

CAUTION!

We hereby give notice that the Rev. W. H. Wadleigh is the only gentleman traveling authorized to collect subscriptions for the "Dominion Churchman."

THE BISHOP OF ONTARIO ON AGNOSTICISM.

WE should be very glad to see the lecture on Agnosticism, delivered before the Synod of the Diocese, by the Lord Bishop of ONTARIO, largely circulated, and would venture to suggest that a cheap popular edition be prepared, so that it may be distributed by tens of thousands. If that is done we hope the Bishop will follow his own precedent, set on page 29, and give the English of all the Latin phrases which are strewn freely in the lecture. These passages are a hindrance to the vast majority of readers, who stumble at their recurrence and lose interest in the argument. It is not for the unlearned only for whom we ask this; there are not many men who having been fair Latin scholars in early life, can promptly translate a quotation from HORACE or other classic author, after having been in active life for some years. We well remember in our student days asking one of the most distinguished honour men of Oxford, he was then sixty years of age, what he made of a certain Latin motto, and he freely admitted that it was beyond his powers of translation, yet we met with it in a popular tract.

The thesis which the Bishop of ONTARIO undertakes to prove in this lecture is, that Agnosticism is not scientific, as is boasted, but that it is based upon Evolution, which is an unverified hypothesis, is in plain English—"a mere guess." In our early days the Agnostic was called Atheist. The changed nomenclature arose from the difficulty into which the well known infidel writer and lecturer, Mr. HOLYOAKE, was put in controversy. He at one time freely spoke of Himself as an Atheist, but into this dilemma he was placed: he having affirmed that there is no God in existence, it was necessary for him to show that he himself had one of the attributes of a God, omnipresence, in order to justify so sweeping a negation; for unless he had ransacked all space and was familiar with all matter everywhere, it was possible that in the region beyond his personal observation there might be this Being whose existence he denied. This was pressed home by illustrations and appeals to men's experience, and after a while the term Atheist was dropped. The infidel party then took the word "Secularist," indicating one who is concerned only with the things of this world. This term failed to make headway amongst speculative thinkers, who, to avoid the Atheist difficulty, accepted the title "Agnostic" to show that they simply pronounced themselves without knowledge of the existence of God. The word Agnostic will die out. Negations lead at their best a rickety life, they are so inadequate to indicate a positive belief, which is repulsive to our natural mental instincts, for nature resists its being maintained in the mind by substituting another belief when the Christian one is rejected. It is not the man who does not know who rules his fellows, such an one is a mere intellectual and moral jelly-fish. The powers which govern men are knowledge and faith. Agnosticism is the philosophy of ignorance, boastful ignorance of a wisdom by which man is differentiated from the brutes. Such a philosophy has in it no principle of life.

A few words are said in the lecture as to the causes of the popularity of the Evolution theory. One reason, however, is not given, which we believe to be this, that the promulgation of this theory was for itself very happily timed, coming as it did in the very height of the excitement of materialistic progress caused by the unprecedented enrichment of the world by the mechanical inventions of the last half century. The rushing tide of modern life has developed a general mental unrest, a passion for novelties, a strong feeling that what is new is true, and a notion that as Science has been of such marvellous material help to material interests, that its theories and speculations are worthy of all honour and credit. Then, too, the ease with which the veriest smatterer nowadays can talk of scientific theories, owing to cheap hand-books on all manner of topics, enables men who could not solve the simplest equation, to dogmatize about science as though their attainments were equal to a NEWTON or a FARADAY. This intellectual feverishness is the atmosphere in which Agnosticism breeds as naturally as snakes in a swamp. It is, we are convinced, a mere passing phase of life, when the theory of Evolution has been examined as long as it has been germinating and flowering, it will have to pass into that limbo where Time puts other unverified hypotheses which have been cut down in their pride by the relentless scythe of true science.

The lecture opens with a statement that "Religion is now confronted with a very real danger, it is attacked at its very root," and proceeds to show how the agnostic spirit prevails, yet how its victims fail to regard it with confidence as a reconstructor of society. Agnosticism then is contrasted with the Gnosticism of the first century and declared to be "a contradiction in terms," "it is a belief that there can be no belief." The Evolution theory is then shown to be the direct cause of this evil, and a very able, interesting and exhaustive analysis follows of the theory of Evolution, in which this pretentious "guess" is treated to such a process of logical vivisection as would be cruel indeed were not the Evolution theory so low in the scale of organization as to be as insensitive to the cut of logic and ridicule as protoplasm itself is to scientific dissection. The double and contradictory action of Evolution we shall have to refer to ourselves shortly, but we must thank the Bishop for a hearty laugh at his amusing picture of the race of man having first had tails evolved in the struggle for existence, and then these tails destroyed also by the struggle for existence! The passages relating to the eye and ear being evolved, as these babblers say, to meet the necessity of light and sound when neither sight nor hearing existed, nor light nor sound were existing phenomena, is very forcibly argued. So, too, the difficulty of believing that matter was self-created and self developed into order. Elquently the Bishop asks, "Is not the belief that the worlds were made by the fiat of an omnipotent Creator quite as thinkable as that they were developed from nebulous fire-dust that existed from eternity, and that they dropped into their places in space by chance which, however, resulted in the planets always poisoning themselves so that the square of one planet's period of revolution round the sun should be to the square of the next planet's revolution, as the cubes of their distances respectively from the sun? That the law of KEPLER should be the production of chance, is unthinkable." But we must not spoil the reading of this lecture by more quotations.

The Bishop exposes clearly the commonly held

notion that "law" has in it some effective power, the truth being, as the lecturer says, "a law does not work, it merely exists." The writer passes on from an argument based upon this thought, to expose how utterly unscientific is DARWIN'S theory as to "the survival of the fittest." The illustrations which follow showing that man's highest works of art, his choicest, most elaborate artistic conceptions are merely imitations of God's handiwork, are very eloquently stated and would bear expansion, the vein is a rich one and the ore pure gold. Some, however care not to follow an argument when its path is through a garden of illustration, they prefer to be led over and amid the hard rocky eminences of severe metaphysical or mathematical reasoning. For these also the lecture also provides. We very cordially feel with the Bishop in his protest against those who assume that religion and science are essentially antagonistic. He very gently rebukes some who regarded him as inconsistent for taking the initiative in inducing the British Association for the Advancement of Science to visit the Dominion, because some of its members are Agnostics. This most admirable lecture concludes with a demand that scientific objections shall be treated scientifically, but protests against guesses being palmed off as scientific truths. It demands also that man's moral nature, his instinctive religious longings shall not be set aside with contempt. The Bishop concluded this able address with the words: "In solving problems in the queen of sciences, Theology, we cannot resign ourselves at the bidding of Agnostics to the torpidity of blank despair."

We repeat our earnest hope that this lecture will attain a very wide circulation; the clergy would do well to make its value generally known by public allusions.

OBITUARY.

IT is our melancholy duty to record the death of two youths whose bright, joyous, hopeful lives were suddenly quenched in the waters of Lake Simcoe during a storm on the 3rd inst. The one was a son of the Honble. G. W. ALLAN, the other of the Honble. D. McINNIS, of Hamilton. The former was at Port Hope School, the other a student of Trinity College. It seems that they were camping on Kempenfeldt Bay, and being anxious to reach their camp they put off in a boat from the opposite shore while the wind was blowing fresh. From this point all is a blank. They left that beach and shoal of time, and landed on the shore of eternity, leaving this mortal sphere in all the solemn loneliness of a stormy lake. The storm fiend, whose sudden bursts of blustering fury render navigation on the northern waters so hazardous, struck its victims and left no sign of the deed save an upturned boat which mutely beached itself to tell their fate. They have been blamed for venturing the passage, but we cannot share in so narrow, so harsh a judgment. Brave they both were, light of heart too, but not reckless, being strong swimmers and skilled as far as the needs are of such waters. To say that they looked danger in the face and smiled in all the consciousness of youthful vigour at its threats, is not to say that they were rash, but that they were endowed with the noblest qualities of our race, qualities which have inspired every deed of heroic daring history or legend records. It should be a consolation to the bereaved that their beloved died the death of the brave when in the innocent path of youthful companionship in enjoyments honourable and befitting