate of the soothsayers, steps forward and asks for delay, purposing to appeal to One—the God of heaven, supreme as heaven itself—concerning this secret. Again it is night, again appears the vision, not now to Nebuchadnezzar, but to Daniel; and with the vision the interpretation thereof

is made clear to his understanding. Brought before the king, he excuses the magicians among whom he has been enrolled, whose gods have failed them, but declares that "there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and hath made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." "But as for me," he says, in effect, I am no diviner; "this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living." Let these others go. The interpretation is only given to me, "that thou mayest know the thoughts of thy heart."

"Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great Image!" But we need not repeat the well-known description of the colossal Image, strange and terrible, that stood in dazzling brightness before the dreaming king. The head of fine gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, the feet of iron and clay, are familiar to us. Nor need we dwell upon the interpretation given, that these separate parts represented kingdoms—empires that were to rule in succession upon the earth. Enough to remark that we have the authority of the original interpreter for recognising in the first of them the sovereignty of Nebuchadnezzar himself, "Thou art this head of gold," and that the second was that which should follow after him, unnamed, as are all the others. The particular identification of these is not to our purpose, though we may suppose that in the qualities of the different metals—as indeed we are told with respect to one of them, the iron—and also in the different portions of the body to which they are assigned, are suggested certain characteristics of the successive empires, affording a clue not very difficult to follow, to their verification in history. Our present object is to direct attention to this composite image as a whole, to what may be a symbolic rather than a definite historical meaning; to take it as representing worldly power in its various forms, all of them expressly the result of human wisdom, skill, and

energy ; to note too the method of its destruction, and the nature of that which took its place.

The great Image then, as it dazed the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, shone one gigantic figure of a man. What was the expression of the countenance we are not told ; most likely it showed only emotionless repose, features without expression, symbolizing simply power, passive, immovable, remorseless—power that answers no questions, and demands only silent, unquestioning submission. Possibly, after the Assyrian manner, the Image stood in profile, one arm stretched forth, one leg advanced ; and thus, fixing no gaze upon the beholder, remained the more inscrutable. It was entirely to outward view metallic, excepting the toes of brittle clay ; and the metals, whether gold, or silver, or brass, or iron, are all, we may remember, products of human labour and skill. They none of them exist otherwise ; the furnace and the alloy are required to fit them for human use. So much for the materials. But not only are these of human discovery and manufacture, but for an Image like that of the vision would be required the fashioning and fitting of each metal to its appointed place and function. The gold would need casting, or else beating into plates, or to be prepared for gilding the enormous head. The silver in like manner plated, or was wrought into semblance of arms and breast. Burnished brass built up the belly, and cuissed the thighs. Iron sheathed the legs, and was wrought partly into the feet that sustained the whole.

Thus it stood a thing of human contrivance from head to foot ; even where metal failed, and potter's clay supplied its place, there was the modelling of toes. The whole was fashioned to represent the organic unity of a human frame, all its parts were there. Part by part, whatever was the diversity of material, was adjusted to its place, so that the man-form should be complete—a figure that, were it living, could think and act, could strike, and march to its end. It

was a figure of colossal, unassailable strength, but for one element of weakness scarcely observable amidst its signs of power—the one flaw attaching to those insignificant members the toes. Yet this Image with its grandeur, splendour, and strength of material, has to be destroyed. How shall destruction come? Shall axe or hammer come forth against it? Shall heaven's lightning blast it? Shall an earthquake shake it down?

By far other means. From a mountain side a Stone is loosened; stirred by no visible means, cut from the soil without hands, it begins to roll, and as it descends the steep it bounds and leaps towards the steadfast Image. Shall it strike the head of gold? Shall it assail the silver breastplate? No; it simply drops upon the feet, inconspicuous compared with the lofty bulk above—the feet wherein is the fatal flaw. They crumble with the blow, and then all fails. When the feet of iron and clay are crushed, the legs, despite their iron strength, bear up no longer. The body bows, the glorious head rolls in the dust, the whole lies in hideous ruin, and the winds arising sweep it all away.

Between the Stone and the Image there is a notable contrast. We have pointed out the artificial character of the Image, an object of human manufacture; the Stone is a natural product. No mason's tool has touched it. It is of no recognisable or definite shape, such as human intelligence would have given. Age-long elemental powers have moulded and placed it on the precipitous steep above. The processes have been altogether secret, silent, by which it has been formed, and reached its destined size and place. The cause of its descent at last is not observable. What it does, if it destroyed a human life, would, in legal phrase, be called "the act of God." Then the Stone, its work accomplished, takes the place of the destroyed statue, whose very fragments are to disappear, and, unlike the Image in its

lifeless immobility, notwithstanding its man-like form, the Stone seems to have life in itself; it grows, it enlarges its base, it towers in height, till it fills the whole horizon of the sleeper's sight.

This Stone which becomes a mountain receives, like the Image, its interpretation. As the Image represented human empire in a succession of kingdoms, so the Stone represents a kingdom, following upon, though in a measure contemporaneous with, the others. It is a kingdom which the God of heaven will set up, and which destroys the others. For it may be noticed that the earlier kingdoms, though according to the interpretation of the vision they had in turn passed away, are yet included in the destruction finally dealt upon the Image, suggesting to us a larger understanding of the vision than we might at first suppose. The Image after all is one, though of diverse parts, and of intermediate application, as the Stone is one, though it becomes a mountain.

The Stone, small as it is when it first comes to sight, is indeed that everlasting kingdom of God which in these latter days has been revealed. It is that kingdom which, coming not with observation,—as none would have noticed the Stone on the mountain side,—issuing from the secret, the eternal counsels of God, declares itself not in the glory of its power, but as a simple, unsuspected force. It is clad in no panoply of war. No catapult is required to launch the Stone, its momentum arises from the invisible action of a natural law. So the Divine kingdom makes no obvious assault, it uses no visible weapon; even the Stone does not encounter the kingdoms of this world where they affront the sky, but with that economy of means and yet completeness of result which marks the Divine administration, it strikes upon the one weak spot in its adversary, that one strange flaw in the mighty Image. That flaw may have an historical and temporary import, as the narrative appears to intimate;

but larger meanings are common in Divine prophecy, and looking at the Image as a whole, may we not take this flaw to indicate some inherent, invariable defect in all worldly power? If so, does not the "iron mixed with miry clay" aptly represent that moral corruption through which the pomp and pride and military strength of empires constantly come to naught?

Some commentators suppose that the destroying blow is not yet given, since the kingdoms of this world have not yet fallen before the kingdom of our God. They view the Stone as still rolling down the mountain. They postpone the moment of collision till the end of this dispensation, when all opposing forces will have been swept away. This does not agree with the terms of the vision. The blow is given while as yet the kingdom of God is but a solitary Stone; it is by growth only that the Stone becomes a mountain. We may well understand an interval during which the Image, smitten only on its feet, still stands erect, apparently untouched, and answering thus to the apparent stability for a time of earthly kingdoms, though already doomed to destruction.

This kingdom of God, let us mark, is set forth as a kingdom against kingdoms. Yet it is not that of the sacred land. It is not the monarchy which had been destroyed in Jerusalem that will be re-established. It is not the throne of David which overturns these other thrones; or the throne of Solomon which outshines their splendour. It is no earthly kingdom, however sacred, no visible city of God which out-tops the Babylons of the world. It is something new, something wholly unlike any previous form of power. Apparently it is among the weak things of the world—as an untrimmed, unsquared stone, which a builder would refuse, yet, if chosen of God, is living and precious, fit to become the corner-stone of a glorious temple. Such a use of it here however would not be consonant with the



purpose of the vision. No great building arises on the site of the destroyed statue. Such an ending would have injured the force of the contrast between God's work and man's work. The shapeless Stone changes, the dreamer sees not how. He dreams through ages, though he knows it not. In that sleep a thousand years are but as a watch in the night, and, behold, the Stone has become a mountain!—a mountain dimly vast, whose base fills the earth, whose top reaches unto heaven! How grandly does this set forth that kingdom which is altogether a Divine creation!

But however unlike earthly kingdoms, it is still a kingdom, which is foreshown to Nebuchadnezzar. As such it agrees with his ideas of power, and commends itself to his understanding. But it is a Divine purpose. That which appeared in the fulness of time was invariably declared to be a kingdom, an ordered rule—the rule of a King who, if He came at first without form or comeliness, despised and rejected, “is yet a King, who shall reign until all enemies are put under His feet.” So also the conquering power of this kingdom is specially set forth in this vision given to a conqueror. That is what he would expect in a new kingdom; it must overthrow and take the place of its predecessors. But how unlike in its warfare to the kingdoms he has known is that which he beholds! How like to the kingdom which was to come!

That prefigured destruction of kingdoms certainly does not imply the dissolution of order and authority in human affairs. These were recognised as of Divine purpose, even in the despotic rule of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors. Nevertheless Babylon remained the centre and type of influences inimical to the people of God—the people amongst whom that kingdom of heaven was to be established—and was subjected to the Divine judgments accordingly. In so far as the kingdoms of this world are antagonistic to the kingdom of God in principles or in practice, they are exposed

to its destroying power, not otherwise. And in that respect we may believe that, not kingdoms only, but all institutions based solely upon human conceptions, formed only for human aggrandisement, associated in any degree with falsehood, injustice, lust, oppression, cruel force,—all systems of thought alien to the Divine Mind share in the irremediable defeat. There needs but a stone to roll down from the mountain of God's truth, that holy hill of Zion, that mountain of the Lord's house established in the top of the mountains, and, behold, the towering but baseless fabrics fall into fragments, and are ready to vanish away!

May we extend the parable still further? Is it fanciful to discover in that ruthless dominion of science which distinguishes our era, that supremacy of intellect, that brilliance of achievement apart from moral progress, an apt resemblance to the head of gold—now apparently serenely secure, but whose downfall as the supreme arbiter in human affairs may arise from that "foolishness of God which is wiser than man"? So may not the silver of a refined but irreligious civilization, the brass of social distinction, the iron of despotism, when opposed to the Divine kingdom, be brought to naught before those "weak things, and things which are despised, which God hath chosen to confound the things which are mighty"? In this sense the kingdom of God may still be but as a Stone that continually strikes and destroys.

This phase of the kingdom however is to pass away. The assailing Stone becomes a mountain, and like unto a mountain shall the kingdom at last be established upon everlasting foundations—"a kingdom that shall never be moved," endowed with all the strength of the hills, girded with power, reposing in all the majesty of endless duration.

The kingdom, its days of warfare over, is to be a kingdom of peace. As the mountain clothed in beauty rises into the serene heaven, is bathed in the light of heaven, a vision

of rest and peace, so "the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"; its King is the Prince of peace.

The kingdom is to be a universal kingdom. All forms of power known to Nebuchadnezzar had their geographical limits. They were bounded by mountains or rivers. All religions were of local jurisdiction. The God of the Hebrews had been doubtless to Nebuchadnezzar but a tribal God; Bel Merodach had his special home in Babylon. The vision referred to a God of heaven, high above all, of whom the Babylonian king could have had but a dim conception; and to a kingdom which, like the mountain that filled the whole earth, should be wide as the cope of heaven above, wide as the world below.

To us it "has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." The Lord of that kingdom has likened it to leaven that, hid in an ephah, presently leavens the whole. He has likened it to a mustard seed which springs up into a mighty tree, upon whose branches the birds of the air make their lodging. He has told us that "the field is the world"; of seed cast into the earth that "groweth while a man sleeps, he knoweth not how," and of a great harvest. He has told us of His return after long absence to receive a kingdom. Of the glory and universality of that kingdom, prophets and apostles combine to assure us; and an angel announced that it should have "no end." What more perfect representation of that kingdom in its secret commencement, its peculiar conquering power, its eventual world-wide extension and glory, could have been given (if given in such a form at all) than in this ancient vision? Is it not a parable of which none could have been the author save Him who, when He appeared on earth, spake in parables?

But was there ever such a vision? Did the God of heaven of a truth reveal this thing to Nebuchadnezzar by

the mouth of His servant Daniel? or, does the whole story belong to what is termed "pseudepigraphical literature"? "It can hardly be denied" (says a popular writer), "when prejudice is quite laid aside, that the facts point to a very clear conclusion, *viz.* that the book of Daniel is one of a class, and differs in quality rather than in kind from other works of the same class—a class of writings which sprang up in the days of national resistance to Antiochus Epiphanes. It was characteristic of this class of writings to appear under the name of some distinguished personality, Enoch, Moses, the patriarchs, and so on. There was no intention to deceive, any more than Milton wished to deceive when he put some of the noblest thoughts that have ever been uttered into the mouths of the persons in *Paradise Lost*. The faithful servants of God, who were resisting the blasphemous tyranny of Antiochus, were strengthened in their noble struggle by the glowing stories and marvellously beautiful visions which had marked the life of the great Daniel in Babylon."

We are not here concerned with the authenticity of the book of Daniel, but since in the passage above it is plainly implied that Nebuchadnezzar's dream was only one of the "glowing stories" inserted in an altogether imaginative composition, we may be allowed a few words of comment. And for one thing, it is hard to understand how the servants of God could be strengthened in the struggle they were maintaining by what was an acknowledged and accepted invention of their own time! If, on the contrary, they believed the story to be a true record of a supernatural event such as had again and again occurred of old time in their nation's history; if they believed it to contain a genuine prediction, through one of the greatest of their seers, of an everlasting kingdom, superseding all other kingdoms, which the God of their fathers would set up;—they might well hold it as one of their strongest supports, little as they

might have understood its nature. "Noble thoughts," uttered only by one of themselves, would be of small avail. It was by the great *facts* of the past that their faith and hope could alone be sustained.

But not to dwell on this. Is it conceivable that so sublime a vision, with its profound spiritual significance, its far-reaching prophecy, even unto "the time of the end," was the invention of an age in which by common consent the prophetic function had ceased? Could it be the product of an age when creative genius had been succeeded by the imitative: of an age that lived on the past, and was busied only with compilation, the working up old materials, the elaboration of legend and marvel? Could it belong to an age that was obliged to cast its lucubrations in some ancient mould in order to attract attention and win respect? Could it belong to a set of writings which, from certain characteristics have for ages been considered devoid of authority, and among which it has not hitherto been classed? Lastly, was it appropriate to a time of desperate conflict with a heathen prince, to compose a story which makes a heathen potentate the depository of Divine secrets, and omits all reference to Jewish exaltation and conquest in the future? To put these questions is, it seems to us, to answer them. If we are to judge literature by the circumstances of its time, this story could not have belonged to the time of Antiochus.

On the other hand, the historical verity of the vision is not without confirmation when we remember the reported crisis of its occurrence. The visible kingdom of God had ceased, but, according to the story, it was immediately followed by a vision which points to a future invisible but most real kingdom of God—a restoration of the original theocracy, not in a limited and local, but in a universal sense, a completion thus of a great plan. This vision moreover is given to one, who, though the immediate destroyer

of the visible, historic throne, had become the custodian of the sacred people, one of whose seers interprets to him its meaning. It must needs therefore win for the captives unusual respect, while they, through their great representative, fulfil their ancient mission as depositaries of the Divine will, destined in due time to declare it to mankind.

It is a conclusion in harmony with the whole history of this people that this dream really visited the great Babylonian ruler, and that it was, with its interpretation, a true revelation of the counsels of God. No; we have not been sitting at the feet of a pseudepigraphical scribe, we have been listening to the eternal Word.

JOSIAH GILBERT.

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## ANCIENT CELTIC EXPOSITORS.

### ST. COLUMBANUS AND HIS LIBRARY.

THE Acta Sanctorum form an unexplored mine of history, poetry, and romance. The historian finds there authentic records of life as lived amid the beginnings of European civilization. The poet can find there sweet songs—almost always of a sad and plaintive character; while as for romance and fable, they abound on every side. Among the romantic lives of the saints, those dealing with the Celtic missionaries stand pre-eminent. Fable, as we might expect, gathers thick round them. Adamnan's *Life of St. Columba* for instance, abounds with stories, fabulous indeed, but beautiful and touching withal. Romance too lends its charm, and among the most romantic lives, that of Columbanus, the apostle of Burgundy, Switzerland, and Italy, was the most striking and is the best authenticated. I have in another place sketched that career, beginning at