

faculty is equally great of conceiving moral responsibility not to exist, or to exist without free agency. To ignore one element of our perplexity is merely to cut the logical knot with a sword. Have we an exhaustive knowledge of the possibilities of being, and can we say that free agency is excluded? If not, and if it must be allowed to be possible that in the ascending scale of being human free agency might at last emerge, we have to consider how its appearance could be manifested in any other way than those in which it is apparently manifested now,—our sense of a qualified freedom of choice before action, our consciousness of responsibility founded on the same belief after action, and our uniform treatment of our fellows as free and responsible agents. Science appeals to the reasonings of Jonathan Edwards as conclusive in favour of

the necessarian theory. If Jonathan Edwards found the truth, it is very remarkable, since he never sought it for a moment. He was not a free inquirer,\* but a sectarian divine, trying to frame a philosophic apology for the dogma of his sect. He is reduced to the absurd conclusion that moral evil emanates directly from perfect goodness.

But these questions are beyond our present scope. The object of this short paper is only to call attention to the fact that, if we may judge by the experience of history, a crisis in the moral sphere, which will probably bring with it a political and social crisis, appears to have arrived.

—*Atlantic Monthly.*

\* His critic, Mr. Hazard, is a free inquirer in the full sense of the term, and one of a very vigorous mind.

## MR. GOLDWIN SMITH'S ATLANTIC MONTHLY ARTICLE.

EITHER there is Intelligence behind the universe or there is not. Unless I am to be a universal sceptic, discredit the laws of thought, and admit my own existence as but a doubtful hypothesis, I must hold that one of these two propositions *must* be true. Shall I then accept as true the one proposition, or the other, or shall I, in the misery of doubt, perpetually oscillate between the two. 'Agnosticism' virtually tells me that I must do the latter. I must be certain of nothing except that there is nothing that I can be certain of. I must not be a Theist and still less must I be a Materialist. I must hold that Theist and Materialist are equally deluded, not as to the fact of Deity or no Deity—on that question I am to have no opinion—but in supposing that they really believe the one thing or the other.

Agnosticism claims to hold the balance impartially between Theism and Materialism. But the question for the great mass of men is not, is the Theistic or the Materialistic theory the most prob-

able? It presents itself as a practical question—Shall we believe in God, or shall we not? Can there be any doubt into which scale Agnosticism throws its weight.

Mr. Goldwin Smith, in his recent article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, finds fault with Agnosticism for practically assuming a negative decision, while ostensibly declining to decide the matter in issue at all. He thinks that 'Agnosticism, if it means suspense of judgment and refusal to accept the unknown as known, is the natural frame of mind for any one who has followed the debate with an unprejudiced understanding, and who is resolved to be absolutely loyal to the truth;' that 'to such a man existence must appear at this moment an unfathomable and overwhelming mystery;' but he also thinks 'that the question cannot be in its nature insoluble, and on the hypothesis that we are in the hands of goodness there seems to be reason to hope for a solution.' Of one thing he is assured, that in the attitude towards religion