

One evening he had been pondering over St. Paul's second epistle to Timothy, and he lingered a long time over one verse. It was this: "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee" (ch. iv. 13). Nothing very difficult, you think, in that simple and straightforward message. No, and yet it seemed to puzzle Philip. I will tell you why. Joe Wilkins, his fellow-workman, who did not like the Bible, and therefore endeavoured to disbelieve it, had brought forward this passage as one proof that the Scriptures were not inspired. "For if they were," he argued, "such a trifling matter, such a domestic detail as this, would have been omitted."

"Well," said Philip to himself, as he gazed upon the words, "it does seem a rather insignificant and unedifying subject for the apostle to mention. I don't think there is anything instructive to be gathered from it."

Just then there was a gentle tap at the half-open door, and the next minute Mr. Howard, the clergyman, came in. When he came to see Philip, he always called in the evening, because he knew that Philip was quite at leisure then; and they often had very nice conversations together; and Mr. Howard was always ready and glad to explain anything which Philip wanted to know. So, as you will imagine, this verse about St. Paul's cloak was soon alluded to, and Philip's little difficulty frankly stated.

"Well," said Mr. Howard, "this verse, Philip, appears to me a most touching and instructive one. St. Paul had lost everything. In his youth he was great among men—favoured by princes, admired of all; but he left all for Christ. During thirty years and upwards he had been poor; in labour more abundant than others, in stripes above their measure, and in prisons more frequent; of the Jews he had five times received forty stripes save one; thrice he had been beaten with rods; once he had been stoned; three times he had suffered shipwreck; in journeyings often; in perils of water, in perils in towns, in perils in deserts, in perils by sea; oft in watchings, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness. These are his own words (2 Cor. xi. 23, 27). He is now Paul the aged, in his last prison at Rome, expecting sentence of death; he has fought the good fight; he has finished his course; he has kept the faith; but he is suffering from cold as the winter sets in, and lacks clothing. Thrust into a dungeon of a prison, he bore a name so vile, that even the Christians of Rome were ashamed to acknowledge him, so that on his first arraignment no man stood with him. Ten years before this period, when a prisoner at Rome, and loaded with chains, he had at least received some relief from the Philippians, who, knowing his miserable condition, had, notwithstanding their own need, laid themselves under restraint in order to minister to his wants. But now he is almost friendless; Luke only is with him; he is forsaken of all others, and the winter is about to set in. He would need some additional clothing, he had left his cloak with Carpus at Troas, two hundred leagues away; there is no one in the chilly dungeons of Rome to lend him one. How affecting the picture. I was myself in Rome last year, and at the commencement of November, on a cold and rainy day, I recollect with what vivid reality I imagined the Apostle Paul down in the deep dungeons of the Capitol, dictating the last of his letters regretting the absence of his cloak, and begging Timothy to bring it before the winter."

Philip's honest, sunburnt face expressed the emotion which he felt on listening to this account. "I never thought all this, sir!" he exclaimed; "I had no idea that the apostle, when he wrote to Timothy, was in such want and distress. O how different the verse looks to me now! It brings St. Paul in prison, cold and friendless, right before me. What a noble character he was!"

"Yes, Philip; and these few words of his, thrown, as it were, negligently, among the closing commissions of a familiar letter, shed a glancing light upon his ministry; and a passing remark enables us to see the character of his whole apostolic life."

"They do, indeed, sir; and it comforts and encourages me to think how patient and cheerful the apostle was in the midst of his poverty and privation."

"And who can tell, Philip, the power and consolation which this portion of his history has imparted to many of the Lord's tried and even martyred servants. I