Literature.

The prompt mention in our list of "Books of the Week" will be considered by us an equivalent to their publishers for all volumes received. The interests of our readers will guide us in the selection of works for further notice.]

THE DUKE OF ARGYLE'S UNITY OF NATURE.

This latest work of the Duke of Argyle has now been long enough before the public to permit us to form a mature judgment as to its character and work. As in the case of his previous volume, "The Reign of Law," of which this is the continuation and conclusion, a considerable portion was brought out previous to publication, in periodicals, where it attracted much attention and led to discussions on both sides of the water, of which the author has been neither slow nor unwilling to avail himself in the final publication. The present volume, therefore, comes out in its first edition with something of the maturity and corrected completeness of a second edition.

The work to which the Duke has set his hand is strictly that of philosophy as distinguished from science. It is not a bare critique of current ideas or systems, nor the elucidation of facts in natural history; but a large, comprehensive restatement of the doctrine of man's relation to Nature and of his place in it.

It might draw on the author some prejudice to say that his work is in the interest of the established theologies. The popular impression has connected the idea of theology so closely with the ecclesiastical, technical, and particularistic phases of Christianity as to make such a statement misleading.

But, theology in the large sense is simply the best answer Christian thinkers can give to the eternal problems which engage man's attention. They do not arise because we have a Bible and a Church; but we have Bible and Church because these are the supreme questions that will be asked and answered. The best service which theology has to render is to lay down for man the philosophy of his life, to give him the clew to his existence, to disclose to him the secret of his suffering and labor, the direction his checkered life is taking, the faith on which he may hope to reach the end for which he was made, and what he has to look forward to as the end and reward of his being. In short, the best service to be rendered a man in this world is to give him a true philosophy. The majority of serious and civilized humanity have at least something to serve them as such. It may be a poor raft to cross the ocean on, or it may be only a log; but, if made of good timber, it will serve the good purpose of keeping the man afloat as a man and not a mere animal. It will sustain his hopes, his views of himself, and keep the spiritual theory alive.

This is not an easy thing to be done. With all its aspiration, it has not proved a light task to hold the human race to the conviction of its spiritual character and destiny. It has not even been a small matter to keep the argument that shows us to be made for such a destiny in good repair or in effective working order.

An argument is addressed to a mind, and, like light, it depends on the organ that is to use it. Nature becomes visible not only by means of certain undulations in the atmosphere, but because they act on organs of sight, which transform them into the glory of the lighted world. Argument has to reckon with the mind of man; and this is by no means the same in all ages. Its assumptions, its sympathies, its *a priori* starting-points change. What convinced it twenty-five years ago may not convince it now. What brought it to bend in awe before God at one age, in another may not touch it at all. The sensitive spot in the human mind has changed very much in our day.

These remarks are intended to show our conception of the service done the cause of right thinking by the Duke of Argyle, both in his last and in the previous volume. He deals with the philosophy of man and his destiny. He has served the cause by restating certain important portions of Christian philosophy in terms which are generally recognized as falling in with the methods and assumptions of the times, and in establishing them on a basis of recognized force and validity.

The intellectual core of his argument remains substantially the same it has been and must always be. But it starts with the thought of the age and meets the supreme problem of philosophy, not only on a different method from that pursued by most Christian speculators, but without getting at all off the common and recognized ground on which all scientific work is done.

The unity of Nature is the very heart of modern science. It was a bold *coup* for the Duke of Argyle to marshal his forces into this *point d' appui*, hitherto supposed by the enemy the key to their battle, for his sally-port into the field. The great achievement of this book lies in its first step, in the bold thought that the doctrine of the unity of Nature, when pressed to the utmost limit the facts permit, instead of bringing man into the circumference of materialistic and necessary phenomena, emancipates him.

The object of the volume now before us is to develop and substantiate this position. Ground for it is carefully chosen in the definitions of the opening chapter. We are told what the unity of Nature is, and what it is not, and drawn on to the conclusion that it is upon something else than structure or composition that the vast differences observed in Nature are based; and that, although science does not even pretend to explain what the directive agency which has produced these vast differences is,

> "One thing, at least, is plain; that, if a very few elementary substances can enter into an untold variety of combinations, and by virtue of this variety can be made to play a vast variety of parts, this result can only be attained by a system of mutual adjustments as immense as the variety it produces, as minute as the differences on which it depends, and as centralized in direction as the order and harmony of its results. And so we come to understand that the unity which we see in Nature is that kind of unity which the mind recognizes as the result of operations similar to its own—not a unity which consists in mere sameness of material, or in mere identity of composition, or in mere uniformity of structure, but a unity which consists in the subordination of all these to similar aims and to similar principles of action; that is to say, in like methods of yoking a few elementary forces to the discharge of special functions, and to the production, by adjustment, of one harmonious Whole."

As this is the key-note of the entire work, we delay on it long enough to call attention to its variation for the better, not only from the crude argument of cause and effect, and from design, but even from the maturest forms of the teleological argument. Substantially, it reproduces the argument based on the perception of order in Nature; but that argument is brought forward in terms that fall in better with the terminology and the thinking of the present generation of thinkers. There is order in the crystallization of salts; but the conviction is not immediate (possibly it is not a necessary one at all) that this order is the work of Mind. The same failure attends the use of this word all along the line. The naturalist may hang on it a denial, or at least a doubt, and challenge the right to attribute it to Mind. But the correlation of elements in the whole system is more than order; and it is to this vast and complex correlation, whose exposition is the boast and achievement of modern science, that the Duke of Argyle turns for the proof on which he rests. The point of all his extended discussion is to exhibit man in this complex correlation, and to measure and interpret the light it throws on his nature and destiny.

The majority of Christian apologists have hesitated to place man distinctly within the circumference of these correlated forces. They have attempted to paint him with one foot in, and the better part of him out. They have kept up a perpetual war with the naturalists, and fought against every extension of the realm and power of the natural over the constitution of man. But the Duke of Argyle makes nothing of all this contention. He says, boldly:

> "Of this Unity, we who see it, and think of it, and speak of it—we are part. In Body and in Mind we belong to it, and are included in it. (p. 44.)

From this starting-point the author proceeds, in the body of his work, to a profound study of man's place in Nature, and to his share and part in the unity which surrounds him. This study is carried over the whole ground traversed by the speculative theories which have their root in modern science.

We cannot follow the discussion through its vast sweep, nor even far enough to make intelligible the points at which we believe it to fail. It is, however, worth while to note some points which may startle some of our readers. For example, the eternity of matter and of force are recognized with a distinctness which seems to be impatient that doubt on this point has ever been expressed. Sir William Thompson's theory of a medium pervading all space, perfectly elastic, but of inconceivable density, is accepted. The principle of evolution is admitted, though it is put under strict bonds to a theistic regulation, and is not held to commit the believer, in any sense, to the descent or ascent of man from the brute.

The conclusion reached is that:

"The system under which we live, is not only a system accessible to our intelligence, but so united to it that all the mysteries of the universe, visible and invisible, are epitomized and enfolded in ourselves. And so we come to feel that our knowledge and our understanding of that system must 'grow from more to more,' in proportion as the whole of our own nature is laid open to the whole of its intimations, and the highest of our Faculties are kept in conscious and wakeful recognition of the work and of the Power to which they stand related. Then, also, it will come to be plain to us that we may expect in that system, and that we may trust to it for, teaching of the highest kind, insomuch that Inspiration and Revelation are to be regarded not as incredible, or even as rare phenomena, but as operations which, in various measures and degrees, are altogether according to the natural constitution and course of things.