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ART. I.—*Remarks on the Epistles of Ignatius.*

THE Epistles of Ignatius may be said to be the sheet-anchor of diocesan Episcopacy. They are implicitly relied on, continually quoted, and made the subject of unceasing boast, as decisive witnesses for prelatical bishops. Whatever testimony may be doubtful on the subject, *this* has been pronounced, for more than two centuries, altogether unquestionable. In short, so much has been said concerning these Epistles, in reference to the Episcopal controversy, that the opinion seems with many to be taken for granted, that if their authenticity can be established, the cause of Presbyterianism is, of course, defeated. On this account, we presume that a few simple statements respecting the history and character of the Epistles in question, will not be uninteresting to our readers.

Ignatius, as Eusebius tells us, was bishop or pastor of Antioch, early in the second century. Where he was born; how educated; when, or by what means, converted to the Christian faith; and at what time inducted into the pastoral charge of the church of Antioch—are all points concerning which nothing is now known. Some of the ancients alleged that he was the “child”.

whom the blessed Saviour "took in his arms," and placed before his disciples as a pattern of humility; and on this account, as some imagine, the name Theophoros, was given to him, as indicating one "carried" or "borne of God." There is no other evidence of this, however, than a very vague tradition; and in opposition to it, Chrysostom, who flourished in the fourth century, expressly says of him, "That he never saw the Lord, nor enjoyed any converse with him."

The first writer that mentions him as bishop of Antioch, is Origen, in the third century. All the succeeding Fathers, who have occasion to mention him, follow this account. When this fact is stated concerning him, there can be no doubt that the title imports, simply, that he had the pastoral charge of that church; as it is perfectly evident that the title of bishop was applied, in the apostolic age, to all Presbyters who were pastors of churches; and it is no less certain that the title was applied in the same manner by Clemens Romanus, who was contemporary with Ignatius. Indeed the very Epistles of which we are now speaking, contain, as we shall afterwards have occasion to show, inherent and abundant evidence of the same fact.

The story concerning this venerable father is, that he suffered martyrdom during the reign of the emperor Trajan; that he was carried a prisoner for this purpose, by a strong military guard, from Antioch to Rome, where he was put to death by being thrown to wild beasts; and that while he was on this last journey, and suffering all the restraint and insult which the ruffian soldiers by whom he was conducted were so brutal as to employ, he wrote a number of Epistles, which are still extant, and which have given rise to so much warm and learned controversy.

Several of the circumstances included in this account have been called in question by grave and learned writers, as altogether deficient in evidence and probability. Among others, bishop Stillingfleet, in his *Irenicum*, speaks thus: "And truly the story of Ignatius, (as much as it is defended with his Epistles) doth not seem to be any of the most probable. For wherefore should Ignatius, of all others, be brought to Rome to suffer, when the Proconsuls and the Præsides Provinciarum did every where, in time of persecution, execute their power in punishing Christians at their own tribunals, without sending them so long a journey to Rome to be martyred there? And how came Ignatius to make so many and such strange excursions as he did by the story, if the soldiers that were his guards were so cruel to him, as he complains they were? Now all these uncertain and fabulous narrations as to persons, then arising from want of sufficient re-

ords made at those times, make it more evident, how incompetent a judge antiquity is to the certainty of things done in apostolical times." So that we may say, there is scarcely any thing related by the ancient writers concerning this father, which does not seem to rest on doubtful evidence, and which has not in fact been called in question. Some men of great learning have even supposed that we have no satisfactory proof of Ignatius having ever written any Epistles; while others, no less entitled to respect, believe that, although he probably did write certain Epistles, the alleged copies of them which we now possess are entirely spurious. Those who wish to examine impartially and extensively every thing that can be now known concerning this man and his works, are referred to the very able and learned treatise of John Daillé, a French Protestant divine, *De Scriptis Ignatii Antiocheni*; to bishop Pearson's *Vindiciæ Ignatianæ*; to bishop Beveridge's *Annotations* on the writings of this father; to L'Arroque's *Defence of Daillé's* work; to Jameson's *Nazianzeni Querela*; and to what archbishop Usher, Vossius, archbishop Wake, and others, have said in less formal and voluminous publications.

The history of the Epistles under consideration is undoubtedly curious. They were first, it is believed, printed at Strasburg in the year 1502. They were then eleven in number. In an edition published a few years afterwards, there appeared twelve. And not long after that a third, in which their number was increased to fifteen, together with an additional letter from the Virgin Mary to Ignatius! These Epistles have commonly been divided, by careful writers, into three classes. The first contains three Epistles which are extant only in Latin, and addressed, one of them to "the Virgin Mary," the other to "St. John." The second comprehends five Greek epistles, which are not mentioned either by Eusebius or Jerome, and of which the first is addressed to Mary Cassabolita; the second to the "inhabitants of Tarsus;" the third to the "Antiochians;" the fourth to Hero, deacon of the church at Antioch; the fifth to the Philippians. These are so full of superstition and folly, that no impartial reader can doubt a moment concerning them. They have some warm Popish advocates, but are rejected as spurious by all Protestants. The third class consists of the seven Epistles supposed to be taken notice of by several respectable early writers; the first, to the Ephesians; the second, to the Magnesians; the third, to the Trallians; the fourth, to the Romans; the fifth, to the Philadelphians; the sixth, to the Smyrnæans; and the seventh, to Polycarp. The whole of these Epistles, taken together, amount to but little in quantity.

They fill but forty-one octavo pages in the American edition of archbishop Wake's translation of the apostolic Fathers.

With regard to these seven Epistles, the only ones, as before stated, which Protestants now acknowledge, they have appeared before the public in two very different forms. The editions of them which were published prior to the year 1644, were much more voluminous than those which are now considered as genuine; and are distinguished from the latter by the title of "the Larger Epistles." Soon after these appeared, they were denounced by some of the most learned Protestant divines as grossly interpolated, and unworthy of credit. Among these, were Calvin, the Magdeburgh Centuriators, Rivet, and Scultet, of the continent of Europe, and the learned Whitaker and Perkins of the Church of England. Here were Presbyterians, learned Lutherans, and no less learned Episcopalians, all uniting in this judgment. Still, however, on account of their being considered as strong witnesses in behalf of Episcopacy, they had many zealous high-church advocates; such as archbishop Whitgift, bishop Bilson, bishop Downham, Peter Heylin, and others of similar stamp, who insisted on their genuineness; appealed to them as affording the most credible testimony; and treated with no little severity those who were not ready to give them implicit confidence. In short, let it ever be remembered, that high-church Episcopalians, when there were no other known than these "larger Epistles," contended for them as the genuine remains of Ignatius with as much confidence and zeal, as they have ever since done for the "smaller Epistles."

While things were in this situation, about the year 1644, archbishop Usher found two copies of these seven Ignatian Epistles, not in the original Greek, but in a Latin translation; one in the library of Caius College, Cambridge; the other in the library of bishop Montague, who had deceased several years before. These copies differed materially from the "larger Epistles" which had been before published. They were much shorter, leaving out much that the larger contained, and containing some things which were not found in the larger, but which were quoted by Eusebius, and other ancient writers. Not long afterwards, the learned Isaac Vossius, a native of Holland, who, in advanced life, removed to England, and enjoyed preferment there, found a copy of these epistles in Greek, in the library of the Duke of Tuscany, at Florence. This copy, which was published at Amsterdam, in 1646, very nearly agreed with the Latin copies found by archbishop Usher in the two libraries in England. When these were published, the tide immediately turned. The high-toned friends of prelacy, who had so long and so strenuously contend-

ed for the genuineness of the "larger Epistles," now gave them up; acknowledged the validity of the arguments by which they had been opposed as grossly corrupt; confessed that their title to credit could no longer be maintained; and immediately transferred all their old zeal to the new and "shorter Epistles." Accordingly, from the time of Usher and Vossius, no other than these "shorter Epistles," have ever been quoted or defended by the mass of Protestant writers. The learned, but not very judicious, William Whiston, it is believed, stands almost alone, among Protestants, in insisting that the "larger Epistles," are more genuine and worthy of credit than the "smaller."

But even with regard to the seven "smaller Epistles," the opinions of their Episcopal advocates are not uniform. Even archbishop Usher, their learned restorer, was inclined to the opinion that the seventh of this number, entitled the "Epistle to Polycarp," ought to be regarded as spurious, or, at least as "doubtful." He thought that Ignatius probably addressed no letter to Polycarp; but that his "Epistle to the Church of Smyrna," was intended and directed both to them and their bishop jointly. And he also supposed that this was the opinion of Jerome. The learned prelatist, Dr. Cave, also, after enumerating those alleged "Epistles of Ignatius," which are unquestionably spurious, sets down the seventh of the "smaller Epistles," addressed to Polycarp, as "doubtful."

The following, then, is a summary of the undoubted facts concerning the far-famed Ignatian Epistles, viz.

1. It is acknowledged on all hands, by Protestants, that *a gross and wicked forgery has been practised with regard to the writings of this father.* In other words, that out of fifteen Epistles confidently ascribed to him, eight are certainly spurious.

2. It is quite as universally and explicitly acknowledged, even by prelatists themselves, that the remaining seven of the fifteen, have been wickedly tampered with, and grossly interpolated; not merely by the addition of words and sentences in a few places, but so freely and largely, as to render them far more voluminous than there is any reason to believe that Ignatius left them.

3. It is notorious that one, even of the seven expurgated and shortened Epistles, of which so much clamorous use is now made, is considered by some of the most competent Episcopal judges, as spurious, or at least, as doubtful; and consequently, as unfit to be quoted with entire confidence.

4. And finally, it is known to all well-informed readers, that a number of the most learned Protestant writers of Europe, of

various countries, of different religious connections, and of different habits of thinking, have concurred in pronouncing even the seven "shorter Epistles," which have been so fully described, as probably spurious, or at least as so much interpolated, that there is no safety in quoting them as the genuine work of Ignatius. After all that has been said in vindication of these Epistles, by Pearson, Beveridge, Wake, Usher, Smith, &c. &c., it is a fact of no small weight in the controversy, that such men as Daillé, L'Arroque, Rivet, Blondel, and Salmasius, utterly deny that they are worthy of credit; and contend that their whole history places them under an aspect so suspicious and disreputable, that they ought never to be quoted, and above all, in support of any fact or principle connected with the Episcopal controversy.

We appeal now to every candid reader, whether it is any wonder that Presbyterians demur when the testimony of Ignatius is confidently and boastingly adduced, as it so often is, in aid of the claims of prelacy? When prelatists pronounce the testimony of this father in favour of their cause, decisive—impregnable—and even unquestionable—it is truly amazing that persons who know the statement which has been given to be correct, can allow themselves to speak thus; and still more amazing that any intelligent readers believe them! Is it not a fact too evident to be denied, that it is a testimony against which a "bill of attainder," so to speak, has gone forth, so weighty, and so widely spread, that it cannot be despised by any thinking man? It is undoubtedly without prejudice or exaggeration, a suspicious testimony; rendered suspicious, not by "false reports," trumped up by ignorance or ill-nature; but by a series of unquestionable facts, really adapted, in the view of every reflecting mind, to destroy their credibility. Certain it is, that no jury in the United States, would assign the least weight to testimony, in an important cause, which had been so strongly marked with tampering and corruption in every period of its history.

For ourselves, we are not disposed to unite with the learned men, before alluded to, who doubt whether Ignatius ever wrote *any* Epistles, and consequently consider it as probable that every thing which has appeared under his name is a total forgery. On the contrary, we are of the opinion, that Ignatius did write at least six Epistles; and that the "shorter" ones, which now bear his name, are, substantially, his real productions. At the same time, we are persuaded, with some of the ablest and wisest ecclesiastical antiquaries that ever lived, that they have all been more or less interpolated; that this interpolation was

mainly intended to favour the hierarchy; that the corrupt insertions to favour this object are numerous, fulsome and disgusting to the last degree; and that, of course, in relation to that point, no sentence from any of the Epistles, "larger" or "shorter," can be safely or wisely produced. We say this, not because we have any fear of the bearing of this testimony, as we shall presently take occasion to show; but, simply, on account of the history of the documents containing it. If this history be not highly disreputable, then we know not what can deserve to be so stigmatized.

Similar to our own is the judgment of many impartial Episcopalians, who have frankly acknowledged that in the controversy respecting prelacy, they did not dare to bring forward Ignatius as a witness. The following remarks of a member of the Church of England, evidently well-informed and candid, are a specimen of what might be produced from many pens in the same communion.

"Could six of the seven Epistles usually ascribed to Ignatius be cited in this cause, with the same undoubting confidence which, in the writer's mind, has accompanied all the foregoing quotations, the controversy concerning the early existence of Episcopacy would be at an end.* He must be a captious adversary who, for the acquisition of a few years, would exclaim, that we had now passed the threshold of another century, and that our contemporary authorities were exhausted. This is not the misfortune; but that after travelling so long in comparative obscurity; after being compelled to close and strongly directed attention, in order to pick up three or four rays of scattered light, we are, in a moment, oppressed and confounded by the brightness of the mid-day sun. For in these Epistles we have the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, marshalled with unreasonable exactness, and repeated with importunity and anxiety. Precept is heaped upon precept, *μη αντιτασσεσθαι επισκοπω, υποταγηναι επισκοπω*, and much more to the same purpose. Besides, these charges are reiterated to so many churches, the circumstances of all which at the same time would scarcely require them alike. There appear, moreover, so many symptoms of contrivance, and such studied uniformity of expression, that these compositions will surely not be alleged by any capable and candid advocate for primitive Episcopacy, without

* We totally differ from this writer as to this point, as will afterwards appear. If every word and syllable could be proved to be authentic, the cause of Episcopacy could gain nothing in the view of impartial interpreters. We merely quote the passage to show that some well-informed Episcopalians do not believe in the integrity of these Epistles.

great hesitation: by many they will be totally rejected. I do not mean to insinuate that the whole of these six Epistles is a forgery; on the contrary, many parts of them afford strong internal evidence of their own genuineness; but with respect to the particular passages which affect the present dispute (Episcopacy) *there is not a sentence which I would venture to allege; the language, at the earliest, is that of the third century.*"*

In like manner, the learned Professor Neander, of Berlin, probably the most profoundly accomplished ecclesiastical historian now living, while he pronounces with confidence that the Epistles of Ignatius have been "corrupted in favour of the hierarchy," freely quotes them on other subjects, and evidently considers them as entitled to some degree of confidence; as containing much that was really written by the father whose name they bear.

Indeed the language of archbishop Wake, in reference to the absolute integrity of these "Shorter Epistles," is such as ought to put every candid reader on his guard. Though a warm advocate of their general authenticity, he, nevertheless, speaks thus: "As for what we find a late learned writer advancing in opposition to the authority of these Epistles, that our copies, though exceedingly more perfect than any that were ever extant before those great men, Bishop Usher, and Isaac Vossius set out, the one the old Latin versions, the other, the original Greek, from the manuscript which he found of it in the Florentine library; yet there may be reason still to suspect that they are not so free from all corruptions as were to be wished: I reply, that if he means that the same has happened to these Epistles, as has happened to all other ancient writings, that letters, or words have been mistaken, and perhaps even the pieces of some sentences corrupted either by carelessness or ignorance of the transcribers; I see no reason why we should deny that to have befallen these Epistles, which have been the misfortune of all other pieces of the like antiquity. This, therefore, it has been often declared that neither do we contend about; nor can any one who reads the best copies we have of them, with any care or judgment, make any doubt of it."†

Nor can we resist the belief that such is the impression which the slightest perusal of the Epistles themselves is adapted to produce on a candid unsophisticated mind. The following anecdote will at once illustrate and confirm our remark. A candidate for the ministry in the Presbyterian Church, was, not long since, earnestly solicited by a theological student of the

* Christian Observer. Vol. II. p 723, 724.

† Preliminary Discourse to the Genuine Epistles of the Apostolic Fathers, chap. 4, sect. 19.

Protestant Episcopal Church, to form a plan for reading together the Epistles of Ignatius; the latter at the same time expressing a confident opinion, that the perusal, if candidly conducted, would convert his Presbyterian friend to Episcopacy. They formed the plan, and forthwith entered with zeal on its execution. But before the proposed perusal was completed, the young Episcopalian was himself so revolted and disgusted by the studied, unseasonable and fulsome repetition of the precepts about bishops, and felt that it bore so strongly the stamp of either miserable interpolation, or an unworthy spirit in the writer, that he was not disposed to pursue the task; and, instead of winning over his Presbyterian brother to Episcopacy, was almost tempted to transfer his own allegiance to the Presbyterian Church; or, at any rate, entirely to abandon Ignatius as a witness in favour of his denomination.

We could wish that these far-famed Epistles were in every Presbyterian habitation in the United States, and could be carefully and dispassionately read over by every individual of that communion. They would soon see what a perfect ecclesiastical imposture the whole argument in favour of prelacy, drawn from these Epistles, is; and that in two respects.

1. They would perceive at once, that the language of these Epistles in reference to the bishop's office, is so urgent, so unseasonably introduced, and so incessantly repetitious, as to be perfectly disgusting; and to satisfy them that a grave writer, at the beginning of the second century, could not possibly have penned it.

The following specimen of this language, if we mistake not, will be sufficient to manifest and to justify our meaning in the view of every intelligent reader.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, the following passages occur: "I received, therefore, in the name of God, your whole multitude in Onesimus; who by inexpressible love is ours, but according to the flesh is your bishop; whom I beseech you by Jesus Christ to love; and that you would all strive to be like unto him. And blessed be God, who hath granted unto you, who are so worthy of him, to enjoy such an excellent bishop." "For what concerns my fellow servant Burrhus, and your most blessed deacon in all things pertaining to God; I entreat you that he may tarry longer, both for yours and your bishop's honour. It is therefore fitting that you should by all means glorify Jesus Christ, who hath glorified you; that by a uniform obedience ye may be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment; and may all speak the same things concerning every thing; and that being subject to your bishop, and the

presbytery, ye may be wholly and thoroughly sanctified.” “But forasmuch as charity suffers me not to be silent towards you, I have first taken upon me to exhort you that ye would all run together according to the will of God. For even Jesus Christ, our inseparable life, is sent by the will of the Father; as the bishops appointed unto the utmost ends of the earth, are by the will of Jesus Christ.” “Wherefore it will become you to run together according to the will of your bishop, as also ye do. For your famous presbytery, worthy of God, is fitted as exactly to the bishop, as the strings are to the harp.” “For if I, in this little time, have had such a familiarity with your bishop—I mean not a carnal but spiritual acquaintance with him—how much more must I think you happy, who are so joined to him, as the church is to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ to the Father; that so all things may agree in the same unity.” “For if the prayer of one or two be of such force, as we are told, how much more powerful shall that of the bishop, and the whole church be!” “Let us take good heed, therefore, that we do not set ourselves against the bishop, that we may be subject to God.” “It is evident, therefore, that we ought to look upon the bishop even as we would look upon the Lord himself.” “Obeying your bishop and the presbytery with an entire affection.”

In the Epistle to the Magnesians, such passages as these occur: “Seeing, then, I have been judged worthy to see you, by Damas, your most excellent bishop; and by your worthy presbyters, Bassus and Apollonius; and by my fellow servant Sotio, the deacon in whom I rejoice; forasmuch as he is subject unto his bishop as to the grace of God.” “Wherefore it will become you also not to use your bishop too familiarly upon the account of his youth; but to yield all reverence to him, according to the power of God the Father.” “It will, therefore, become you with all sincerity to obey your bishop, in honour of Him whose pleasure it is that ye should do so.” “I exhort you that ye study to do all things in divine concord; your bishop presiding in the place of God; your presbyters in the place of the councils of the apostles; and your deacons most dear to me, being entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father before all ages.” “Let there be nothing that may be able to make a division among you; but be ye united to your bishop, and those that preside over you, to be your pattern and direction in the way to immortality.” “As, therefore, the Lord did nothing without the Father; so neither do ye do any thing without your bishop and presbyters.” “Wherefore come ye all together as unto one temple of God; as to one altar; as to one

Jesus Christ; who proceeded from one Father, and exists in one, and is returned to one." "Be subject to your bishop, and to one another, as Jesus Christ to the Father according to the flesh."

In the Epistle to the Trallians, he speaks as follows: "Whereas ye are subject to your bishop as to Jesus Christ, ye appear to me to live not after the manner of men, but according to Jesus Christ." "It is therefore necessary, that as ye do, so without your bishop, you should do nothing." "In like manner, let all reverence the deacons as Jesus Christ; and the bishop as the Father; and the presbyters as the sanhedrim of God, and college of the apostles. Without these there is no church." "Continue inseparable from Jesus Christ, our God, and from your bishop, and from the command of the apostles. He that is within the altar is pure; but he that is without, that is, that does any thing without the bishop and presbyters, and deacons, is not pure in his conscience." "It becomes every one of you, especially the presbyters, to refresh the bishop, to the honour of the Father, of Jesus Christ, and of the apostles." "Fare ye well in Jesus Christ; being subject to your bishop as to the command of God, and so likewise to the presbytery."

In the Epistle to the Philadelphians, he speaks thus: "Ignatius, who is also called Theophoros, to the church of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, which is at Philadelphia in Asia; which has obtained mercy, being fixed in the concord of God, and rejoicing evermore in the passion of our Lord; which I salute in the blood of Jesus Christ, which is our eternal and undefiled joy; especially if they are at unity with the bishop and presbyters who are with him, and the deacons appointed according to the mind of Jesus Christ." "As many as are of God, and of Jesus, are also with their bishop." "Wherefore, let it be your endeavour to partake all of the same eucharist. For there is but one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ; and one cup in the unity of his blood; one altar; as there is also one bishop, together with his presbytery." "I cried whilst I was among you, I spake with a loud voice—Attend to the bishop and to the presbytery, and to the deacons. Now some supposed that I spake this as foreseeing the divisions that should come among you. But he is my witness, for whose sake I am in bonds, that I knew nothing from any man. But the Spirit spake, saying on this wise; do nothing without the bishop; keep your bodies as the temples of God; love unity, &c." "The Lord forgives all that repent, if they return to the unity of God, and the council of the bishop."

The following passages are found in the Epistle to the Smyræans:

"See that ye all follow your bishop, as Jesus Christ, the

Father; and the presbytery as the apostles. Let no man do any thing of what belongs to the church separately from the bishop. Let that eucharist be looked upon as well established, which is either offered by the bishop, or by him to whom the bishop has given his consent. Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people also be; as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic church. It is not lawful without the bishop, either to baptize, or to celebrate the holy communion; but whatever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God; that so whatever is done, may be sure and well done." "It is a good thing to have a due regard both to God and the bishop. He that honours the bishop shall be honoured of God; but he that does any thing without his knowledge, ministers unto the devil."

In the Epistle to Polycarp, we find the following language; and in order to understand the language of this epistle, let it be remembered that Polycarp was at this time the bishop or pastor of the church of Smyrna; and that this letter purports to have been addressed to him for the purpose of exciting him to diligence and fidelity in his official character.

"Let not the widows be neglected. Be thou, after God, their guardian. Let nothing be done without thy knowledge and consent; neither do thou any thing but according to the will of God; as also thou dost with all constancy. Let your assemblies be more full. Inquire into all by name.* Overlook not the men nor maid-servants; neither let them be puffed up; but rather let them be more subject to the glory of God; that they may obtain from him a better liberty." "If any man can remain in a virgin state, to the honour of the flesh of Christ, let him remain without boasting: but if he boast, he is undone. And if he desire to be more taken notice of than the bishop, he is corrupted. But it becomes all such as are married, whether men or women, to come together with the consent of the bishop, that so their marriage may be according to godliness, and not in lust. Let all things be done to the honour of God." "Hearken unto the bishop, that God may also hearken unto you. *My soul be security for them that submit to their bishop*, with their presbyters and deacons. And may my portion be, together with theirs, in God!"†

Such is the language ascribed to a man who lived toward the close, and a little after, the apostolic age; who, at the time he is alleged to have written thus, was a prisoner of the Roman government, on his way to Rome, with a full expectation, which the event speedily justified, of suffering martyrdom for the cause of Christ! That, in these circumstances, with a violent and awful

* In the original, "Inquire after, or seek out, all by name."

† See archbishop Wake's *Apostolical Fathers*.

death fully and immediately in view, and when other thoughts might be expected to occupy his mind than those which related to official dignity and pre-eminence; that, in these circumstances, he should be so incessantly harping on the claims of the bishop; begging the people to honour their bishop, to submit to the bishop, to adhere to their bishop, to do nothing without their bishop, assuring them that if they honour their bishop, God will honour them; and declaring, "My soul be security for them that submit to their bishop," &c. is truly one of the most incredible of all allegations! The general character of Ignatius is a guaranty that such unceasing incense to the dignity and the pride of office cannot be his. Nor is this all. The utter discrepance between this language and that of all the other writers who wrote about the same time, must strike every attentive reader. It is, undoubtedly, language foisted in by some presumptuous interpolator, at least two hundred years after Ignatius had gone to his reward.

This supposition is confirmed by the notorious fact, that in the earlier ages of the church, large numbers of spurious writings were attempted to be palmed on the religious public, and actually obtained no small currency; and that the practice of interpolating the genuine writings of popular and highly venerated men, for the purpose of accommodating them more to the taste of an age becoming more corrupt, both in doctrine and order—had a wide prevalence, is too well known to render formal proof necessary. It was so much the standing trade of the day, that one-tenth part of the testimony which we actually possess, that the *Epistles of Ignatius* have been tampered with, would be sufficient to render the charge an exceedingly probable one.

The charge of interpolation, which, for more than two centuries, has been constantly brought against these *Epistles*, has a particular respect to "the hierarchy," as Neander expresses it; that is, mainly to the exaltation of the bishop's office. They have never been specifically charged, so far as is now recollected, with having been altered to favour the scriptural doctrine of the Trinity, or any of the leading articles of Christian orthodoxy. The learned and indefatigable Lardner, who was himself a Unitarian, in speaking of the integrity of the *Epistles* in question, expresses himself thus: "Whether the small *Epistles* are the genuine writings of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, is a question that has been much disputed, and has employed the pens of the ablest critics. And whatever positiveness some may have shown on either side, I must own, I have found it a very difficult question. I shall, however, deliver my opinion, formed upon the inquiry I have made into this controversy. Consider-

ing the testimonies I have alleged, and also from the internal characters of great simplicity and piety, which are in these Epistles (I mean the smaller) it appears to me probable that they are, for the main, the genuine Epistles of Ignatius. If there be only some few sentiments and expressions, which seem inconsistent with the true age of Ignatius, 'tis more reasonable to suppose them to be additions, than to reject the Epistles themselves entirely; especially in the scarcity of copies, which we now labour under. As the interpolations of the "larger Epistles" are plainly the work of some Arian; so even the "smaller Epistles" may have been tampered with by the Arians or the Orthodox, or both; though I do not affirm there are in them any considerable corruptions or alterations."*

The foregoing remarks are intended to give such of our readers as may not have had an opportunity of being acquainted with these Epistles, and with the controversy respecting them, as correct a view of the leading facts in the case, as we are able to present in a few pages. Such is the history, and such the character of these far-famed remains of antiquity. That they are all an entire forgery, we do not believe. That they exhibit the substance of what was written by the venerable martyr whose name they bear, we admit as highly probable, and as sustained by a majority of impartial judges. That they have been tampered with by corrupters and interpolators, is acknowledged on all hands. No Protestant has the hardihood to deny it. That even the seven shorter and purer Epistles are not wholly free from this dishonest dealing, is contended, as we have seen, by a great number—it is believed by far the greater number of learned men, of various denominations, and in all parts of the Christian Church. And that this wicked management has been applied with a particular view to make them speak a language more favourable to ecclesiastical pre-eminence than they originally did, will be manifest to any one who impartially compares them with contemporary writings, and has been confessed by some learned Episcopalsians themselves.

2. But the second beneficial effect likely to result from a more familiar acquaintance with the Epistles of Ignatius is, that, even assuming their perfect integrity, they are by no means such witnesses in favour of prelacy, as is commonly imagined. The truth is, the foregoing statements have been drawn from us more as a tribute to the truth of history, than by any apprehension that the testimony of Ignatius, intelligently and candidly interpreted, will establish, or even favour the claims of diocesan

* Lardner's *Credibility*, Part II. vol. I. p. 153, 154.

Episcopacy. We have no doubt that the interpolations referred to were intended chiefly to exalt the character of the bishop; but that it was not a diocesan, but a parochial bishop whom they really describe and honour, we think can be made out to the satisfaction of every enlightened and impartial reader.

It seems to be entirely forgotten by our Episcopal brethren; that in the Presbyterian Church there are three orders or classes of Church officers, all of whom Presbyterians believe to be of divine appointment. They seem not to keep in mind that our doctrine is, that in the apostolic age, and in the age immediately following, comprehending that of Ignatius, the title of bishop was applied to every pastor of a church, that is, to every presbyter who had a pastoral charge committed to him; in other words, to every one who was appointed a spiritual "overseer" of a Christian congregation. That the term bishop is so applied in the New Testament, the highest authorities of the Episcopal denomination themselves freely acknowledge; and there is sufficient evidence that the title continued to be applied in the same manner for more than a hundred years after the apostolic age. With respect to the second order of ecclesiastical officers in the Presbyterian Church, we commonly call them elders, and not presbyters. Yet every scholar knows that elder and presbyter are terms of exactly the same import; the one being of Saxon, and the other of Greek derivation: and, accordingly, the Greek word, *πρεσβυτερος* is never translated *presbyter*, but always *elder*, in our English version of the Bible. The language of our public formularies, in enumerating our ecclesiastical officers, is "bishops (or pastors) elders and deacons." But if we had written in Greek as Ignatius did, if we were now to write about our church in that language, we could not avoid saying, as he did, that our officers are *επισκοποι, πρεσβυτεροι και διακονοι*. And if an individual or body of ministers, among us, were to address a particular church, with its appropriate officers, they would naturally, and indeed almost necessarily, speak of their bishop or pastor, together with their presbytery, or eldership, and their worthy deacons, and exhort them to honour and obey these officers in their appropriate exercise of authority. When, therefore, we say, that the style in which Ignatius designates the three classes of church officers of whom he speaks, decides nothing at all in favour of the claims of prelacy, but is quite as favourable to Presbyterianism, we state a simple, unqualified fact, which no man, who really understands the subject, can deny. In other words, the enumeration, bishops, presbyters and deacons, which so frequently occurs in the pages of Ignatius, agrees just as perfectly, both in number, order, title and descrip-

tion with the array of officers found in the Presbyterian Church, as it can be imagined to do with the Episcopal form of government. We are aware that the contrary is alleged, with the highest confidence, by many of the friends of prelacy; but we will venture to say, without a shadow of support from the facts in the case.

But we go one step further. Not only is it certain that the ecclesiastical nomenclature of Ignatius perfectly agrees with both the nomenclature and the arrangements of the Presbyterian Church; so that if Presbyterians were to speak *of* or *to* their own church officers, and to discuss the same subjects which this venerable father did, they could scarcely, without circumlocution, employ any other terms; but we will be bold to say, that the facts and duties which he ascribes to these officers, *can be predicated of no other than parochial or Presbyterian bishops*. Of this we have no doubt that every candid reader may be easily satisfied.

Let it be distinctly borne in mind, then, that Presbyterians do not deny that there were bishops in the apostolic Church; that there were bishops in the days of Ignatius; and that there ought to be bishops now. They believe, as before stated, that this title was appropriated, in the apostles' days, and for a considerable time afterwards, to all men in sacred orders who had pastoral charges. Episcopalians themselves acknowledge that in the New Testament, common presbyters, who had been constituted pastors, were called bishops. We suppose that in the days of Paul, and Peter, and John, and also in the days in which Ignatius wrote, every church—that is, every Christian assembly—had its bishop or pastor, its bench of presbyters, or elders, and its deacons. We suppose also on the faith of Scripture, that in large churches, such as Ephesus, Philippi, &c. there were then, as in similar circumstances there often are now, more than one bishop, that is, colleague pastors; and that this character of the bishop's office remained for more than a hundred years after the death of the last apostle. Let us now apply this Presbyterian doctrine to the Epistles of Ignatius, and see whether they do not agree much better with this than with any other system: nay, whether it is not manifest that they cannot, without doing violence to their obvious sense, be reconciled with any other.

For, in the first place, what do his statements imply as to the situation, and the duties of the bishop of whom he speaks? We find the church of which this bishop has the care, represented, throughout these Epistles, as coming together to one place; as worshipping in one assembly; as having one altar, or communion table; as eating of one loaf; having one prayer; and in a

word, uniting in all the acts of Christian worship. Surely all this can apply only to a single congregation! Further; the bishop here spoken of, is represented as present with his flock whenever they came together; as conducting their prayers, and presiding in all their public services; as the only person in the parish who was authorized, in ordinary cases, to administer baptism and the Lord's Supper; as the person by whom all marriages were celebrated; and whose duty it was to be personally acquainted with all his flock; to take notice with his own eye of those who were absent from public worship; to attend to all the widows and poor of his congregation; to inquire after all by name, and not to overlook even the men and maid servants belonging to his flock. Can any man of common sense believe that these minute and personal duties could be enjoined or expected in any other case than that of the pastor of a single church?

In the next place, it is equally evident that the presbyters and presbytery so frequently mentioned by Ignatius, together with the deacons, refer to officers which belonged, at the date of these Epistles, like the bishop, to each particular parish. Almost all the Epistles of this father are directed to particular churches; and in every case we find each church furnished with a bishop, a presbytery or bench of elders, and deacons. But what kind of officers were these presbyters or elders? The advocates of prelacy tell us, with the utmost confidence, that they were the inferior clergy, who ministered to the several congregations belonging to the bishop's diocese; an order of clergy subject to the bishop, empowered to preach, baptize, and administer the Lord's Supper, but having no power to ordain and confirm. But all this is boldly asserted without the smallest proof. On the contrary, there is much proof that the assumption cannot be true. The presbyters or presbytery here spoken of, are represented as always present with the bishop and his congregation when assembled; as bearing the same close and inseparable relation to the flock with its pastor; and as being equally necessary to a regular and valid transaction of its affairs. To every altar, or communion table, there was one presbytery, as well as one bishop. To suppose, then, that these presbyters were the parish priests, as our Episcopal brethren are fond of expressing it, in other words, the rectors of so many churches, within the diocese of a prelate, is to disregard every part of the representation which is given respecting them. The probability is, that the greater part, if not all, of the presbyters of whom Ignatius speaks, were ruling elders, who assisted the pastor in the inspection and government of the church. The whole strain of these Epistles, then, may be

considered as descriptive of Presbyterian Church government. They exhibit a number of particular churches, each furnished with a bishop, or pastor, and also with elders and deacons, to whose respective ministrations every private member is exhorted, as long as they are regular, implicitly to submit.

But even supposing the suggestion, that the most or all of these elders were ruling, and not preaching elders, to be unfounded; still the supposition derogates nothing from our mode of interpreting the Epistles in question. Sometimes, when a Presbyterian church is large, it has two or even more than two bishops, united in the same pastoral charge, and having, in all respects, an official equality. When this is the case, each of these bishops is president or moderator of the church session in turn. But in some Presbyterian churches, the bishop, instead of having one or more colleagues, of equal authority and power with him, has an assistant or assistants. These assistants, though clothed with the whole ministerial character, and capable, without any other ordination, of becoming pastors themselves, yet, as long as they remain in this situation, bear a relation to the bishop similar to that which curates bear to the rector, in some Episcopal churches, and, in some cases, cannot regularly baptize, or administer the Lord's Supper without the concurrence of the bishop. But all this, as every intelligent reader knows, may exist without prelacy. Ignatius, therefore, we repeat, could hardly give a more perfect representation than he does of Presbyterian government. And all the fault we have to find with the strain of his Epistles, as they now appear, in regard to this point, is, that he appears to be too anxious about the prerogatives and honors of the parochial bishops of whom he speaks; to have the dignity and authority of that officer continual running in his head; and to introduce the subject, and dwell upon it with a frequency and zeal at once unseasonable and disgusting. No contemporary writer treats this matter in a similar way; and hence the best judges have been of the opinion that his Epistles have been tampered with by some unprincipled and unskilful friend of the hierarchy, with a particular view to the elevation of the bishop. Modern readers of these Epistles, predisposed to the prelatical regimen, overlooking the circumstances and duties of the bishop in the second century; borne away by the mere title; and taking for granted that that title was of the same import in the second century as in the fourth and subsequent centuries, have pronounced Ignatius a decisive witness in support of diocesan Episcopacy!

Having had occasion, of late, to review, with some care, the controversy concerning these Epistles, our wonder has been strongly renewed, that they should ever have been pressed with

so much confidence into the service of prelacy. The only rational solution of the difficulty is, that, finding no solid support for prelatical Episcopacy in the New Testament; and perceiving also the extreme scarcity of any thing that has the semblance of testimony in its favour for the first three hundred years, its friends have thought these Epistles too important to their cause, and the language of them too well adapted to operate upon the popular mind, to be given up. They have thought them too precious to be spared. They have, therefore, determined to hold them fast, as a strong-hold; and have gone on repeating the story of their clear and decisive import in favour of prelacy, until they have honestly persuaded themselves that the fact is really as they have stated.

~~Review of the~~ *Rev. Mr. Baxter*

ART. II.—*Narrative of Facts, characterizing the supernatural manifestations in members of Mr. Irving's congregation, and other individuals in England and Scotland; and formerly in the writer himself. By Robert Baxter. Second edition, with preface on the spiritual influence permitted to Satan.* London. 1833. pp. 155.

THE subject of this interesting pamphlet is, beyond doubt, a series of the most curious occurrences of the religious world in modern times. Various notices respecting them have appeared in the religious periodicals of the day; but none of them in any tolerable degree satisfactory, either as to their nature, their extent, or their history. The little work before us precisely meets these deficiencies. As the title page imports, it is a full narrative of the most striking facts connected with the subject; by one who was a leader in the very scenes and occurrences which he details. It may not be generally known, that Mr. Irving, whose name has been so conspicuous in the whole matter, is no more than a patron of the work; and though long and anxiously waiting for supernatural endowments, has never yet received any thing at all of "the power," as it is technically called. He is, as they express it, yet "in the flesh;" though it has been several times prophesied that he should receive the gift, and become the great prophet of the Scotch church.

The writer of the work before us, who was during the period of his delusion the principal prophet of London, is fully of the opinion, that the whole work is to be ascribed to satanic influ-