

NOTES ON GENESIS.

CHAPTER I.

3. THE first verse is summary and prefatory ; the second shows us the matter on which God wrought ; with the third only commences the first act of creation.

And God said.—This is the first creative word. This word, not only denotes the ease with which God accomplished His work, it is the expression of His will. It is not, as in the Indian cosmogonies, “God *thought*, I will create worlds,” which are, in fact, the emanation of the thinking Deity (Colebrooke, *Asiatic Researches*, viii., p. 420). He *speaks*, and it is (Ps. xxxiii. 9). He is absolute Lord and sovereign. The “word” is the mediating principle of creation ; it is the link, so to speak, between Him and His work (cf. Ps. xxxiii. 6). In Psalms cvii. 20, cxlvii. 15, 18, “He sendeth forth His word” (*ἀποστελεῖ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ*, LXX.), the word is regarded as a messenger between God and His creatures. Thus a preparation is made in the O.T. for that full development of the agency of the personal Word in creation which meets us in the prologue to St. John’s Gospel : *ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος. . . . πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, κ.τ.λ.* (Cf. Heb. i. 2, xi. 3 ; Col. i. 16.) The eternal Logos is the Mediator in creation as well as in redemption. The spirit is the vivifying power which makes a living, sentient universe possible ; the word makes it actual.

Let there be light.—As St. Paul says, “God commanded the light to shine out of darkness” (2 Cor. iv. 6). It is the first work, because it is the indispensable condition of all life and order and beauty. Let there be light, and there

was light; or, with a nearer approach to the Hebrew brevity, "Light be, and light was." The words are quoted by Longinus (*Περὶ Τψ.* ix. 9), with admiration as an instance in their lofty simplicity of the true sublime. Light is the only material object which is used in Scripture to set forth the very being and nature of God (1 John i. 5; cf. John i. 5, iii. 19, viii. 12, ix. 5, xii. 35, 36, 46). That the light is thus represented as existing before the sun and the other heavenly bodies is, as we know, strictly in accordance with scientific observations. Thus, for instance, Halley says of the nebulae in Orion and Andromeda: "In reality these spots are nothing else than the light coming from the regions of the ether filled with a diffuse and inherently luminous matter"; and he adds that "these nebulae reply fully to the difficulty which has been raised against the Mosaic description of creation, in asserting that light could be generated without the sun. Nebulae manifestly prove the contrary; several, in effect, offer no trace of a star at their centre." This is substantially confirmed by the most recent observations. See the remarks of Professor Stokes, quoted in the excursus at the end of this section.

Job, like Genesis, speaks of the dwelling-place of light as something mysterious, and therefore not dependent upon the sun and moon. "Where is the way to the dwelling of light?" (xxxviii. 19); and again (ver. 24), "By what way is the light parted?" (Cf. also xxvi. 10.)

4. *And God saw the light that it was good.*—A not unusual construction both in Hebrew and in other languages, the subject of the second (dependent) clause being made the object of the first. (See, for instance, vi. 2, xii. 14, xlix. 15; Exod. ii. 2; Isa. iii. 10.) It throws into more prominence the light as the object of Divine contemplation and Divine approval. This is the first time that the Divine approval is recorded. It occurs altogether seven times at

various stages of the creative work, and marks the perfection of each as corresponding to the thought and purpose of God. God is not an absent, or distant, or indifferent God. His creation is the object of His care and love. He rejoices in His works (Ps. civ. 31).

And God divided, etc.—Light and darkness have henceforth their separate spheres; there are periods of the one and of the other. (Cf. Job xxvi. 10, “the confines of light and darkness,” and 2 Cor. vi. 14.) The origin of darkness, like that of chaos, is not mentioned; God’s word does not call it into existence, nor does God call it “good,” but by His act of separation it is recognised as having its proper place in the Divine ordering of the world, as a necessary part of it.

5. *And God called.*—It seems scarcely necessary to remark that this expression does not mean that the Hebrew names for day and night were given by God, though the words have actually been so taken; but it denotes (1) that the common division of time into day and night is part of a Divine ordinance, that the distinction is in the nature of things, the difference being recognised in all languages; (2) that there is here an anticipation of man’s appearance on the earth. The beneficence of this arrangement is recognised by the writer of Psalm civ.: “Thou makest darkness, and it is night; wherein all the beasts of the forest do move. . . . The sun ariseth, they get them away, and lay them down in their dens.” Whereas, on the other hand, “Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening” (vers. 20–23). “The night,” says Augustine, “is an ordered darkness” (“*nox enim ordinatæ sunt tenebræ*”: *De Gen. ad Lit.*, I., xvii.). It is remarkable that the writer supposes the interchange of day and night as existing before the creation of the sun and moon, on which nevertheless this interchange depends. A comparison with the passages in Job xxxviii. 12–15, 19,

20, and xxvi. 10, already quoted, would seem to show that, according to the Hebrew conception, the light, though gathered up and concentrated in the heavenly bodies, is not confined to them.

And the evening and the morning, etc.—Rather, “And there was evening and there was morning, one day” (or, “a first day”), the cardinal number being used for the ordinal, as is not uncommon in Hebrew (*e.g.* ii. 11; Exod. xxxviii. 17) and in other languages. There was the close of one day, there was the dawn of the next. Thus the creative acts were presented to the recipient of the revelation in successive periods of day and night. The later Hebrew mode of reckoning the day from evening to evening (*νυχθήμερον*, 2 Cor. xi. 25; cf. Dan. viii. 14) is not adopted here, but rather the ancient Babylonian method, which reckoned the day from sunrise to sunset. Thus “evening” here is the close of the first day, “morning” the beginning of the second. This explanation was given long ago by Augustine (*De Gen. ad Lit.*, I. x., and *De Gen.* vii.).

In the intention of the writer, and to his perception, it is just possible that the days were literal days of twenty-four hours, though even to him the difficulty must have presented itself that three of these days are spoken of before the creation of the sun.¹ But unless we are prepared to deny all in-

¹ This did not escape the notice of Augustine. “Quid volunt,” he asks, “dies transacti sine luminaribus?” and observes, “Qui dies cujusmodi sint, aut perfidicille nobis aut etiam impossibile est captare, quanto magis dicere?” “It is very difficult, and even impossible, for us to imagine what sort of days these were, much more to describe. For we see that the evening and the morning of our days depend on the setting and rising of the sun, whereas the first three of these days of Genesis were passed without the sun, which was not created till the fourth day. . . . What sort of light it was, and how there could have been any alternation corresponding to day and night, lies altogether beyond the observation of our senses, and cannot be explained.” He suggests however that there may have been a far distant material light, from which the sun afterwards received its light (*unde sol postmodum accensus est*), or else that the light is to be taken in a mystical sense, as denoting the heavenly Jerusalem, angels, spirits, etc. (*De Civ. Dei*, lib. xi., cap. vi., vii.). And again, “But what sort of day and what sort of night are these? If by day he means one which

spiration, it is at least conceivable that the Divine meaning was something infinitely larger and grander. Divine days and human days may have a real correspondence, without being of the same length. We have only to adopt the supposition of a succession of great creative acts, passing before the eyes of the inspired writer, presented to him as in a series of tableaux, or in a waking or sleeping vision, and there is no difficulty. The "evening" and the "morning" are merely like the falling and rising of the curtain on the successive scenes. And this comes out more vividly when we keep to the true rendering, "There was evening and there was morning." To the seer the whole did appear like a succession of literal days and nights; but this was because God's work was on too vast and grand a scale to be otherwise presented. There was evening when the curtain fell, there was morning when the curtain was raised. When we try steadily to conceive of what is meant by an act of creation, we soon see how infinitely it transcends all human thought. It *could* only be presented to man in some suggestive outline. But the important thing to notice is that, according to the Hebrew belief, creation was not an instantaneous act, but a slow and gradual one. The preparation of the earth to be the abode of man was marked by stages of deliberate action. This certainly is not opposed to, it is rather amply confirmed by, all the observations of science. I repeat, I am not concerned to make out any harmony between the first chapter of Genesis and the discoveries of modern science. I have no sympathy with the impatience which insists on settling questions of this kind. If a man cannot feel the majesty and the inspiration of the record, no harmonizing

begins at sunrise and ends at sunset, and by night one that begins at sunset and ends at sunrise, I do not see how these could have existed before there were lights in heaven. Could the mere interval of hours and times have been so called apart from any distinction of light and darkness?" (*De Gen.* vi.)

theory will produce any effect upon him. But these two truths—creation in the strict sense of the word, a truth which no science can ever touch; and a gradual and progressive and orderly preparation of the earth in successive stages, a truth which science asserts—stand out in simple majesty on the first page of the Bible. The fact that of the seventh day it is not said, “There was evening and there was morning, the seventh day,” is noticeable. On the theory that the days are periods it is perfectly explicable, but on no other. Here we have the fact that, up to the creation of man through long ages—we know not how long—God was engaged in His creative work, a succession of creative acts. Since the creation of man there has been, in the sense of Genesis, no new *creation*. During all that “period” therefore God has been enjoying His sabbath rest. That has been His seventh day: the day of human life and human redemption, the day in which the world still exists. But during all that period, although there has been no new creative act, God has not withdrawn from the work of His fingers; He has ever been guiding, controlling, blessing it; His sabbath has been a sabbath of active benevolence. Bearing this in mind, how forcibly our Lord’s argument in St. John’s Gospel appeals to us (v. 17), “My Father worketh even until now, and I work!” Our Lord as man in His human sabbath claims to be following His Father’s example in doing works of benevolence. The sabbath rest does not mean idleness: *good* works may be done on the sabbath, in man’s sabbath, as in God’s. The whole force of the argument turns on “My Father worketh *even until now*.” From the time that He entered into His rest up to the present moment (when our Lord was speaking), His Father had continued to work: in other words, His sabbath was still continuing; and in it He was still *working*, though not still *creating*.

THE SECOND DAY (vers. 6-8).

6. A further separation takes place. On the first day light and darkness are divided; on the second, the waters above the firmament from the waters below. The earth in its lifeless, unformed state was enveloped in water and shrouded in darkness (ver. 2).

And God said, *Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters.* The English word "firmament" is taken from the rendering of Jerome, *firmamentum*, which again is taken from the *σπερέωμα* of the LXX. and the other Greek translators. Etymologically the Hebrew word means something *stamped* or *beaten out*, and so *spread out* like metal. The verb is used in Job xxxvii. 18: "Canst thou with Him *spread out* the sky, which is strong as a molten mirror?" The notion is evidently not merely of an expanse, but of a *solid* expanse, capable of supporting the vast mass of waters above it. Similarly the Greek poets speak of the heaven as *σιδήρεον* (Hom. *Od.* xv. 328, xvii. 565), *χάλκεον* (*Il.* xvii. 425; Pind., *Pyth.* x. 42, *Nem.* vi. 6), and *πολύχαλκον* (*Il.* v. 504; *Od.* iii. 2); and even the philosophers, as Empedocles (Plut., *Plac. Phil.* ii. 11) and Artemidorus (Seneca, *Nat. Quæst.* vii. 13) regard it as firm and solid. So likewise the Vedas and the Avesta have the upper waters in the heaven; and in the Egyptian mythology the sun-god Râ daily guides his boat across the heavenly sea. But it is possible to push a great deal too far expressions which are found chiefly in poetry, as if they were intended to convey definite physical conceptions. See for instance Psalm xxix. 3, "The voice of Jehovah is upon the waters"; cxlviii. 4, "Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens"; or again civ. 3, where God is said to have laid the beams of His chambers upon the waters (see also ver. 13); or such expressions as "opening the windows (Gen. vii. 11) or doors

(Ps. lxxviii. 23) of heaven," "making windows in heaven" (2 Kings vii. 2, 19), and the like. Figurative language of this kind is natural in poetry and among an imaginative people. But we meet with other forms of expression which show an acquaintance with the true facts of the case. Thus Job says (xxvi. 8), "He bindeth up the waters in His thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them"; again, xxxvi. 27, 28, God is said to draw up "the drops of water which distil in rain from the vapour thereof." See also Psalm cxxxv. 7; Jeremiah x. 13, "He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth" (cf. Ps. xviii. 11, 12). The physical notions here are plainly different. Besides if Job speaks of the sky being spread out strong as a molten mirror, a Psalmist (civ. 2) says, "Thou spreadest out the heavens like a curtain." No one would think of arguing that because another Psalmist writes, "He sendeth forth the wind out of His treasures" (cxxxv. 7), he supposed that there were certain storehouses in which God kept the wind; or when the author of Job calls the mountains "the pillars of heaven," he believed the heavens really to rest upon them (cf. Job xxxviii. 25, 26). Delitzsch quotes Petavius (*De Opificio Mundi*): "Cælum aëreum στερέωμα dicit non naturæ propria conditione, sed ab effectu quod perinde aquas separet, ac si murus esset solidissimus"; and remarks that this must have forced itself on the notice of the earliest observers.

And let it divide.—Lit. "And let it be dividing," the participle denoting that the division is *permanent*. (See Ewald, *Gram.* § 485.)

The waters from the waters.—More fully described in the next verse as those under and those above the firmament. The LXX. place the words, "And it was so," at the end of this verse instead of at the end of the next, which is in accordance with the use of the phrase in vers. 9, 15, 24, where it follows the Divine command, and not, as in ver. 7, the fulfilment of the command.

7. *And God made.*—The creative act following on the creative word (ver. 6).

And God called the firmament heaven.—See on ver. 5. No expression of Divine approval follows here, as at the conclusion of all the other days, though the LXX. have introduced it. But the Hebrew is right, the separation of the waters under the firmament from those above being only a preliminary stage to their being gathered together into one place (ver. 9), and the work accordingly being not entirely completed.

8. *And the evening, etc.*—As before, “And there was evening and there was morning, a second day,” or, “the second day”; for in enumerations of this kind the article may be omitted.

THE THIRD DAY (vers. 9–13).

The work of this day, as has been observed, is twofold: (a) the separation of earth and water; and (b) the clothing of the earth with vegetation.

9. *Let the waters under heaven be gathered together into one place.*—This is the obvious rendering, “the waters under the heaven” being of course marked out in opposition to those above the firmament, and not, as Delitzsch, “Let the waters be gathered together from under heaven,” etc. The vast mass of water, which up to this moment had completely enveloped the earth, is now gathered into the ocean beds, and the surface of the earth appears. How this was accomplished we are not told. A strikingly picturesque description of this separation is given in Psalm civ. 6–9. It is at the rebuke of God, at the voice of His thunder, that the waters flee, and haste away, and sink down into the place appointed for them, whilst the face of the earth is diversified by mountain and valley. In Psalm xxiv. 2, God is said to have founded the earth upon the seas and established it upon the floods; and elsewhere the conception is that of a

vast subterranean reservoir, from which the sea is supplied with water (Gen. vii. 11; Job xxxviii. 16; Prov. viii. 28). After "and it was so" the LXX. add, "and the water which was under heaven was gathered together into the gathering places thereof," etc. This last expression seems to have been intended as a kind of commentary on "into one place," to show that it could not be understood strictly.

We have here a Divine-human representation. The author sees everything with the eyes of God; hence the colossal outlines: but he sees everything for human hearts; hence the human names, heaven, earth, sea, and so on.

10. *And God called.*—The giving of the names marks the separation as a permanent ordinance of God; see on ver. 5. "Our human naming is but a far off echo of the Divine" (Delitzsch).

Earth.—The name was used in ver. 1 of the earth as composing with the heaven the visible universe; in ver. 2 of the earth in its lifeless, chaotic condition; now it is the name of the dry land as opposed to the sea.

Seas.—Or perhaps rather "sea," the plural being used, only as expressing the various bodies of water, for the singular, as in Psalm xlvi. 3. The sea is now placed within its bounds which it cannot pass (Job xxxviii. 11).

But this separation between land and water is not enough, if the earth is to be the abode of man. It must have its clothing of vegetation. Accordingly the command is heard,

11. *Let the earth bring forth grass* (quite literally, "cause to sprout forth sprouting things"), the word "grass" denoting here all first tender herbage, such as, in ver. 25, is said to be given as food for the cattle. Beside this, there is the green herb, and the "fruit tree yielding fruit." This is the beginning of organic life in its lower forms. It is not quite clear whether three kinds of vegetation are here mentioned or only two. Delitzsch

takes the latter view, supposing that the first word, "grass," is a comprehensive term, denoting all the flora of the earth, which is afterwards distributed under two heads, the herb bearing seed and the fruit trees; and this is confirmed by ver. 12. Otherwise there is a threefold division: (a) grass including all the smaller plants; (b) the herb yielding seed including cereals and vegetables of all sorts, such as the Psalmist says are "for the service of man" (civ. 14); (c) the fruit trees.

After its kind.—It is not very clear whether this is intended to refer to all three classes or not. In the enumeration in the next verse, where the accomplishment of the Divine word is given, it is expressly confined to "the herb" and the "fruit tree." This is so far in favour of Delitzsch's view that vegetation is here described under two heads only.

It has been said that the botanical system of the writer is of the simplest and most primitive kind. How should it be otherwise? not only because he lived in the infancy of the world, or at least in the infancy of science, but because to have entered into minute detail in such a passage as this would have been ludicrously out of place, even if it had not been misleading. Everything here is on a majestic scale; everything is in outline. The picture is exhibited in a few master-strokes, and no minuteness of elaboration would make it half so telling. All vegetation, this is the lesson, has its root in the command of God, in the potentiality once for all conveyed to the earth by the command to bring it forth. God did not construct a number of seeds or plant a number of plants; He bade the earth produce the whole of the rich and ample vegetation which covers its surface, and it obeyed His voice. God's creative word gives to the earth the power of producing everything that we behold in the vegetable world, from the lowest organized forms up to the highest; and each of these

forms, once produced, contains in itself the germ of all future reproduction. On the question whether it was possible for this vegetation to exist before the creation of the sun, see the excursus at the end of the section.

12. *And the earth brought forth grass, herb yielding seed, etc.*—The italic *and*, which has been inserted in the A.V. before “herb,” has very properly been struck out in the R.V. Hence it would seem as if the writer meant the word translated “grass” to be taken, as it is elsewhere, in its widest signification as denoting vegetation generally. Then this is broken up into seed-bearing plants and fruit-bearing trees. Each of these is now said to be “after its kind,” each to have seed only, but the fruit tree contains its seed in the fruit: each having thus assigned to it a reproductive power, and the vast variety, the many species, of all being implied in the words “after its kind.” If we were to be guided by ver. 11 only, “Let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed, fruit tree bearing fruit,” we should conclude that we had three different classes of vegetation spoken of. If, on the other hand, we take ver. 12 by itself, it seems to speak of two.

And God saw that it was good.—On this stage of His work also there rests the approbation of God, and so the third day closes: “And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.”¹

THE FOURTH DAY (vers. 14–19).

14. *Let there be lights.*—The word for “lights” is different from that in vers. 3–5. It means the heavenly bodies as receptacles of light, “luminaries.” In order to bring this verse into harmony with a certain preconceived system, it has been asserted that what is recorded here is not the creation of the sun and moon, but their first

¹ “Tuesday,” says Delitzsch, “is called by the Jews *Ki-tob* (‘that it was good’), is regarded as a lucky day, and is a favourite day for marriages.”

becoming visible to the earth. But the narrative as it stands lends no colour to such an interpretation. If the writer had meant to say this, it would have been easy for him to express his meaning without any ambiguity: just as easy to say, "Let there appear," as to say, "Let there be"; just as easy to say, "Let lights appear," as to say, "Let the dry land appear." But he uses precisely the same expression which he uses in ver. 3 of the creation of the light: there, "Let there be light"; here, "Let there be luminaries." Both were to *come into existence*, not merely to become visible, by the Divine fiat. Moreover, if the luminaries had been already created, the word would almost certainly have had the article: "Let *the* luminaries (already created) appear." Nor is the argument valid which is built on the use of the verb "made" in ver. 16, as if it meant only "prepared." That the verb is capable of such a rendering is true, but in this chapter it is plainly used as synonymous with the word "created." So in ver. 26 we read, "And God said, Let Us *make* man in Our image"; and in ver. 27, "So God *created* man in His own image." (Cf. also ver. 2 with ver. 25.)

These luminaries are for the benefit of the earth, and prophetically for the benefit of man upon the earth, and subserve a double purpose: 1, they are to mark various divisions of time (ver. 14); 2, they are to give light upon the earth (ver. 15). This purpose is described more carefully and more in detail than in the case of any other of the creative works. In the creation of organic beings no purpose is mentioned. In the first three days it is merely hinted at in the names which God gives to the work of His hands. Possibly the intention may be to guard against the worship of the heavenly bodies, so widely prevalent among the Eastern nations. In stating so fully what they are, creatures of God's hand, and with what object they are created, *viz.* to be of service to man, it is implied that

they are not intended to be worshipped. The first object according to the Samaritan text and the LXX., is "to give light upon the earth." In the Hebrew text this follows in vers. 15, 17, and the first object is "to divide the day from the night." God had before this divided the light from the darkness, and had called the one day, and the other night; and yet He here gives to the sun and the moon this office—evidence surely that with the fourth day a new state of things comes in.

These luminaries are to be "FOR SIGNS." The word is used in a very wide sense, as of the mark set upon Cain (iv. 15), of the rainbow (ix. 12, 13), of circumcision (xvii. 11); of the sabbath, of portents, etc. Here it denotes apparently that sun, moon, and stars mark the distribution of time, the seasons, etc.; human occupations like agriculture, navigation, and the like, being regulated by the heavenly bodies: not that they are to be for portents (Jer. x. 2), or for astrological signs, a belief in which is certainly not implied or sanctioned here. The SEASONS are not the seasons of the year, spring, summer, etc., but fixed times (chap. xvii. 21; 1 Sam. xiii. 8; Exod. ix. 5), or festival times, which however in the Jewish kalendar were regulated by the seasons, being principally feasts of ingathering, harvest, vintage, and the like, or feasts dependent on the moon. In Jeremiah viii. 7 the word is used of the time of migration of birds: "The stork knoweth her appointed times."

The conception is that human life is regulated both in its civil and its religious ordinances by the heavens (Job xxxviii. 33), the apparent motion of the sun determining the succession of day and night and the return of the seasons; whilst the various festivals were dependent on the phases of the moon. (See Ps. lxxxi. 3 [4], civ. 19. The latter passage especially is a comment upon this.) Tuch and others would render: "And let them be for signs both for

seasons and for days and years," a possible construction (see Ps. lxxvi. 7, Jer. xxxii. 14), though other passages quoted by Tuch (Isa. ii. 13-15, xvi. 5; Jer. xlii. 1) may be differently explained.

The third purpose is "to give light upon the earth." Throughout, the creation of sun, moon, and stars is supposed to have a special importance in relation to the earth. And to one who believes that the earth is the theatre of the incarnation and the redemption, the importance assigned to this little globe on the first page of Scripture will not appear exaggerated. But even on the lowest ground, to a writer of that age the geocentric view of the universe was surely the most natural,—was indeed inevitable.

Ver. 16. In recording the accomplishment of the Divine will, which is introduced in the usual way, "and it was so," "the two great" lights—"great," that is, as regarded from the earth—are specified, and a particular office is assigned to them, "to *rule* the day and the night." They do not *make* the day and the night, but they are the most conspicuous objects in each, and upon the sun the length of the day depends. Cf. Psalm cxxxvi. 7-9; Jeremiah xxxi. 35. So Cicero (*Tusc.* i. 63) calls the sun "*dux et princeps et moderator luminum reliquorum*"; and Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* ii. 4) "*rector cæli.*"

He made the stars also.—The Hebrew merely says, "And God made two great lights, . . . and the stars." There is no pretence for saying that the mention of the stars is "parenthetic." The reason that the mention of them is so slight is that their position relatively to the earth is not so striking as that of the sun and moon. But Jeremiah (*l.c.*) speaks of "the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night," evidently connecting the two closely. [The rendering of the Vulg., "*Et posuit eas (sc. stellas, in the preceding verse) in firmamento cæli ut lucerent super terram,*" points the same way.]

17. The order of fulfilment is different from the order in ver. 15, and introduces also the new purpose of ver. 16, which does not appear in ver. 15.

The names "sun" and "moon" are not mentioned. They are simply "the greater light" and "the lesser light."

18. On this fourth day also the Divine benediction rests: "God saw that it was good"; and "evening" and "morning" have with the creation of the sun a new significance.

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*PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF
CARDINAL NEWMAN.*

III.

SOME remarks about Newman that have appeared in the press have assumed that as Cardinal he took an active part in the general government of the Catholic Church. This is quite a mistake. His cardinalate was as nearly an honorary distinction as anything of the kind could be. Not having any diocese under his care, as most cardinals have, he should by rights have resided in Rome permanently, and there no doubt he would have had to take part in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs. But he was dispensed from this; and his being placed by courtesy on one or two of the Sacred Congregations—on that of relics, for example—was a purely nominal affair; and the imposing looking envelopes with quaint seals, which on rare occasions reached the Oratory from Rome, seldom contained anything but formal announcements of changes in the Sacred College, or "the compliments of the season," and such like.

He thought lightly of the advantage of "retreats," at any rate of long ones, and dissuaded people from making them. He could not exempt members of the community from such retreats, lasting a week or ten days, as authorized by