

generally add erroneous particulars. We admit that all speak of the martyrdom; but it was customary to exalt the apostles by making them die that death. In the absence of definite knowledge, early writers assumed a glorious death in honour of the persons they wished to praise. Peter's mode of execution is embellished with the peculiar feature that he was crucified with his head downward, at his own request, not thinking himself worthy to suffer in the same posture as his Master. The growth of tradition is illustrated by the fact that the deaths of Paul and Peter are said to have taken place on the same day, and in the same year, though the earliest writers merely say that they suffered about the same time. Jerome states that they were executed on the same day; and though Augustine places a year between them, holding that they died on the same day of the month only, it came to be universally believed, after Pope Gelasius' time, that they suffered on the same day (June 29) in the same year. Even Dr. Burton declares that the weight of evidence favours this identity of year and day. The more the basis of the whole tradition is examined, the slighter will it appear. The Babylon of the Epistle contributed to it; while it was the interest of the Jewish Christians to put their leader along with Paul in preaching to the Church of the Imperial city, and suffering death under the same emperor. Early Christian writers were credulous and uncritical. They repeated the statements of predecessors, and added to them without much discernment or consistency. To judge fairly of evidence was not their talent. We cannot, therefore, assent to the statement of Schott, that the fact of Peter's presence at Rome is one of the best attested in the later New Testament time."

BOOKS.

Milton, in his magnificent speech for the liberty of unlicensed printing, has a noble passage on books:—"I deny not," says he, "but that it is of greatest concernment in the Church and Commonwealth to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves as well as men, and thereafter to confine, imprison and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors—for books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a progeny of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous dragon's teeth—and being sown up and down may chance to bring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book; who kills a man kills a reasonable creature—God's image; but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself—kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth, but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life."

PEACEFUL DEPTHS.

We are told that, in the depths of the ocean are mighty rivers, flowing with calm and noiseless currents, from the pole to the equator, and from the equator to the pole. Down, deep down, where the roar of the tempest is never heard, where the lash of the raging billow is never felt, hidden from the eye of man, they pursue their silent way. These are flowings of the mighty arteries, preserving the life of its waters, moderating the heat of the centre and the cold of the extreme. We speak of the wild and stormy ocean as if all its secret depths were stirred by storms. We forget that it is only a surface agitation. The great heart of the ocean is always calm and peaceful. So a believer's outer life may be full of comfort in the enjoyment of the Saviour's gift. "Peace I leave with you," says Christ, "My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."