

ORDER OF NATURE,

or, as it is sometimes named, the "uniformity of nature." This will be made clear by one quotation from Professor Huxley, who, in justly condemning the realism that would make laws of nature agents, says, "A law of nature, in the scientific sense, is the product of a mental operation upon the facts of nature which come under our observation, and has no more existence outside the mind than colour has." This observed order, or uniformity, points to law or rule in a mind ; but is not itself that law, any more than the arrest of a thief is the law against theft. It would save a world of misunderstanding if this distinction were carefully observed, and the word "order" used when order was meant, a word about which we are all agreed, and which involves no theory whatever. Especially inappropriate is the use of the term "law" by those who deny all necessity in the successions of phenomena, and all force in their production. Such cannot do more than register sequences in nature ; and as such registration shows a certain order, and nothing more, they ought not to be allowed to use any other word than this when they wish to express this fact.

The next aid to clear thought is to determine the exact character of this order, because through neglect of this we have much nonsense talked about the improbability of an answer to prayer, and of miracles. The day for urging the impossibility of miracles has happily passed away. Scientists now see that it is a question of evidence only, but the evidence demanded is all the greater because of their supposed improbability ; and they are considered improbable because they are imagined to be deviations from, or violations of, the order of nature. Even so clear a thinker as Dr. Cairns becomes confused here, for he says, in his pamphlet on *Christianity and Miracles*, "It is to be remembered that while, in one sense, miracles set aside law, in another and deeper sense they uphold it." It is evident that by "law" he means "order," for to set aside law is inherently impossible ; and in his definition of miracle he speaks of God's ordinary working, but this is the order of nature. If he had first determined what he meant by the order of nature, he would