

THE PRISON OF SOCRATES.

BUT a few more steps, and from the pulpit of the Christian preacher we pass to the prison of the Pagan sage, or what is said to have been so. This is simply a narrow rock cave, about eighteen feet high apparently, running up into a small furnace shaped aperture on top, whence proceeds the only air and light when the opening in the front is closed. The rock walls make all egress except by the door impracticable, and a safer prison cell not even the Castle of Chillon could boast. The sage, with all his philosophy, must have been so very uncomfortable in this hole in the ground as to have received his final draught of hemlock with Pagan fortitude. At present the cave is used as a sheep-pen, and we disturbed the repose of several of those amiable animals by our visit, they evidently fearing that the fate of Socrates was to be theirs by the unwonted intrusion on their privacy. With regard to the authenticity of this spot we had no means of verifying it, but the tradition has fixed it as the genuine place where :—

“Athens’ best and wisest looked his last”—

and we see no reason to doubt the fact. The pleasures of an undoubting faith in sites of historical interest are so superior to those of skepticism that it is always better to believe than to doubt, when there is reasonable margin for credulity. The tendencies of our time incline the other way, it is true ; but it is more than doubtful whether Smollett’s “Smelfungus,” who ran over the continent turning up his nose in dissatisfaction at everything, where a happier man than the easily satisfied Yorick, whose “Sentimental Journey” is still the fruitful source of smiles and tears to generations unborn when he penned it. So let us believe Socrates drank his hemlock just here where the drowsy sheep now enjoy their peaceful slumbers, for the place is eminently adapted for a prison, and suits the historic record of that tragic event. We ne-