

not an ecclesiastical faith—that we are children of the Supreme and the Universal, and brothers to every one of its manifestations, from the hyssop on the wall to the stars in their mighty courses ?”

XVI

“MR. BROMPTON will, I hope, forgive me,” said Glanville, with a slight smile, “if my exposition does not quite equal the poetical anticipations which he has formed of it. I will, however, begin it with a celebrated line of poetry—

The river wanders at its own sweet will.

This is what Wordsworth wrote about the Thames, as it flowed at sunrise. Mr. Brompton knows the quotation; and like all of us, at one time or another, he has, I am sure, admired it.”

“I admire it still,” said Mr. Brompton, in a tone of sympathetic authority.

“Yes,” said Glanville; “but do you think that what it says is true? Does the river really wander at its own will, whether sweet or otherwise?”

“Of course,” said Mr. Brompton, “in a scientific sense it does not. Its direction, its speed, its currents, and even its smallest ripple, are determined by natural conditions under which it is absolutely passive. To speak strictly, it has no more will than a bullet. I know that perfectly well. But poetry is not science. It speaks not to the reason but the imagination; and it is beautiful because it speaks a language which the imagination can understand.”

“No doubt,” said Glanville. “And now let us turn from poetry to mechanics. We are all of us here familiar enough with a steam-engine to know that its steam-power makes a wheel turn round by means of a piston-rod which pushes and pulls a crank.”

“I suppose,” said Miss Leighton, “that the action is much like that of a turning-lathe. The piston-rod is like