

we imagine, are poets that have, and ought to have, a great influence : that being so, their belief and their reasons are matters of moment. All these essays are interesting and clear in their statements, and may be useful to those for whom they are written, viz., "the semi-scientific who have some elementary ideas about science, and desire to know more." The parts of this work that are more within our special province are those concerning the Religion of the Future, Agnosticism and Christianity, the Historical Element of the Gospels, and Scepticism and Pessimism. And here, while we say again that Mr. Laing writes forcibly, he does not always state things fairly, and we cannot accept his conclusions. He treats the theory of evolution as a fact, and that, of course, tinges his arguments all through. Mr. Laing says agnosticism has no quarrel with that definition of Christianity which is founded on love and admiration for Christ, and which are translated into a desire to imitate Christ as far as possible, and to act upon His precepts. But with "the definition of Christianity, which is theological or dogmatic, which, commencing with St. Paul and St. John, and culminating in the Athanasian Creed, has been accepted from the early ages of Christianity, almost until the present day, as the miraculous revelation of the true theory of the universe; agnosticism has nothing in common;" and such agnosticism is the superior thing in Mr. Laing's opinion. Mr. Laing is not satisfied with Cardinal Newman's celebrated theory of the "illative sense"; creation, immortality, the nature of the soul, have no meaning for Mr. Laing, he cannot define them; and when he comes to the word "incomprehensible" in the Athanasian Creed, he appears not to know that it means "not included in space," but takes it to mean simply "what cannot be understood." St. Paul is quoted as saying that the judgments of God are unsearchable, and His ways inscrutable, and that is true; but will Mr. Laing claim St. Paul as an agnostic and set him beside Huxley and Spencer? However, he says, "that agnosticism is the best of all arguments against atheism and materialism, for if we cannot prove an affirmative, still less can we prove a negative." Mr. Laing notes that Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Huxley, Carlyle, and Mill have drifted away from Christianity; so, says he, so much the worse for Christianity. He forgets, however, the many eminent men of science who still are sincere believers. Mr. Laing is not better satisfied with Positivism, which has been said to be Catholicism without Christianity; and altogether he thinks it best to be a Zoroastrian. He has no fear for morals, however; for morality, he opines, will take care of itself, and a system which can produce a Darwin is good enough for anything. Mr. Laing approves of the addresses of the Bishops in Manchester Cathedral, at the meeting of the British Association, in 1887; and though not quite so well satisfied with the Bishop of London's Bampton Lectures, he claims him as a learned man advancing towards the high agnostic position. Mr. Laing would not upset everything,