

ters. Much of his reading may of necessity be distracting, some of it disquieting. It is good to turn over these quaint pages of an author, his allegories, or his sermons, or his treatises, or even his poetry, for which Mr. Froude has a very kind word, especially for his *Book of Ruth* and the *History of Joseph*, done into blank verse. Dr. Johnson said the man was little to be envied whose piety would not grow warmer amid the ruins of Iona. Little is that minister to be envied who does not enjoy wandering with Christian or Great-Heart, fighting with Captain Credence or Captain Conviction, who cannot find an uncommon delight in the pleading fervors of his discourses. They do warm the heart. We live in an atmosphere of strong, deep, beautiful conviction. We frequent the society of no half-heated souls. It braces us for struggles, and shames all our haggard, halting steps. Well were it for our ministry if the pages of such men as Charnock and Owen and Baxter and Bunyan were more familiar.

#### VI.—THE CHURCH IN THE CATACOMBS.

BY REV. HORACE C. STANTON, PH.D., ALBANY, N. Y.

It was Divine providence which ordered that the most striking monuments of the early Christians at Rome should be buried deep under the Seven Hills. Had they been above the surface of the earth they would long ago have disappeared. But hidden in the dry, soft stone, on which the Eternal City stands, they still survive to touch the heart of Christendom, and give their imperishable testimony to the faith of the Martyr Church. The Catacombs are not in the labyrinths of now abandoned pits, once yielding the sand or pozzolana, which, mixed with lime, made the indestructible Roman cement. And rarely are they cut in solid rock. Though a few quarries, believed to have been dug by men who lived before Romulus and Remus, contain some of the earliest interments, even those of persons who may have listened to the voices of the apostles. There is the date of burial of one man who died less than forty years after the Crucifixion. The great majority of the Catacombs are cut in the clayey tufa. They are not earlier than the second century, and the custom of subterranean sepulture ceased when Rome was sacked by Alaric in 410.

Said St. Jerome, fifteen centuries ago: "My schoolfellows and I used on Sundays to make the circuit of the sepulchres of the apostles and martyrs. Many a time did we go down into the Catacombs. On either hand, as you enter, the bodies of the dead appear in the walls. Only occasionally is light let in to mitigate the horror of the darkness. You recall the words of Virgil,

"The gloom and silence fill all minds with awe."

With exactly such impressions, through the Church of St. Callistus, one enters now this city of the dead. The dry air smells of earth and