inTRoDucTION.| THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON. (cu. xiv.   
   
   
   
 SECTION IV.   
 CHARACTER AND STYLE.   
   
   
   
 1. This Epistle is a remarkable illustration of St. Paul’s tenderness   
 and delicacy of character. Dr. Davidson well remarks, “ Dignity,   
 generosity, prudence, friendship, affection, politeness, skilful address,   
 purity, are apparent. Hence it has been termed with great propriety,   
 the polite Epistle. The delicacy, fine address, consummate courtesy,   
 niece strokes of rhetoric, render the letter an unique specimen of the   
 epistolary style.” Introd. vol. iii. p. 160.   
 2. Doddridge (Expositor, introd. to Philem.) compares it to an Epistle   
 of Pliny to Sabinianus, ix. 21, written as an acknowledgment on a   
 similar oceasion of the reception of a freedman by his master‘: and justly   
 gives the preference in delicacy and power to our Epistle. The eom-   
 parison is an interesting one, for Pliny’s letter is eminently beautiful,   
 and in terseness, and completeness, not easy to surpass.   
 8. Luther’s description of the Epistle is striking, and may well serve   
 to close our notice of it, and this portion of our introduction to the   
 Epistles :   
 “This Epistle sheweth a right noble lovely example of Christian love.   
 Here we sce how St. Paul layeth himself out for the poor Onesimus, and   
 with all his means pleadeth his cause with his master; and so settcth   
 himself, as if he were Onesimus, and had himself done wrong to Phile-   
 mon. Yet all this docth he not with power or force, as if he had right   
 thereto; but he strippeth himself of his right, and thus enforeeth   
 Philemon to forego his right also. Even as Christ did for us with God   
 the Father, thus also doth St. Paul for Onesimus with Philemon: for   
 Christ also stripped Himself of His right, and by love and humility   
 enforced the Father to lay aside His wrath and power, and to take us to   
 His grace for the sake of Christ, who lovingly pleadeth our cause, and   
 with all His heart laycth Himself out for us. For we are all His   
 Onesimi, to my thinking.”   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
 4 The Epistle runs thus:   
 “C, Plinius to his Sabinianus, health.   
 “Thou hast done well that thou hast taken to thy house and heart thy freedman   
 once dear to thee, now sent back by my letter. This will be a delight to thee: it is   
 certainly tome. First, because I see that thou art one capable of being ruled in thine   
 anger: then, that thou holdest me in such esteem, as either to obey my authority, or   
 to grant my prayers. Therefore I both praise and thank thee: and at the same time   
 admonish thee for the future, that when any of thine commits a fault thou wouldest   
 be merciful, even though there be none to intercede. Farewell.”   
   
   
   
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