

Poetry.

THOUGHTS OF HEAVEN.

Thoughts of Heaven! they come when low
The summer eve's breeze doth faintly blow;
When the mighty sea shines clear, untried
By the wavering tide or the dipping bird;

Mary Howitt.

MINUCIUS FELIX.

(By a Correspondent of The Church.)

It is, unhappily, too clear that the present age is more than usually fertile in religious excitement. Doctrinal discussion, conducted too often with an acrimony scarcely consistent with Christian charity, seems in many cases to have supplanted practical piety—a state of things which not seldom presents that anomaly so fatal to tranquil devotion, of those whose duty it is to hear with reverence professing to teach with authority.

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Our Church on this point hath uttered her decision openly and plainly. The glorious Liturgy which she hath prepared for her children, next to the Bible her choicest gift, is a standing monument of her reverence for antiquity. Our first Reformers and their successors, up to the age of revolution which threatened extinction even to the pursuits of ordinary refinement in the 17th century, carefully cultivated a knowledge of the Fathers: they would have fared but poorly with their wily opponents had they not done so. We prove their wily opponents had they not done so. We prove their wily opponents had they not done so.

When we consider that the Octavius of Minucius Felix occupies a high station in the productions of ancient Christian apologists, and when we reflect that, from his position and ability, the writer must have been esteemed in his life-time no unworthy conditor even of his celebrated contemporary Tertullian, it surprises us that Ecclesiastical history is so singularly deficient in notices of his career. Cave has provided him with no place amongst his Primitive Fathers, and honoured him with a very brief allusion in his *Historia Literaria*. The birth-place of our author appears to be involved in some uncertainty, but the learned, we believe, have pretty unanimously concluded that he was an African. With regard to the period in which he flourished, St. Jerome, in his catalogue of Ecclesiastical writers, places him before Cyprian, and contemporary with Tertullian; that is, in the reign of Septimius Severus, about A.D. 210. He was a lawyer of eminence at Rome; and has received from Lactantius this flattering commendation:—"Minucius Felix held no humble station amongst the lawyers of Rome. His work entitled Octavius, shows how efficient a champion of the truth he might have been, had he devoted himself entirely to the study of it."

Jerome also bestows his meed of praise: in speaking of him with relation to the present work he asks,—"What Heathen writing has he passed over unnoticed?" and the number and force of the profane testimonies he selects as corroborative of Christianity, prove the thorough acquaintance which the author possessed with Pagan writings, and evince the justice of St. Jerome's compliment. His Octavius was for some centuries back mistaken for an 8th book of Arnobius; Baldwin was the first who removed this misconception, and published an edition of the work under the name of its real author, to which he has prefixed a Dissertation. On the value of similar productions of early Christian writers, this Editor very justly observes,—"We have had enough, quite enough of modern publications on religious subjects. Let us now make an exertion to restore ancient remains, and be sometimes more desirous of learned antiquity than empty novelty: let us likewise contemplate the characters of our ancestors, and display them to the world, lest we ourselves should appear to be new."

This small treatise, remarks Archdeacon Echar, "is written with rare elegance and an agreeable turn." It is not, however, altogether free from harsh constructions, obscurity, and inappropriate expressions, though doubtless the style and language are chaste for the 3rd century, and the Latin is probably quite as good as Celsus or Porphyry employed. Erasmus has a remark with reference to St. Augustine, if we mistake not, to the effect that Africa has its peculiar character, and it is possible that many of the peculiarities of the present work may be resolved into provincialisms. The Octavius is written in the form of a Dialogue, or more properly disputation, represented as taking place between Cæcilius Natalis, a Heathen, and Octavius Januarius, a Christian, in which the author himself is the arbiter. This Octavius, it appears, was an attached friend of Minucius,—his associate in the errors of Paganism, and his companion in conversion to Christianity. Cæcilius opens the discussion by alluding to the infirmities of human judgment in examining matters of religion, the great difficulties and divisions in which even every sect of philosophy had become involved, and infers from thence the wisdom of submitting to ancient tradition in preference to placing any confidence in private discernment and investigation. He attaches great importance to the extent of the Roman dominion and the success of his country's arms, arguing that a course of such unexampled prosperity was a presumptive evidence of Divine favour. A Poet of our own has introduced into one of his tragedies a Heathen character pleading in favour of Paganism, to the same effect:—

"Wouldst thou that Rome, whose Gods have raised her up To empire, boundless as the ocean-girt And sun-enlightened earth; that by the side Of her victorious chariot still have tolled, While there were hosts 't' ravage, or realms to conquer; That had attended on her ranging eagles Till the winds filled them in their trackless flight;— Wouldst thou, that now upon her power's meridian, Tragatful she should spurn the exhausted aid Of her old guardian Deities, and disclaim Her ancient worship? Did not willful Jove His delegated sceptre o'er the world Grant to our fathers? Did not armed Gradivus His Thracian conquests urge before our van, Striving our foes, as the wild hurricane The summer corn? where shone the arms of Rome That our great sire Quirinus looked not down Propitious from his high Olympian seat?"

This is the argument to which Cæcilius reverts with national pride. But is the plea, we may enquire, the error of a bygone age? Is it a delusion which can only be imputed to the spiritual ignorance of a Pagan? Has it been exploded by the advancement of knowledge? or has Christianity repudiated the deduction as one that rests on false principles, and consists not with the experience of mankind, and the word of God? Alas! we fear not: this unscriptural logic is as popular now as it was then. How often are our ears assailed by this vindication of irregularity and insubordination. "The success of our opinions is a seal of their truth." The extension of schism is made to imply its justice; and the number of separatist evinces, it is pretended, the truth of their cause and the enjoyment of the divine favour. Thus professing Christians abstain not from availing themselves of a sophistry which heathens could employ in common with themselves. Does not this manifest inconsistency between some of its unscriptural premises and its conclusions, attest at once both Paganism and Christianity? Was not David's heart grieved to witness the increasing prosperity of the wicked; but did this economy of Providence, though it might at first sight awaken dependence, cause him to doubt for an instant whether wickedness were hateful to God? Doth not Satan win over souls to perdition? And may not the successful agency of schism itself be one of those subtle schemes by which the Prince of Darkness estranges men from the paths of truth and the way of salvation? Schism, then, when it magnifies the partial triumphs that attend its career, and ascribes them to the influence of God's blessing, enlists on its side an argument which Paganism and crime might alike, and even Satan himself, who is often transformed into an angel of light, is privileged to employ.

The Pagan objector, after thus dilating on the vastness and grandeur of the Roman dominion, proceeds to detail the thousand times repeated calamities of the day. He charges the followers of Christ with ignorance, presumption, uncharity; he imputes to them the observance of idolatrous rites the most wicked and insane that can be imagined; and as a comprehensive

stigma he styles them a sect compelled by their abominable practices to seek concealment and to shun the light. The major part of his invective is pure invention, in which that age was fruitful, and which the vulgar, already prepossessed against the truth, were content to receive for unanswerable fact. The remainder applies to the Christians as a body what was true only of the Gnostics, whose detestable creed excites universal abhorrence. The adherents of Cerinthus or Basilides enjoyed no communion with the orthodox: it was surely then unfair and dishonest to make these latter responsible for the errors and delinquencies of those whom they abjured. But such is generally the case with blind prejudice. Where absolute fiction is not resorted to exaggeration is a favourite expedient. The fault of one is laid upon all, and the occasional errors incident to every human institution are amplified into radical defects of an entire system. The Church of England receives from her adversaries abundant vituperation for the unsoundness of the Oxford Theology; but is this conduct fair? Is the Church, as the established faith of a vast empire, answerable for the proceedings of a certain party within her pale, who have always delivered their opinions in the capacity of private individuals, and never professed to speak the voice of the Church? Admitting that the "sophistries of the Isis" (as they have been termed) are as dark and as injurious as they are sometimes represented to be, do they contaminate the purity of the whole Church? Do they affect the integrity of any great part? Christianity survived the invectives of Paganism; and the Church of our Mother-land will, we may piously believe, outlive the ungenerous misrepresentations of her modern enemies, and continue to be the bulwark of Protestant Christendom, when the weapons formed against her shall be striven in the dust.

When Cæcilius has closed his discourse, a smile on his countenance shows that he is fully satisfied with his defence. And indeed his information, tact, and versatility are worthy of a better cause. But the arbiter, before the controversy proceeds, is careful to divert the Pagan's language of its specious colors. "Although," says he, "your discourse has wonderfully delighted me by its ingenious variety, yet am I influenced by higher principles, not connected particularly with the present discussion, but grounded on the nature of every disputation. And this, because the character even of obvious truth is not seldom changed, by the comparative abilities of the disputants, and the power of eloquence.—It is notorious that this is owing to the credulity of audiences, who, whilst they are diverted from the substance of the argument by the illusions of the language, assent without discrimination to every statement, and neglect to distinguish falsehood from truth; unconscious that truth may present itself under circumstances which seem incredible, and falsehood conceal itself in the guise of probability." Cap. 14. (Ed. Cantab. 1707.)

Truth needs no embellishment; falsehood rarely appears without it; and though the prudent and considerate can penetrate the disguise, it too frequently misleads those who evince but little judgment and forethought in the formation of their opinions.—Heresy and schism, revealed in their actual deformity, would rapidly decline, were the sage advice of Basil more generally adopted.—"Hearers instructed in the Scriptures ought to examine what is said by their teachers, and to embrace what is agreeable to the Scriptures, and to reject what is otherwise." But, alas! deliberation seldom obtains a place where the most dangerous propensities of man's heart are suffered to exert their evil influence. There is something blinding and intoxicating in the career of irregularity, of corrupted doctrine and violated order.

The Christian advocate, Octavius, then proceeds to overthrow the allegations of his antagonist. We need not follow him in detail through each division of his argument. One by one the defenses of his excellence are demolished, and the superior conspicuous Christian revelation stands at length conspicuous and undoubted. The result is that the Pagan acknowledges his error, professes to his Christian friend the gratitude he feels for the light he had communicated, and declares his faithful adherence to a religion which had formerly incurred only his contempt.

We will conclude this article, which has already exceeded the limits we originally proposed, with a few extracts from the discourse of Octavius. His vindication of the majesty and spirituality of the only one, living, and true God, is well expressed:—

"The busy tenants of the five acknowledge one sovereign; in the flocks we find one leader; in the herds one ruler; can you then deny that the heavenly supremacy is divided; that the authority that only true and divine government is disembodied? And this, too, when it is obvious that God, the father of all, had neither beginning nor ending; who, himself possessing the attribute of eternity, bestows on all the boon of existence; who, ere his command directeth, by his wisdom arranges, and by his power perfecteth, the vast structure of the universe. This Almighty ruler is invisible, he is too glorious for sight, impalpable, his spiritual essence eludes the touch. Neither can we comprehend him; he is far beyond our capacities,—infinite, incomprehensible, known in all his majesty to himself alone. Our intellect is of a truth confined in its perceptions; and on this account we conceive not what we perceivingly know, we announce him inconceivably. I will freely own my persuasion, that he who imagines he understands the glory of God, degrades it; and he who would not degrade it, acknowledges that it surpasses his comprehension."—Cap. 18.

In the course of his argument he takes occasion to expose the absurdity of idol-worship.

"If one would only reflect with what implements and machines every idol is framed, he would soon dread an image moulded into man, divinity by the ingenuity of the artist. Your wooden deity forsooth, a portion of a funeral pile perchance, or of the stake on which some wretched victim has suffered, is elevated, hewn, carved, and planed. And your god of brass or silver is fused from some filthy vessel, as is often done by a king of Egypt, is beaten with hammers, and fashioned into an image. Your god of stone is chiselled, carved, polished, and all by a creature of flesh. Nor doth it discern the ignominy of its origin, as it is equally impotent, after its formation, to perceive the adoration you pay to it, unless, when a god, it be no longer stone, wood, or silver;—But when, prithee, does the divinity commence? Let us see! it is cast, and moulded, and carved; it is still no god; it is soldered, proportioned, and raised on a pedestal: nor is it yet a god. It is decorated, consecrated, and addressed with reverence. Now at length it is a god; that is, when its mortal maker has approved and dedicated it!"—Cap. 23.

We cannot bring these selections to a close better than by introducing here the reply of Octavius to the sneers of his Pagan antagonist at the Christian belief of a future resurrection:—

"We do not, as you imagine, apprehend any evil effects from the mode of burial, though we certainly adopt interment as a practice of ancient date and more congenial to the feelings. Behold how much to our comfort nature doth shadow forth the resurrection! The sun sets and rises; the stars depart and return: the flow of the field wither and revive; the trees of the forest, after temporary decay, are again clothed with foliage; the seed is not quickened except it die. Thus the body during the lapse of ages, as the tree in winter, conceals under apparent destruction the principle of renewed existence. Wherefore do you anticipate with eager expectation, whilst winter yet asserts his dreary sway, that the tree shall reassume its perished health and verdure? Even so we look for the spring of the human form. And full well I know, that very many, from the consciousness of their misdeeds, wish for rather than believe in annihilation. And the delusion of these unhappy beings is only increased by the freedom still vouchsafed to them on this earth, and by the patient long-suffering of God, whose sentence is the more deserved as it has been the longer delayed."—Cap. 34.

"See Isaiah 44. 9.—19. The well-known statue of Horses is an evidence of the opinion even of the enlightened heathen.—"Olim trahens crum fecimus, Inutile lignum; Crum faber, interitus scimus, faciemusque Prispum, Maluit esse Deum."—Serm. 1, 8, 2.

"I habet Africa suum quoddam ingenium." + Milman.

THE LATE S. F. WOOD, ESQ.

(From the English Journal of Education.)

The present number of this journal cannot go forth without some allusion to the recent death of one of the most diligent laborers in the cause of Christian education. He is known to our readers as the author of two articles, "On Attaching the Middle and Lower Orders to the Church," which appeared in this journal with the signature of S. F. W. The initials are those of the late Samuel Francis Wood, M. A., of Oriel, Oxford, and Barrister-at-law. It will be noticed here, with peculiar interest, that the last of those papers was one of his latest compositions. Just before it appeared in our April number, he had retired to the seat of his father, Sir Francis Wood, Bart., of Hickleton, in Yorkshire, where he passed into rest on Sunday, the 22d of April, after two years of slowly wasting health and strength.

It is not in the pages of a magazine that the memory of what we must venture to call his saintly character can be fully preserved. Something in the way of silence is due to that unaffected reserve, wherewith he seemed to withdraw himself from observation, and to be wounded by praise. Yet something in the way of utterance is due to the friends who loved him, and to the Church which reaped the fruit of his willing service. Even here, therefore, without trenching on the province and privilege of near and dear friends, who, we trust, will speak of his more private life for the instruction of others, it may not be presumptuous to note down a few particulars of those good works, the unwearied discharge of which, even to the last, causes him to be missed in many quarters.

During his college life he was, as he has been ever since, an example to many. He was formed to make and retain friendships, of no common warmth, with mingled kindness of manner, affectionate and tender sympathy, and an unvarying charity of judgment which was most remarkable. He took his degree in May 1831, and was in the first class in classics, a distinction which he fully deserved, by an unusual union of elegant scholarship, historical knowledge, and philosophical thought, with a sound and discriminating judgment. He was always remarkable for accuracy of knowledge and independence of mind, as well as for the freshness of interest with which he apprehended the merits of the different schools of literature to which this century has given birth, both at home and abroad.

With these qualities, so given by nature, so improved by cultivation, and sanctified by purity of intention and deep devotion, it is not surprising that he took a vivid interest in the struggle which these times have witnessed for a maintenance of ancient principles and the restoration of life to the institutions of the Church. With clearness of intellect to apprehend distinctly the points at issue, and with that earnestness of heart which gives one man power over others, he exercised an important influence, though with such retiring modesty, that he seemed himself unconscious of it; yet sometimes by his pen, sometimes by his counsel, and at all times by the example of his meekness, and by the sweetness of his society, he drew men on to holy thoughts, and to deeper views of what was passing around them.

In this place, however, we must speak of him only in one point of view, namely, in reference to the service rendered by him to the various societies which in our day supply in some measure the lack of a more adequate ecclesiastical organization. He was early called to this work, by gaining the confidence of that reverend man, whose retirement from the treasurership of the National Society was so affectionately commemorated at the last annual meeting. As that venerable person seemed to perform the part of Robert Nelson in this century, so did he of whom we are writing seem destined one day to follow in the same track; indeed, he once was heard to observe, that it seemed as if he was called to take up the routine of the work of his good friend; and therefore, though few were more painfully alive to the faults of our religious societies, or longer more earnestly for deeper principles, or more devotedly to the cause of the Church, he was content, day by day, to do the good which seemed appointed to be done in his time by means of the existing machinery. Accordingly, he would spend many a patient hour, even during exhausting illness, in sifting applications for aid, whether for the building of churches or for the employment of additional clergy.

In the various committees of which he was a member, he was ever diligent in his attendance to the ordinary routine of business, as well as ready to devise plans of extended utility; there was no one more clear-sighted to discern what was practicable from what was fanciful, no one more fertile in expedients to reconcile conflicting opinions, and to bring various minds to bear on the execution of the common object. In all his communications there was a peculiar quality of manner, a consideration for the feelings of others; and especially in his dealings with those in authority or in advanced life, there was an unaffected deference and delicacy of manner which cannot easily be forgotten.

He was among the first promoters of the extended diocesan operations engrained on the parent stock of the National Society, and, in the operations of the Committee of Inquiry and Correspondence, his was the clear pen to sketch some of the most important documents; his zeal and the discretion which commended the plans proposed to the judgment of those on whom their adoption depended.

In how many ways he advanced the cause of education both in London and in the country, cannot now be told; but it may be interesting to an important, and we hope a numerous, class of the readers of this journal, to know that they are in a great measure indebted to him for the arrangements by which the comfort and improvement of the adult masters in training at Westminster have been provided for. The principal institution at Stanley Grove also engaged his peculiar interest and watchful care. It owes to his happy suggestion the name of St. Mark's College, which so well indicates the true position of the schoolmaster in the Church.

He had taken particular interest in the erection and adorning of the chapel, to which he gave a window of stained glass; but he was not permitted to live till divine service was performed within its walls. He was, however, fresh in the memory of the friends who there knelt together on the third Sunday after Easter, but one week after his funeral; and along with his name, doubtless, were remembered those of W. M. Praed and H. N. Coleridge, fellow-workers in the same cause,—like him accomplished in mind and gentle in spirit, and like him called hence in the prime of life.

May the remembrance of such animate the hearts of those who remain, that they slacken not in the work to which they stand pledged; and may God, in His mercy, increase the number of those who labor in His Church, and grant them a like spirit of patience, humility, and perseverance!

CHARACTER OF SAMUEL.

(From a Sermon before the Parliament by Abp. Sandys.)

I shall crave leave that I may speak somewhat of the princely prophet Samuel; who, descending of noble parentage, was by his mother consecrated to the ministry. Of which calling, though Christ himself thought so highly and honourably that, refusing to be a king, he chose the office of a minister; yet so perverse is the judgment of the world that they think no

condition more base or vile. The minister with his master Christ is contemned; this holy office is become odious: "All men seek their own," and serve themselves; it is accounted slavery to serve the Lord. Samuel was called of God to be a magistrate, wherein he was so faithful and upright, that his adversaries were forced to justify his doings, and to bear him record that he neither was a bribe-taker, nor an extortioner, nor one that had injured any man. It were well with our commonwealth if all officers could carry away the like testimony. But evil subjects cannot away with good magistrates. The prodigal which have consumed their substance in lewdness and vanity, long for a change, supposing that their state will be bettered thereby, and persuading themselves that it cannot be made worse. "All change is perilous;" and an old saying is it, "Seldom comes the better." A better this people could hardly have had: yet so unquiet and discontented they were, that (the good and peaceable government of Samuel notwithstanding) they misliked their present state, and desired another governor to be given them. The worthy magistrate Moses was muttered against; the noble king David for a time deposed; our faithful Samuel rejected. Behold the hard state of good princes, who are for the most part rewarded with great ingratitude. Moses' dear cousins became his deadly enemies; David's familiar friends became his most fierce and violent foes; Samuel was rejected of such as he most favoured. Chrysisippus, observing the course of these things, saith that which experience proveeth true: "Thou shalt be sure, if thou governest, to purchase God's, if well, the people's, anger and displeasure." The danger of this office, by reason of the great ingratitude of the people, made Moses say to God, "Send whom thou wilt send." It ceased Demosthenes rather to wish banishment than place of government; and Themistocles to prefer hell itself to the judgment seat. When Antigonus should put on a royal diadem he brake forth into this speech, "O cloth of more honourable than happy estate, wherewith if a man were so thoroughly acquainted that he could tell the number of cares and miseries wherewith thou art fraught, he would not stoop for thee though he might have thee for the taking up." Wherefore it grieved not Samuel to be eased of so heavy a burden; but God was much grieved to see so great disgrace offered to his anointed. "They have not rejected thee but me," saith the Lord. "To dislike and cast off a good magistrate is to dislike and cast off God; because 'all power is of God.'" God in his wrath for godly Samuel gave them wicked Saul. I pray God in his justice serve all such alike as seek after such change, as cannot submit themselves with loving and obedient hearts to the good government of worthy Samuel, their natural prince, their good and faithful magistrate, whom for conscience sake they ought to honour and obey.

Samuel was both a prophet and a prince, a minister and a magistrate: so was Melchisedec, Moses, David, Christ. He had need to be a rare man, that should well answer Sunday offices. When *redde rationem*, "Give account," cometh then one office such as the least of these will be thought a burthen heavy enough for any one, besides these, to have borne. But the matching of these two offices doth teach, what agreement, love, and liking should be between these two officers. They are God's two hands to build up withal the decayed walls of Jerusalem. If the one hand set forward, and the other put backward, God's work will be ill wrought. The wisdom of God matched Moses and Aaron, two brethren; the one the minister, the other the magistrate; that, knit together in brotherly love, they might labour together with both hands for the furtherance of God's building. When the word and the sword do join, then is the people well ruled, and then is God well served. So long as king Joas and the good priest Jehoiada lived together, God was served according to his word: the priest rightly counselled, the king gladly followed.

Samuel, rejected and put from the office of a magistrate by this froward and rebellious people, yet was not so froward himself, as to forsake the office of a minister. Neither minded he to revenge this wrong offered him; but with a mild mind he was content, not only to pray for them, but to teach them faithfully and lovingly to admonish them. A pattern for all princes to be mild in their own matters yet earnest and zealous in the quarrel of God. He prayed for the people his enemies—the cause was his own: he took the sword in his hand, and cut king Agag in pieces—the cause was God's—Moses in his own cause was a man most mild; he quietly suffered wonderful wrongs: but when he perceived idolatry committed, God's glory coming into question, he with his partakers for worshipping of that calf, put to the sword three thousand men—Christ our Saviour and Master suffered, though undeservedly, yet meekly, and in reproof, yet reproof, yet death itself; but when his Father's cause came in hand, that the house of God was made a den of thieves, he bestirred him with his whip, cursed those simoniacal choppers and changers, buyers and sellers, out of the temple, and made havoc of whatsoever they had.

WHAT TO BELIEVE: A TALK FOR THE TIMES. (From the Boston Transcript.) Mrs. Smith. How rapidly the Church of Rome is gaining ground in England! It will soon be dominant again. The Tablet, Romish paper. "The Anglican Church is growing every day with the growth of a giant. Look at this heretical communion now, and look at it ten years ago. Then it was broken, discomfited, trampled on, despised, and its approaching end foretold. Now, we verily believe, it is stronger than it has ever been since King William's Revolution. In all quarters it is becoming more efficient, more respected, more powerful." (Quoted in "The Church Intelligencer," London, July 19.) Mrs. Smith. You quite astonish me! Why, it is just about ten years since the Puseyites came to your aid. United States [Roman] Catholic Miscellany. "We acknowledge no alliance with the Puseyite party." (Paper of July 29.) Mrs. Smith. But now, surely, since that sermon, their great leader must be claimed as yours! [Roman] Catholic Herald. "Unfortunately, he has not advanced far enough for us to claim him as our own." (Paper of August 3.) Mrs. Smith. You don't mean to say that Dr. Pusey has not come out, at last, a real Roman Catholic? [Roman] Catholic Herald. "The preface points out the difference of the teaching of Dr. Pusey from that of the Catholic Church, and shows that he is not yet a child of faith. We must pray that the firm which dims his vision may be removed." (Paper of July 27.) Mrs. Smith. Well, this is very strange! Why, it was only the other day that I read in "the Sunday School Journal," published by the American Sunday School Union, an extract from "the Pastoral