

one as Huxley essayed to break a lance with them?

Not a little light is thrown on the mental attitude of Huxley in his telling of how he chose the name agnostic. In becoming a member of the Metaphysical Society, composed of men of every variety of philosophical and theological opinions, he says:

"They were quite sure they had attained a certain gnosis, had more or less successfully solved the problem of existence, while I was sure I had not, and had a pretty strong conviction that the problem was insoluble. So I took thought and invented what I conceived to be the appropriate title of agnostic. It came into my head as suggestively antithetic to the gnostic of Church history, who proposed to know so very much about the very things of which I was ignorant."

Having taken this position he refused to be ranked as a fatalist, inasmuch as he took the conception of necessity to have a logical and not a physical basis, nor as a materialist "for I am utterly incapable of conceiving the existence of matter if there is no mind in which to picture that existence," nor an atheist "for the problem of the ultimate cause of existence is hopelessly out of reach of my poor powers." The true position he believed, as regards many matters, to be neither belief or disbelief, but suspense of judgment, or the Scotch verdict, Not Proven.

To Huxley the real conflict was not between Science and Religion but between Science and Superstition. But there may be superstition or some thing akin to it in Science as would appear from the statement where we have the scientist saying he is "no optimist; but I have the firmest belief that the Divine Government (if we may use such a phrase to express the sum of the customs of matter) is wholly just. The more I know intimately the lives of other men (to say nothing of my own) the more obvious it is to me that the wicked does not flourish, nor is the righteous punished." We should say this is not a conclusion to draw for one who looks merely on the things that are seen. The key however to the situation in Huxley's case is to be found in what he says of himself in his professional course as being only interested in physiology "which is the mechanical engineering of living machines. . . . What I cared for was the architectural and engineering part of the business." Such a view may do for the valley of dry bones but assuredly is not adequate in the case of living men. Only from such premises can the Divine Government be made to be equivalent to "the sum of the customs of matter." There certainly is more than one thing lacking in the philosophy of pure physiologists or metaphysicians would not have the places they claim and hold. It is just as much superstition on the part of the physicist to ignore metaphysics as it is on the part of the theologian to ignore science. It needs more than a mere anatomist or physicist or scientist to apprehend the Man of Sorrows.

There is still another factor to be taken into account in trying to form an estimate of the greatest disciple of Darwin. Those who have read Walsh's "Secret History of the Oxford Movement" will be lenient with a man who did not hesitate

to question some of the articles of the creeds according to which the Judicial conduct of members of "The Society of the Holy Cross" of "The Order of Corporate Reunion" etc., could be justified. Newman and Pusey and Faber are honoured names, but no one has ever tried to accuse Huxley of such conduct as was that of these men—coquetting with the Church of Rome while, at the same time, they kept their livings as officers of a pronounced Protestant church.

Had there been less anxiety on the part of many English ecclesiastics about postures, and vestments and elaborate ritual, the wistful appeal of Huxley to Mr John Morley in 1883 might have been better heard.

"It is a curious thing that I find my dislike of the thought of extinction increasing as I get older, and nearer the goal. It flashes across me at all sorts of times with a sort of horror, that in 1900 I shall probably know more of what is going on than I did in 1860. I had sooner be in hell a good deal—at any rate in one of the upper circles where the climate and company are not too trying. I wonder if you are plagued in this way?" Doubt of Heaven there certainly was in his case but not the disbelief of some who profess to believe in Heaven, and yet act as if it was to be "tolerated" indeed rather than the flames of Hell, but not to be desired before the felicity of earth.

Huxley did deny the fact of a revelation. No more certainly, by his writings and by the bounds he set to knowledge, proved the need of revelation. In many ways there was the cry in his life of Job—for a daysman. It would be unwarrantable to say that only the ecclesiasticism of those who say they are called by Christ to be His witnesses was altogether to blame for his lack of knowledge. Still at this late day the power of the gospel ought to be so felt that one, noted for his honesty, should not at the last feel only in the maze. It must be that non-essentials are being over-emphasized when at present such telling use can be made of such arguments as Huxley brought forward. Less Jesuitism less Ritualism, more doing justice, more religion ought to have made it impossible that this epitaph, written by Mrs Huxley, should have been deemed satisfactory for the tombstone of one who by general consent was regarded as a great and a good man:

Be not afraid ye willing hearts that weep,
For still He giveth His beloved sleep
And if an endless sleep He wills—so best.

We are glad to note the interest our readers are taking in the question of Synod Reform. It is a fruitful subject, and we shall be more than willing to receive the opinions of men in the active ministry upon it, either for publication, or as private comment. It is acknowledged by all that the Synod is not serving a useful purpose. It has been kept alive for years by transfusion. There is a limit to that process, and the indications are that the limit has been about reached in the present instance. The subject from whom good blood has been drawn is itself growing anæmic. We surely will not shoot the old servant. Let us give it an opportunity to exercise its life.

Literary Notes.

The opening article in Harper's Magazine for March is by Arthur Symonds on "Seville". His description of this beautiful old city is written with exquisite literary feeling. "Seville", he says, "more than any other city I have ever seen is the city of pleasure. It is not languid with pleasure, like Venice, nor flushed with hurrying after pleasure, like Buda-Pesth; but it has the constant brightness, blitheness and animation of a city in which pleasure is the chief end of existence, and an end easily attained, by simple means within every one's reach. It has sunshine, flowers, an expressive river, orange-groves, palm trees, broad walks leading straight into the country, beautiful ancient buildings in its midst, shiny white houses, patios and flat roofs and vast windows—everything that calls one into the open air, and brings light and air to one, and this gives men the main part of their chances of natural felicity." The opening chapters of Mary Wilkins' serial, "The Portion of Labor," are very welcome. Short stories by Frederick Remington, Bret Harte, Edith Wharton and other well known writers, help to make up an excellent number. Wm. Dean Howells, in the Editor's Easy Chair, discusses M. de Bernhardt as Hamlet in a most interesting manner.—Harper & Brothers, New York.

In the Ladies' Home Journal for March appears "The Gibson Pay" by Marguerite Merington, based on Charles Dane Gibson's series of pictures of "A Widow and Her Friends". The fashions in this month's number are specially interesting, being those for Easter. Mrs. Phelps' story is to be concluded next month, and Kate Douglas Wiggin has a short story entitled "The Author's Reading at Bixby Centre"—The Curtis Publishing Company, Philadelphia.

We are requested to ask the annuitants on both the Aged and Infirm Ministers and the Widows and Orphans Fund to send their present address to Rev. Dr. Warden so that cheques for the current half year may be sent out without delay.

Some old customs are better dropped. They have served their purpose, or their observance is now an empty form. But in discarding others we have suffered a distinct loss. One of these is the custom, still observed in the North of Ireland, of introducing the new minister to the congregation on the first Sabbath morning after his induction. After the induction service is on Thursday, and the minister is not in either mental or spiritual condition to preach two sermons on the following Sunday. Why should not the Presbytery appoint one of its number to preach on the morning of the first Sabbath, and at the close of the sermon, introduce the new minister, who might then speak briefly, but who would deliver his first sermon to them in the evening. The advantages of such a practice are many and obvious.