

CURRENT LITERATURE.

IT is refreshing, in the heated atmosphere of religious discussion we are compelled to inhale in this time of transition, to take a quiet and unpretending survey of "The Ethical Teaching of Christ." A paper by the Rev. Vincent H. Stanton on this subject, with which the *Contemporary Review* for September opens, is written in the best of tempers, and deserves commendation because of the conspicuous absence in it of the *odium theologicum*. The writer's object is to show how far the complaints against the Saviour's moral teaching as being "impracticable, contradictory to Economic Science, deficient and one-sided," have any foundation. He therefore proceeds to examine the records of that teaching, as given in the Gospels, "in the light of the requirements of moral and social science." The first inquiry is: "Whether there is anything in the Ethical Teaching of Christ corresponding to what, in a system reduced to scientific form, we should call a First Principle, a Law to which all other precepts are subordinate, from which they may be seen to flow; and if there is, what is its value?" These questions are answered by citing the central principle—"Love thy neighbour as thyself." With the first commandment of Jesus Mr. Stanton does not try to deal, because he desires to confine himself to the purely ethical question. There seems to us, we must confess, a weak point here—a weakness the writer shares with the author of "Ecce Homo." So far as it goes, the examination of Christ's teaching, from a merely human stand-point, is capable of doing good service in an age when faith in the supernatural is dim, and the spiritual lights have burned low; but it is not fair treatment of a system which so intimately connects duty to God with duty to man, that they cannot be separated except by violence. The motive to right conduct is wanting; the sanctions upon which Jesus lays the chief stress are taken away. Mr. Stanton himself quotes one of many texts which would prove this view of the Christian code of Ethics:—"Love your enemies," &c. Why? "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven." The best part of the writer's paper is the comparison of the Greek and Roman moral philosophies with the teaching of Christ. Mr. Stanton is not a Utilitarian in Ethics, and he, of course, aims a blow against the shreds which yet remain of the "greatest happiness" principle. His

second inquiry relates to asceticism, and finally the attitude of Christian morality to the progress of human society. In the course of the latter Mr. Stanton makes a good point by placing together two passages—one from the well-known work of Mr. Fitzjames Stephen, in which he asserts that if men took the morality of the Gospels as their guide of life, they would, in sober earnest, "turn the world upside down," and the other from Mr. J. S. Mill, "On Liberty," where he complains that Christianity is "essentially a doctrine of passive obedience; it inculcates submission to all authorities found established," &c.

Dr. Bastian, the author of "The Beginnings of Life," returns to his special subject in a paper on "Heat and Living Matter." A very full account is given of the experiments of the Abbé Spallanzani in the last century, on the effects of heat on organic life, animal and vegetable. He remained a Pan-spermatist, as Pasteur and Huxley are now. That is, he believed that no life can have any existence except by means of antecedent life. Dr. Bastian, on the contrary, is a believer in "spontaneous generation," and goes so far as to express a conviction that organisms may be produced from inorganic matter. Having hermetically sealed a glass tube which had contained organic life, and had been submitted to heat sufficient, as he believes, to destroy all vitality, he found that infusoria were still alive after an interval of several weeks. Professor Huxley says that sooner than admit spontaneous generation, he would incline to the belief that there were germs which heat could not destroy.

Mr. Hewlett's rather lengthy essay on "The Poems of Matthew Arnold" is a very able one in many respects. It is perhaps, too invariably eulogistic, but the writer's thorough sympathy with his author will be of service to the reader. The paper is intended to serve as a guide to the connected and natural study of Mr. Arnold's works. Mr. Hewlett traces with great care the progress of the poet's mind, from the early poems in which he was imbued with the Hellenic or "Neo-pagan spirit," through the period of doubt to the more spiritual and "Hebraistic" phase into which he passed in spite of himself. The continuity of purpose in his prose and poetical works is traced, and the apparent conflict between them, in tone and object, reconciled by a careful ex-