

OCTOBER 1890

The Theological Monthly

THE PROBLEM OF PHILOSOPHY.

WHAT is Philosophy? The difficulty of answering this question arises from the wide range and variety of speculations included under the common name. It seems easy to define Philosophy while we confine our attention to some particular branch or period, but a definition wide enough to cover the whole field is more difficult. Mr. George Henry Lewes, in his *History of Philosophy*, proposed at first to define it as "an attempt to explain the phenomena of the universe;" but afterwards abandoning this as vague and unsatisfactory, he proposed a threefold definition of Theology, Science, and Philosophy. Theology is the systematization of our religious conceptions; Science the systematization of our knowledge of the order of phenomena; and Philosophy the systematization of the conceptions furnished by Theology and Science. These definitions, though far from satisfactory, afford a convenient starting-point for our inquiry. We must not, however, allow ourselves to be misled by the word "systematization." The formation of an artificial system into which our various conceptions are to be ingeniously fitted is neither Theology, Science, nor Philosophy; but an investigation into the true meaning, and nature of the conceptions presented by Theology and Science, with a view to reducing them to a system, may be Philosophy, even though it fail in the attempt to discover any completely satisfactory system. We may ask also the preliminary question, Why does not Science, which is so busy with the formation of systems, go a step further and itself