

## HEREDITY.

HEREDITY has been a popular subject in the sciences for a great many generations of men. Its general principles have been indicated in fiction, philosophy, biography and history; and recently have been attempted to be explained scientifically.

The general principle may be expressed as in popular phrase "Like begets like." The likeness of the progenitor is preserved in his progeny. Not only a physical but also a psychical likeness, of the parent is transmitted from one generation to another. Natural Science is concerned with investigating the extent and conditions of the hereditary qualities of the physical nature, while philosophy is trying to ascertain how far the moral nature of the individual is traceable to the hereditary influences of the parent. Beyond the conflicting theories of science that the bodily characteristics of man, normal and abnormal are hereditary, philosophy has to add that the moral life of man which depends upon his psychical nature, is the basis of morality for all his descendants. Thus the child resembles the parent not only in

physical appearance but in disposition and in character.

It may be important to mention here a few of the novelists whose writings on this theme are calculated to deepen an interest in their subject. Chief among these are Oliver Wendel Holmes, M. Zola, and George Eliot, who, by concrete examples, have pointed out the workings of this far reaching principle. No one can lay down Holmes' Elsie Venner even after a cursory reading without a feeling of at least awakened interest in his theme which is heredity. Much as has been said against that pessimistic writer M. Zola, and repellent as the character of "La Bête Humaine" may be, nowhere does Zola exaggerate the darker side of heredity. That the intellectual capacity of man is directly influenced by his immediate ancestry is seen especially in the written lives of distinguished characters. "It is impossible therefore" Says Dr. Clark Murray, "even if it were desirable, to carry out that crude radicalism which would act without any regard to the past history of the individual, of his family, or of his race. No men can cut