

has read and has written volumes upon volumes, when he comes to the test of a dying hour, is shut up to all the simplicity of the "faithful saying." This is what he needs equally with the least; and this is what the least, equally with him, enjoys. And the perfectly child-like submissiveness with which master-minds in Israel have avouched their reliance on the most rudimental elements of the truth, is among the marks of its Divinity. It shows that in one point of need, in which all are alike, and which, in all cases equally the gospel is intended to meet, the adaptation of means to end is perfect.—*Wardlaw's Life of M. All.*

THE FATHERS.

[Of what use are the Christian Fathers? This is a question, which is beginning to excite a very general and absorbing interest among the religious public in Britain; and which may also before long force itself, on the attention of Christians in this country. It is generally known that the spirit of Popery is reviving fast in the Church of England, in consequence of the plausible and insidious efforts of the Oxford School to set up Tradition as well as Scripture, as an authority in matters of faith and practice. These men have gone a great length to abjure both the spirit and the doctrines of evangelical Protestantism. It would seem as if the battles of the Reformation must soon be fought over again, and every disputed point in the controversy, examined and discussed afresh. This dangerous party, like the Church of Rome, attach vast importance to the writings of the Fathers, if they do not, in fact, place them on equality with the works of Paul, and other confessedly inspired men. What leads them thus to exalt and revere the patristic Records is the fact, that from them Tradition is to be gleaned. These writings are

the morass from which proceeds the *ignis fatuus*, which these men follow to their imminent peril, having confounded it with 'the light that shineth in a dark place'—the sure word of prophecy. On account of the unwarrantable use which is thus often made of early Christian writers, and to guard all against a similar delusion, the following extract is inserted from the pen of an author of much repute, who, unlike some that 'speak evil of those things which they know not,' understands what he says and whereof he affirms. His estimate of the Fathers regards chiefly their value as umpires in religion, and accordingly he shows their unfitness to command or control our faith: but still it must not be forgotten, nor can it be denied, that these same Fathers have their uses, some more and some less, 1, in establishing the Canon of the New Testament; 2, often in explaining the meaning of obscure words and passages in Scripture; and 3, in furnishing materials for Ecclesiastical History and Antiquities. Of some at least, it may be said too, that they are adapted, notwithstanding their crude and extravagant opinions on some points, to improve the piety, as well as enlarge the knowledge, of those who are wise enough to refuse the evil and choose the good.—EDITOR.]

Independent of any direct heresies, erroneous methods of considering Christianity became prevalent from the indiscriminate study and admiration of Gentile philosophy. Each of the Christian fathers, who affected a reputation for literature, naturally adopted the favorite opinions of some philosophic school, and thus every speculative sect came to mingle their own peculiar errors in that incoherent and discordant mass of opinions which formed the Christian literature of antiquity. Few attempts have had less foundation to proceed upon, than the endeavour to make the Christian fathers pass for the supreme judges of controversy and the oracles of religion. Nothing can be more vague than their conclusions, nor more weak than their arguments, nor more variable than the tendency of their writings. They might, notwithstand-