

# The Church.

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## THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY'S VISITATION.

(From the Times, September 26.)

On Tuesday morning his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury held his Visitation of the Clergy of his Diocese, at All Saints' Church, Maidstone, a building admirably suited for the purpose, on account of its magnitude, being one of the largest parish churches in the Kingdom.

His Grace arrived at a seat in the neighbourhood of Maidstone on Monday, where he remained during the night, and whence he proceeded in the morning at an early hour to the Star Inn, Maidstone, and then on to the church, preceded by the parish authorities, and a large number of the Clergy in full canonicals.

Four years have elapsed since his Grace last held a Visitation, and as might be expected, great anxiety was evinced as to the views which his Grace was likely to take upon matters of great and stirring interest, which have of late agitated, and, in some measure, divided the Church.

The service commenced at eleven o'clock, when prayers were read by the Rev. Charles Rew, Curate of All Saints, and, after a sermon by the Rev. Henry Vallance, the lecturer, preached from Cor. i. 1, 2, v.—“Let a man so account of us as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in a steward that a man be found faithful.”

The Most Rev. Primate took his seat on the north side of the altar, and the registrar called the names of the Clergy. Several inquiries were made by his Grace as to the manner and frequency of performing Divine service in the Diocese, and, as all were satisfactorily answered, his Grace proceeded to deliver the following charge:—

My Reverend Brethren,—I ever regard with peculiar satisfaction the recurrence of this period, which gives me an opportunity of holding personal intercourse with the great body of my Clergy, and of addressing them on matters of general interest to our national Church, or to that portion of the Church in particular which forms the field of their spiritual labours.

Though every Clergyman has every access to me, and though whatever takes place in my Diocese, may be brought under my notice through the agency of the Archdeacons and Rural Deans, whose judgment and vigilance in the discharge of their several functions I desire most gratefully to acknowledge; yet these solemn official meetings are of the greatest advantage in directing the attention of all of us to our special duties and to the relation in which we stand one to another, and as inviting communication in the presence of those who, from their experience and knowledge of facts, are qualified to give useful advice and correct information.

On no former occasion have I been more sensible of those advantages than at the present crisis, for in this light I regard it, when the course of a few years must determine whether the Church shall attain to the happy condition of fulfilling her solemn avocations to God and man, without a diminution of her energies by internal commotion and trouble, or whether increased dissension shall produce a state of confusion which would deeply affect her honour and her usefulness.

At the same time, I must say, that I see every reason to hope for the best upon that particular point. In other respects, the position of the Church affords ample encouragement for a humble reliance upon the protection of that especial Providence which has hitherto preserved it from many imminent dangers within and without in the days of our forefathers, and not less conspicuously in our own times during the last half century.

I am naturally led by the occasion to speak, in the first place, of my own Diocese, and I can speak of no better criterion than if I state in respect to many of our religious institutions and paternal care, their condition in the present day, as compared with former times. I go back no further than the year 1811. At that date, and indeed long since, the accommodation provided in places of religious worship bore little proportion to the amount of the population.

In many of the principal towns in this Diocese—in this parish—in this town, and in Dover, there was only one church, and now I have the pleasure of seeing four churches in this town and three in the other. In Margate, Ramsgate, and Sheerness, where the scanty provision of church accommodation almost denied access to the poor, a large and spacious church has mitigated, if not entirely removed the evil. Nor are these the only parts of my Diocese in which additional churches have been built, or are now in process of erection.

In comparing the tables of residence with the last return, I observe a striking increase in the number of Incumbents residing on their benefices. At that time the benefices were 327, and the resident Clergy were 190. Of the same number of benefices, the resident Clergy are now 245, showing an increase of fifty-five in the space of little more than thirty years.

When to these are added the Ministers of sixteen new benefices formed in the interval, the result will be a total of 343 benefices, of which 260 are served by their respective Incumbents, and eighty-two, or less than one-fourth of the whole, are under the charge of Curates. This decrease of non-residents has not yet reached its limits; and though this beneficial change is, in some measure, to be attributed to the recent restraints on pluralities, the chief cause will be found in the readiness with which the Clergy to avail themselves of the facilities afforded by the loans provided by Queen Anne's Bounty of providing themselves with glebe-houses, which were only attainable at an expense trenching considerably upon what was too often but a very narrow income.

The increased attention to the best interests of the flocks is visible in other particulars. In many places where the churches were open but once on the Sabbath, two services are now regularly performed, and prayers are read in some places on saints' days and other days of the week. The more frequent celebration of the holy communion, the increase of communicants, and the attendance upon Divine service afford other demonstrations of the active zeal of the Clergy, and I am pleased to believe that has been followed up by a corresponding improvement in the habits of the people.

The disposition of the Clergy generally to observe the ordinances of the Church and to respect its authority is deserving of equal commendation, though, unlike facts that are upon record, it cannot be made the subject of exact comparison. Since my first connexion with this Diocese, I have uniformly experienced from the Clergy a willing compliance with my suggestions, though sometimes requiring a surrender of their private opinions, and even of their secular interests.

I have met with few instances of conduct unworthy of Clergymen—with none of perfidious resistance to my wishes. If, through the mercy of Providence, which I have so often experienced, I should be permitted to meet you again in the capacity of visitor, I trust that all my observations in expectation of fruits still more abundant, resulting from the good spirit prevailing in the Diocese, may be more than realized.

From these brief observations on my own more immediate charge, I proceed to say a few words on the position and prospects of our National Church, and here again I conceive that no just estimate can be formed of the progress that has been made, or the position that we are in, without returning to the circumstances in which we were placed about the eleventh year of this century, to which I have already referred.

An account of its present state without such reference would convey no adequate idea of the good which has been progressively effected. A consideration of the advances which have been made in the way of improvement will show that, how much soever still remains to be done, there has

been no want of zeal and activity on the part of the Clergy,—that the changes for the better have been very considerable, and are still in progress. In this respect I can speak from my own observation, having been called to a station which required my attention to all the concerns of the Church more than thirty years ago. I am by no means disposed to concur in the censure which has been unsparingly cast on former generations of the Clergy, as if from the commencement of the eighteenth till some years of the nineteenth century had elapsed all had been apathy and indifference. On the contrary, I see much to approve and to admire in the zeal and the exertions of many able and proper men who stemmed, by their reasoning, the torrent of infidelity which

overflowed the land—confuted the Atheist, the Deist, and the Arian—established the truth of the Bible on solid grounds—exposed the extravagances of enthusiastic pretensions to infallibility—and, effectually refuting all latitudinarian principles, fairly established the foundation of ecclesiastical authority. At the same time, it must be admitted that there had been a culpable remissness exhibited by a great body both of the Clergy and laity, and in nothing was it more visible than in the want of care taken to provide for the Scriptural wants of the population, which in 200 years has more than doubled its numbers, more especially in places which from insignificant villages had grown into large and populous towns.

In many of these the poor were entirely excluded from the benefits of religious instruction, and from a participation in the ordinances of our Church. Schools there were none.—So inveterate, indeed, was the evil, so enormous the extent of the destitution, that the wise and good, whilst they were alarmed at its amount, almost despaired of finding any effectual check to its progress. Let any one look at the statements contained in a book published in 1815 by the Rev. R. Yates, entitled *The Church in Danger*, and to the first reports of the National Society for the Education of the Poor of a rather earlier date, and then take survey of the Churches and schools which have since sprung into existence through the care of the Government, the liberality of individuals, or the active exertions of associations, and which are now open for the use and instruction of the poor, and he will be compelled to acknowledge that a change has occurred in the aspect of affairs for which we cannot be sufficiently thankful.

An additional proof of the zeal which has for years past been in active operation is supplied by the establishment of new associations or the extension of old ones for the diffusion of religious truths—by multiplying copies of the Scriptures and other useful works in all languages—by the amount of the collections for the supply of that which is still required to meet the spiritual wants of the people, and a more special manifestation as regards their best interests, by the liberal contributions to the education of the poor in the principles of the National Church which have been made, may be regarded as a sure indication of a growing attachment to our Church, and a sense of the necessity of a Christian education to the happiness of the people and the safety of the State.

The measures now in operation for the endowment of new benefices in populous places and for the augmentation of cures under a certain amount of value, exhibit but a small portion of the benefit likely to accrue to the Church when the revenue for those purposes becomes fully available; but the requests for assistance have brought forward much individual bounty, without which it could not have accomplished its object—and it can hardly be denied that the feeling thus exhibited will much aid the Church in attaching the people to it, thus securing its stability.

A combination of causes has indeed already produced such a result. The storm of popular violence which caused some apprehension for our ancient Establishment has now subsided, and I believe to no period of our history has more affection been felt for the Church—has her usefulness been more justly appreciated, or her claims more generally recognized.

In this steady and continued exhibition of zeal I see an intimation which distinguishes itself from those sudden outbursts of excitement which, like a blaze among stubble, is easily kindled, but soon subsides. I see in this a preference founded on a conviction of the truth, and it is reasonable to expect that that preference will be lasting; and here I may be indulged in an humble expression of gratitude to that gracious Providence which has lengthened my days beyond the ordinary term of human existence, that I might behold what I trust is but the commencement of renewed exertions, and that I might witness the union of the Clergy and the laity in labouring for the good of society.

In this state of things—with the prospects which are opening before me, and with the fullest persuasion that the great head of our Church will not abandon his ministers while they do him faithful service, I look forward with hope, though I am not altogether free from anxiety, to the future destinies of our Church. It is not from direct violence from without, or from dissension from within, that I apprehend immediate danger, but what may eventually be the result of her external dissensions, and the difference now existing within her own bosom, if they should ever proceed to extreme lengths, it is painful to contemplate.

“If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye are not consumed one of another,” was the warning of the Apostle to the Galatians. I am far from asserting that that language is applicable in all its significance to the state of our own Church, but I fear there is enough of division to weaken those resources which, if applied in conjunction, might much more effectually aid the common object of promoting the glory of God and the happiness of our fellow-countrymen than they can be promoted whilst that division is to be found which, unfortunately, it is notorious does exist amongst us.

By these indications of discord the hopes of the Romanists have been raised—without any sufficient ground I fully believe. From the extent of resources at their command, and from the unity of purpose which marks their proceedings, they have succeeded in making an impression in our colonies; but, notwithstanding the gigantic resources which they possess, their success in this country will probably be limited to a few converts. At the time of our separation from Rome it was satisfactorily shown that we could not partake of her communion without partaking of her sins; and, as no material alteration has taken place in her system, and as her doctrines are unchanged, and, in her own estimation, are unchangeable, it may be presumed that few persons who have considered the grounds on which our reformers were justified, will be disposed to return to her communion.

Among the dissenters, within the last few years, so far as I can judge from some of their writers, and the expressions employed at their meetings, a feeling of dislike to the Church appears to be gaining ground. After reasonable allowance is made for temporary excitement, I see enough to convince me that serious designs are in agitation for the subversion of our national Church. Under the circumstances alluded to above, I see no reason for alarm, but much to regret in the partial estrangement of the people from the Church, as well as in the defeat of measures by them useful to society; the successful opposition, for example, made to the plan proposed by the Government for the education of children employed in the mining and manufacturing districts, affords a melancholy proof of this. The principles of dissent indeed appear to me to be essentially faulty, as they open an inlet to errors of every description, and act directly in opposition to that spirit of unity which Christ acted upon when he founded the Church. In this latter principle of unity the strength of the Church consists. While she has unity in herself, there is little to dread from external violence, but

she may suffer irretrievably from divisions within herself. What is wanted at present to insure her efficiency is peace. In speaking of peace I am far from recommending the compromise of principle with indifference, or the sacrifice of the truth—that peace which alone can be lasting and useful is to be found in the Church, and in the determination of her Ministers to act cordially together in the discharge of the duties assigned to them, abstaining from unprofitable controversies, or from an indulgence in rancour, through slight differences, (for differences must needs exist), but discussing them with temper, and with no other desire than that of elucidating the truth. In speaking thus of the Church, I do not deny the existence of party, or the hope of salvation out of its pale; but, as all revelation proceeds from our blessed Lord, I can hardly be wrong in the belief, that he who brought down the word to the Church from on high, has also provided the means of transmitting it to all generations. Those who view matters in this light will readily admit that it implies, if nothing more, a want of faith to seek elsewhere for the means of grace than in the sanctuary which the Lord has built—“built” as he himself hath said “upon a rock,” and the perpetuity of which he has insured to the end of the world.

The various figures under which this question is described in the Scriptures, point out the connexion between it and the Lord. It is designated as a Kingdom erected by Christ, and by him directed and governed—as a fold under his peculiar care, in which the flock are protected against every enemy, and are supplied by him with abundant pasture—as a household, of which our Lord himself is the ruler. From these significant images we learn the immediate connexion of Christ with those who are within the pale of the Church, as their sovereign protector defending them by his power, providing for their wants by his bounty, and leading them to salvation by his holy word through the appointed means of grace.

A still closer connexion is intimated where our Lord speaks of himself as the vine of which he is the root and we are the branches deriving life from him, and when he is described by Paul as the Head of the Church, of which he is the body and we are the members. If such were the appointment from the beginning, as appears from ample testimony, is it not reasonable to imagine that a disbelief of the Church is next to a disbelief of the Gospel? If the truths of the Gospel be necessary to the salvation of mankind, the arrangements which the Gospel has reserved for our use can hardly be of less importance.

If nothing more be said for the Church than that it is the institution of Christ—that he laid the foundation of the building, and that it was completed by the Apostles under his Holy Spirit, surely we ought to be cautious before we meddle with what he has established; and we may be sure that his word is not to be improved by man, and that from his providential wisdom and most perfect knowledge of the disposition of his creatures, he alone knew what was necessary to guard against the machinations of evil spirits and the presumption of men—how much more should we be cautious when we consider for what purpose the Church was destined, all of which it has accomplished by the uniting of men in a perfect bond of charity. Had there not been from the first a body of men as the special repositories of the oracles of the living God, what guarantee had we for the accuracy of the Scriptures?—what other security for the efficacy of our religious faith; for our doctrines and ordinances, which are the means of grace? I will not advert to the disorders in the religious condition of those countries which acknowledge no particular Church, or in which the Church has departed from the apostolic body; nor can there be any necessity for directing your attention to the state of the country when the Church was wholly disregarded, or to the doctrine or worship of those who neglect its authority.

If the observations which I have made be just, it is evident that they are of the greatest importance, as showing the duties which we owe to the Church, of which our Lord Christ we are ministers, and our obligation to do all in our power to prevent separation and to promote the return of separatists to her bosom. But whilst with zeal we should labour to bring those back to her sanctuary, we should labour under a fatal mistake if ourselves neglected the purposes for which it was instituted, or if we adopted means not in accordance with the principles of an ever-blessed founder and head.

In this view the Church may be regarded as the channel through which the spiritual graces which sanctify body and soul are conveyed to the faithful—as the model of a perfect society, communicating through the mediation of Christ by pastors commissioned to act in his name. That these ends will not be fully obtained before the final separation of bad from good we are told by our Lord, and we might reasonably anticipate it from the known imperfections of our nature. The Church has, in consequence, been subjected to many calamities from the wickedness of its members, the abuse of its spiritual power, as well as a disregard to its lawful authority, and a want of that mutual affection which ought to be the distinguishing characteristic of all its members.

In this latter respect, perhaps, the failure of the Church has been most striking. The special command of Christ—that his disciples should love one another, even as he first loved them—appears to have been disregarded by many in the different ages of the Church. It is difficult to mention any period of the Church which has not felt the pernicious influence of a spirit of party introducing contention and strife where all should be love and peace. It is frequently the misfortune of young men to take up notions on trust which might not be approved on mature judgment, but, being hastily adopted, form part of their creed without further inquiry. For such infirmities, though allowance must be made, we know, from experience, that they may be the cause of incalculable evil. This, indeed, is our vulnerable point. Contention, in whatever cause employed, is injurious in its effect and ruinous in its tendency to the Church. When knowledge and zeal are so generally diffused amongst the Clergy, when multitudes are ready to lend their assistance in furtherance of God's work—when more than can be readily imagined may be gained by a concurrence in good exertions, the want of unanimity is most surprising.

The objects of the Church are twofold—domestic and missionary—corresponding with the injunction of our Lord to preach the gospel to all nations and to feed his flock. In reference to the first of these commissions I will not inquire in what position we stand as compared with other Churches in this country; it is sufficient for my purpose to say that there are two great institutions in this country in connexion with the Church—the one more particularly appertains to the conversion of the heathen, and the other to the supply of spiritual comfort to those of our fellow-countrymen who are scattered, like sheep in the wilderness, in every quarter of the globe. These objects can seldom be separated in our colonies. The heathen and missionary labours are frequently in contact. The heathen can scarcely be expected to embrace Christianity if he sees his more civilized neighbours despise its blessings. [The Most Rev. Primate proceeded to speak in terms of praise of the zeal and ability of the missionaries employed by the two societies, and strongly pressed upon the Clergy the peculiar claims which the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel had upon them, on account of its extreme usefulness, and its claim to antiquity, having commenced its operations more than a century before any other association for a similar purpose was established.] That society was established in the full confidence of re-

ceiving the full approbation and hearty support of the Clergy. Should those exertions—those beneficial operations of the society be frustrated now, at a crisis when they might be enlarged with such decided advantage to the highest interests of our fellow-subjects abroad? Must they be carried on on a narrower scale, at a time when Rome is planting her banner in every quarter, when the Church in America is engaged in the diffusion of the Gospel among the heathens, when the dissenting community are actively employed? It would be a reproach to the united Church of England and Ireland to allow such an establishment now in full action to fall into decay. The consequence would be, that nearly 300 Clergymen employed by the society would be reduced to the greatest straits, and some, perhaps, would be obliged to relinquish the service to which they had voluntarily devoted their lives. What, however, must be the state of the congregations thus left by the pastors, to whose ministrations they owed the privilege of communion with the Lord, and all the blessings of religion, when again left for supercession to lay hold of, under the direction of fanatical and ignorant teachers? And such might be the lot of our countrymen abroad if the society be compelled to withdraw its subscriptions, which now supplied them with the means of grace. [The Most Rev. Primate again alluded in strong terms to the necessity of supporting this society. His Grace continued:]—I should not have dwelt so long upon this subject had I not been convinced of its vital importance—and disgrace would fall upon the Church if we could behold with indifference the state of our countrymen, compelled, perhaps, by necessity, to seek the means of subsistence in a desolate wilderness, perishing for lack of knowledge. To this intimation we shall have nothing to answer if we do not use more than ordinary exertions in aid of a society which only requires sufficient means to rescue them from that lamentable condition. People hitherto, perhaps, have not done what they ought for the relief of their fellow-creatures in remote settlements. The contributions indeed have been liberal from many of the Clergy and laity also, and considerable sums have been raised after sermons and at public meetings. But these sums, considerable as they are, are greatly disproportionate to the object in view; and even if they were adequate to existing circumstances, they would not be able to meet the constant and increasing expenses of the society. This, however, might be effected by a perfect organized plan engaging the attention of the whole Church generally.

In some places associations have been formed in its aid, in which the system of annual subscriptions is adopted, and from the success which has so far attended that mode of proceeding I should venture to recommend its adoption on a most extensive scale. The increase of archdeacons and of rural deaneries would afford a means of organization immediately in connexion with the Church. The establishment of an association corresponding with these at which the Clergy might meet at stated times, thus affording opportunities of personal intercourse and conversation on matters of importance to the Church, such as the relief to Clergymen disabled by sickness, the establishment of schools, and increased church accommodation, has been recommended by high authority in the Church, and under good administration they would, I believe, be exceedingly useful. It would give me great pleasure to see them established in this Diocese, and one of their earliest and most useful occupations might be to procure a regular supply for the maintenance of missionaries. If the whole result of such a social union among the Clergy were to enable the Church to send forth the ambassador of mercy wherever there was need of aid, we should have the satisfaction of having faithfully executed one of the great commands of our Lord; and amongst its other advantages I should look forward with the pleasing hope to the settlement of the difficulties which now distract both Clergy and laity; depriving the latter of much of the benefit which they would partake of if they cordially co-operated one with another in the spirit of brotherly love. In regard to the duty of feeding a flock committed by our Lord to our care, the greatest advantages might reasonably be expected from the energies of such an association being directed to that object. In no respect would the benefit be greater than in regard to a subject which at this time has most particular claims on our attention—the education of the children of the poor. The formation of schools where they are not already established is the paramount duty, as far as the ability exists, of the parochial Clergy. It is by education alone, conducted on right principles, that we can become a moral and religious people. The course of events has forced this conviction on the minds of our governors, and of all who are anxious for the real prosperity of the country. Facilities are offered by the Government for their establishment, but the effect of all our exertions must depend on the judicious superintendance of schools by the Clergy; on them the country depends, above all, for the religious instruction of the children. If the teacher be negligent the time of the children is wasted. If the duties and doctrines of our holy religion be not taught so as to make a deep impression on the mind, they can have little influence on the character; and these, and similar reasons, can only be prevented by frequent and attentive inspection. It is our business to see that the benefits derivable from education are actually derived by the children—that they are trained up in the habits of industry, and in Christian doctrine and worship, conformable to the ordinance of our Church. It has been sometimes a matter of complaint that persons on leaving schools neglect attendance at church altogether, or fall into the hands of the dissenters. Against such danger there is no perfect security; but those who are early taught to look up to their spiritual Pastor, and receive from his lips the words of instruction, rejoice in his approbation, respect the Church in his person, and remain attached to it through life. In the proper education of children—the most effectual means of preventing them being led astray by erroneous doctrines—this will be found the most effectual means of preventing them being so led astray, contrary to the word of God. [The Most Rev. Primate proceeded to enforce the necessity of consulting the dispositions of children, and of adopting towards each such a line of conduct as would most likely insure to the master their esteem and respect.] It is unnecessary for me to remind you, that whatever may be the character of those entrusted to your care, they are members of your flock, to be led on to greater perfection by your fostering care, if their dispositions be good, or to be reclaimed, if perverse and vicious. In the performance of these duties, it is evident that gentleness, firmness, and coolness, are essentially required, and that your success, in most instances, will be in proportion as you act on that principle. Consideration to men of low estate should be visible in all the proceedings of the parochial Minister. The poor are easily won by kindness, and to a certain degree repulsed by austerity; they have many wants and many hardships, and much may be done by the Clergyman for their relief and consolation. His advice, exhortation, and even reproof, will be received with attention, when the people are convinced that they can trust in his judgment and his disposition to promote their welfare; but allowance must always be made for their errors and their prejudices. The conversation with them at their homes, and the service at the church, should be suited to their capacity. Discourses on abstract points of theology can never be useful to ordinary congregations, but may have the effect of unsettling their minds, and occasioning misinterpretation and error. [His Grace proceeded again to recommend, in the case of diffe-

rences arising among the Clergy on points of discipline, that care should be taken to speak at all times dispassionately, and with moderation. By Christian gentleness and prudence they would best promote the efficiency of the Church, whilst they could not be certain of the consequences of discussion in public assemblies upon such matters. Again enforcing the necessity of unity amongst ourselves, his Grace concluded in the following words:]—“Our Church would then approach as nearly as is consistent with human infirmity that blessed condition which shall be attained hereafter, when, as an integral part of the Church universal, she shall be presented to the Father of Love without spot or blemish. The return of all separatists to her bosom, and the restoration of union among all the Christian Churches, may seem impossible, humanly speaking. But shall we limit the Divine Omnipotence? Shall we say that he who brought light from darkness, and who has so long protected his Church against the malice of man, is unable to tranquillise the passions, and still the commotions, which impede the efficiency of the Church and obscure her glory? It is for us to set a bright example, by merging all strife and dissension amongst ourselves in such an entire devotion to our duties, as to produce a hearty concurrence in doing the work of the Lord, and to leave no avenue open for the entrance of contention and discord.”

His Grace then pronounced the benediction, and immediately afterwards quitted the church.

## ST. MARY OF IMPRUNETA.

(From Middleton's Letter from Rome.)

In a collegiate church of regular canons, called St. Mary of Impruneta, about six miles from Florence, there is a “miraculous picture” of the Virgin Mary, painted by St. Luke, and held in the greatest veneration throughout all Tuscany; which, as oft as that state happens to be visited by any calamity, or involved in any peculiar danger, is sure to be brought out and carried in procession through the streets of Florence, attended by the Prince himself, with all the nobility, magistrates and clergy, where it has never failed to afford them present relief in their greatest difficulties. In testimony of which they produce authentic acts and records, confirmed by public inscriptions, setting forth all the particular benefits miraculously obtained from each procession; and the several offerings made on that account to the sacred image, for many centuries past, down to these very times; from the notoriety of which facts it became a proverb over Italy, that the Florentines had got a Madonna which did for them whatever they pleased.

Among the numerous inscriptions of this sort, there is one in the church of Impruneta, to this effect:—“That the sacred image being carried with solemn pomp into Florence, when it was visited by a pestilence for three years successively, and received with pious zeal by the great Duke, Ferdinand II., and the whole body of the people, who came out to meet it, and having marched about the city for three days in procession, the fierceness of the pestilence began miraculously to abate, and soon after entirely ceased. Upon which the magistrates of health, by a general vow of the citizens, made an offering of ten thousand ducats of gold, to be employed in providing portions for twenty young women of Impruneta to be disposed of annually in marriage, and placed that inscription as a monument of so signal a benefit, A. D. 1633.”

During the time of these processions, they always inscribe certain hymns, or prayers, or eulogiums of the Virgin, over the doors and other conspicuous places of each church, where the image reposes itself for any time, in order to raise the devotion of the people towards the sacred object before them. In a procession made A. D. 1711, the following inscription was placed over the principal gate of one of their great churches:—“The gate of celestial benefit. The gate of salvation. Look up to the Virgin herself. Pass into me all ye who desire me. Whosoever shall find me shall find life, and draw salvation from the Lord. For there is no one who can be saved, O most holy Virgin, but through thee. There is no one who can be delivered from evils, but through thee. There is no one from whom we can obtain mercy but through thee.” In the conclusion are these expressions:—“Mary indeed opens the bosom of her mercy to all; so that the whole universe receives out of her fullness. The captive, redemption; the sick, a cure; the sad, comfort; the sinner, pardon; the just, grace; the angel, joy; the whole Trinity, glory.” Now what can we say of a devotion so extravagant and blasphemous, but that it is a revival of the old heresy of the Collyridians, maintained by a sect of silly women; who fell into their foolish error or madness, as Epiphanius calls it, through an excess of zeal towards the blessed Virgin, whom they resolved to advance into a goddess, and to introduce the worship of her as such into the Christian Church.

I cannot dismiss the story of this wonderful picture, without giving the reader some account of its origin, as it is delivered by their writers, not grounded, as they say, on vulgar fame, but on public records and histories, confirmed by a perpetual series of miracles:—“When the inhabitants of Impruneta had resolved to build a church to the Virgin, and were digging the foundations of it with great zeal, on a spot marked out to them by heaven; one of the labourers happened to strike his pickaxe against something under ground, from which there issued presently a complaining voice or groan. The workmen, being greatly amazed, put a stop to their work for a while; but having recovered their spirits after some pause, they ventured to open the place, from which the voice came, and found the miraculous image.” This calls to my mind a Pagan story of the same stamp, and the same country, preserved to us by Cicero, concerning the origin of divination: “That a man being at plough in a certain field of Etruria, and happening to strike his plough somewhat deeper than ordinary, there started up before him out of the furrow a deity whom they called Tages. The ploughman, terrified by so strange an apparition, made such an outcry that he alarmed all his neighbours, and in a short time drew the whole country around him; to whom the God, in the hearing of them all, explained the whole art and mystery of divination; which all their writers and records affirm to be the genuine origin of that discipline, for which the old Tuscans were afterwards so famous.” Now these two stories, forged at different times in the same country, and for the same end of supporting an idolatrous worship, bear such a resemblance to each other, that every one will see the one to be a bungling imitation of the other; and we may say of the Pagan Madonna what Cicero says of the Pagan Tages, “that none can be so silly as to believe that a god was ever dug out of the ground; and that an attempt to confute such stories would be as silly as to believe them.” My design therefore in collecting them was not so much to expose the folly of them to my protestant readers, as to admonish our papists, by unquestionable facts and instances, drawn from the present practice of Rome, into what a labyrinth of folly and impiety their principles will naturally lead them, when they are pushed to their full length, and exerted without reserve or restraint; and to lay before them the forgeries and impostures which are practised in their Church, to support the absurd doctrines which she imposes as the necessary terms of Catholic communion.

## THE CHURCH.

COBOURG, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1844.

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We resume, and intend to conclude, in the present number our observations upon CLASSICAL LITERATURE.

The story of Orpheus, which is related in the Fourth book of the *Georgics* with all the powers of poetry, must have been formed on some sacred tradition. There is such a mixture of circumstances, that any one method of accounting for them might be hazardous and unsatisfactory; but in the outlines of this story you have a man going down to the regions of death in the character of a mediator, to redeem a beloved wife, who had perished by a serpent concealed in the grass.

In the fabulous character of the *Hero* so much celebrated by the poets, we have a champion and deliverer, partly divine, partly human, invested with supernatural powers; like the person promised to our first parents, the miraculous Seed, who was to conquer the great enemy of man's salvation. And it is remarkable in the character of Achilles, the first of heroes in the first of poets, that he is the son of a deity, and vulnerable only in the heel: a circumstance so singular, that it points to the true original of the heroic character.—(See Gen. iii. 15.)

The intercourse maintained between earth and heaven in the early ages of the world, when celestial visitants, and even the Deity himself in form of flesh, deigned to hold familiar converse with men of mortal mould, is implied by Horace in his well-known compliment to Augustus, (*Odes*, l. 2); and is explicitly declared by Ovid, though for a different purpose, to punish the iniquities of mankind, where the Poet introduces the Sovereign of Olympus addressing the assembled Gods in these words:—

Contigerat nodas infamia temporis auras:  
Quam cupiens famula, summo delabor Olympo  
Et Deus humanum lustru sub imagine terras.  
Met. l. 211.

“The clamours of this vile degenerate age,  
The cries of orphans, and th' oppressor's rage,  
Had reached the stars; ‘I will descend,’ said I,  
‘In hope to prove this loud complaint a lie.’”

And the fears of the same Jupiter, on the eve of pouring forth his vengeance on the whole human race, betoken an origin allied with the voice of Revelation, touching the dissolution of the Universe, when “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat: when the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light; when the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” But how much does the simple but solemn language of inspiration transcend the Heathen Poet,—choice as his expressions undoubtedly are!

“Jamque arde in totas sparsurus fulmina terras;  
Sed timuit, ne fortis acer tot ab ignibus ether,  
Conspicere flammam, longaque ardesceret axis.  
Esse quoque in fatis reinitur, affore tempus,  
Quo mare, quo tellus, corruetque regia caeli,  
Ardeat, et mundanos opeosa labore.”  
Met. l. 255.

“Already had he tossed the flaming brand,  
And rolled the thunder in his spacious hand;  
Preparing to discharge on seas and land;  
But stop, for fear thus violently driven,  
The sparks should catch his axle-tree of Heaven,  
Remembering in the Fates a time, when fire  
Should to the battlements of Heaven aspire,  
And all his blazing words above should burn,  
And all th' infernal globe to cinders turn.”  
DRYDEN.

Jones of Nayland brings to the support of his argument several other examples of coincidence; but it is not requisite that we should specify all that he has advanced; which, however, embraces but a part of what might be quoted on the subject. The existence of the principle of agreement,—the operation of a law (if such it may be called) of conformity, is sufficiently proved by the cases already enumerated.

The illustration with which we now prepare to close the present discussion, is one of which the credit rests entirely on our own conjecture; and is placed last in order, because we do not profess to claim for it the same authority with that which the preceding examples must be allowed to possess. If there be any thing fanciful in the assumption upon which it is built; or if the analogy which we conceive to exist be esteemed by others, which is very possible, imaginary and unwarrantable; still it is important to bear in mind that the failure of one comparison will not invalidate other parallels to which no similar exception can be made; for the argument under consideration enjoys precisely the advantage attached by Dr. Paley to his *Unassigned Coincidences*, that each case stands upon its own merits; and that, as all are independent, the rejection of any one member from the body of proof does not cancel the authority nor impair the evidence of the rest.

It is well known how extensively the notion of a vicarious satisfaction for the sins of men pervaded the religious ordinances and devotional opinions of the Greeks and Romans. The necessity of such a satisfaction was universally felt; and it was this widely-circulated impression which occasioned the scrupulous observance of all the rites connected with the sacrificing of living victims. A persuasion which thus inspired the public faith, and entered into the composition of all religion, must have exercised considerable influence over the aspect of literature; at least so far as this might be allied with subjects of a sacred and solemn character. The popular creed was, in short, the tradition of a Messiah—not triumphant but suffering—obscured, it is true, but pointing notwithstanding to that propitiatory atonement for the sins of all men which was promised in Paradise and consummated on the Cross. As men became more thoroughly sensible of their own infirmities, and more keenly alive to the dangers of the position in which unexpectant transgressions had placed the whole human family with reference to the Ruler and Judge of the Universe; in the same degree in which alarm was awakened, the conceptions of this vicarious sacrifice would be rendered more vivid, and the subject itself appear to them more momentous and important. The opinion, under such circumstances, would be interwoven, by degrees, with the constitution of every serious mind; and it would then act with an unreeling and all-absorbing energy; so that it might readily find its way, even where that was least to be expected, into the works of Heathen authors,—introduced obliquely and indirectly, if it were not embodied in the more palpable shape of dogmatical instruction.

It is an interesting feature of Grecian Tragedy, that the established faith of the nation was the groundwork upon which it was constructed. Neither immorality nor irreverence was aimed at in the representations of the Athenian stage. Pagans though they were, the inhabitants of Athens have excelled many nations, who make their boast of the name of Christian, in the observance of theatrical decorum. It must, indeed, be acknowledged that the coarse jest and unfeeling burlesque of Aristophanes were too often received more favourably than they deserved, and the preservation of national gravity and virtue required; yet, though justice compels us to make this admission, it still remains an indisputable fact, that when the Tragic Muse preferred her lofty themes, the Poet never thought of defiling his compositions with the indecency which too often infects the modern drama; and his audience were not in the habit of repairing to the