

# THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

VOL. XII.—NOVEMBER, 1886.—No. 5.

## REVIEW SECTION.

### I.—THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL: ITS PREPARATION AND ITS PURPOSE.

BY REV. J. B. HEARD, OF ENGLAND, AUTHOR OF "OLD AND NEW THEOLOGY," "TRIPARTITE NATURE OF MAN," ETC.

ONCE and once only in Church history do we meet with a case of entire, sudden, and supreme conversion. The Apostle Paul speaks of himself as a pattern to them who should hereafter believe. He was a pattern in this sense, that, when converted, he passed over at once, and without reserve of any kind, from the camp of the persecutors to that of the persecuted. His was a unique case of a character which was changed not as others "by slow degrees all but the basis of the soul." One of our poets has thus described the growth from within of character, as it unfolds from narrow to wide and from little to large views of life and duty. In the Apostle Paul's case, the very basis of the soul, which was naturally broad and fitted to take a conspicuous position in life, was shaken. He never could have settled down into a groove, but must have played a high part, whether for good or evil. Like his namesake, the first king of Israel, he was in mental, if not in physical, stature head and shoulders over others, and profiting, as he tells us he did, in the Jews' religion above many his equals in his own nation.

Conversion, if it means anything, means the carrying over into the new and spiritual life of all that is worthiest and best in the powers of the old life, which is after the flesh. In conversion the flesh is not changed into spirit—that is unmeaning. Conversion is rather the grafting of a new scion on an old stock, and the more vigorous the old stock is the better the graft will be. In conversion God does not change nature into grace; that would be to mar His works, and God is the God of order, not of confusion. But what He does is to set the old powers to a new use. The stock that bore wild olives now bears good olives, and energies and capacities which once ran to waste in a