

by those who need it most. But as the religious paragraphs apparently occupy quite a subordinate place in this delightful *pot-pourri* of literature and art, they are read with, and partly for the sake of, the rest; and if the reader's mind is at all open, they are sure, sooner or later, to produce their proper effect.

The true mental attitude in which to view differences of religious doctrine and belief is admirably expressed in the following paragraph from "The Professor":—

"Do you know that every man has a religious belief peculiar to himself? Smith is always a Smithite. He takes in exactly Smith's-worth of knowledge, Smith's-worth of truth, of beauty, of divinity. And Brown has from time immemorial been trying to burn him, to excommunicate him, to anonymous-article him, because he did not take in Brown's-worth of knowledge, truth, beauty, divinity. He cannot do it, any more than a pint pot can hold a quart, or a quart pot be filled by a pint. Iron is essentially the same everywhere and always; but the sulphate of iron is never the same as the carbonate of iron. Truth is invariable; but the *Smithite* of truth must always differ from the *Brownite* of truth."

A partial insight into Dr. Holmes' interpretation of Christianity may be obtained from the subjoined passages:—

"The Broad Church will never be based upon anything that requires the use of language. The cup of cold water does not require to be translated for a foreigner to understand it."

"The Christian religion, as taught by its Founder, is full of sentiment. . . . those yearnings of human sympathy which predominate so much more in the sermons of the Master than in the writings of His successors—which have made the parable of the Prodigal Son the consolation of mankind, as it has been the stumbling-block of all exclusive doctrines."

Religion and morals are treated throughout Dr. Holmes' works as being in a very large measure identical. The ethical questions of freedom and responsibility are discussed in an exceedingly interesting manner, not only in the "Breakfast

Table" series, but elsewhere. The book "Elsie Venner: A Romance of Destiny" is, in the main, an illustrated exposition of our author's theory of morals. Then, in 1870, he delivered in Harvard University an able address, which was afterwards published under the title "Mechanism in Thought and Morals."

He describes himself throughout as seeking not to limit, but to *define*, responsibility. But the process of definition is literally and essentially one of limitation, and Dr. Holmes, in his exposition of freedom, has not escaped the inevitable. This is evident from the following passage:—

"Do you want an image of the human will or the self-determining principle as compared with its prearranged and impassable restrictions? A drop of water imprisoned in a crystal; you may see such a one in any mineralogical collection. One little fluid particle in the crystalline prism of the solid universe!"

While enlarging on the influence of heredity in producing moral aberration he yet emphatically scouts the notion of inherited responsibility. Much of what is usually called sin and crime he considers as the outcome of a state of moral disease—this disease itself being either hereditary or the necessary result of the unavoidable environment of the victim. In such a case responsibility, of course, does not attach to immoral acts. The following paragraph admirably illustrates Dr. Holmes' position:—

"I do not know that I ever met with a human being who seemed to me to have a stronger claim on the pitying consideration and kindness of his Maker than a wretched, puny, crippled, stunted child that I saw in Newgate, who was pointed out as one of the most notorious and inveterate little thieves in London. I have no doubt that some of those who were looking at this pitiable, morbid secretion of the diseased social organism, thought they were very virtuous for hating him so heartily."

But there is ground for objecting that Dr. Holmes goes too far in his compari-