

THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE

to cast a critical glance at the historical course of this great struggle; especially seeing that the attacks of the "Church militant" on science in general, and on the theory of evolution in particular, have become extremely bitter and menacing of late years. Unfortunately, the mental relaxation which has lately set in, and the rising flood of reaction in the political, social, and ecclesiastical world, are only too well calculated to give point to those dangers. If any one doubts it, he has only to look over the conduct of Christian synods and of the German Reichstag during the last few years. Quite in harmony are the recent efforts of many secular governments to get on as good a footing as possible with the "spiritual regiment," their deadly enemy—that is, to submit to its yoke. The two forces find a common aim in the suppression of free thought and free scientific research, for the purpose of thus more easily securing a complete despotism.

Let us first emphatically protest that it is a question for us of the necessary defence of science and reason against the vigorous attacks of the Christian Church and its vast army, not of an unprovoked attack of science on religion. And, in the first place, our defence must be prepared against Romanism or Ultramontan-ism. This "one ark of salvation," this Catholic Church "destined for all," is not only much larger and more powerful than the other Christian sects, but it has the exceptional advantage of a vast, centralized organization and an unrivalled political ability. Men of science are often heard to say that the Catholic superstition is no more astute than the other forms of supernatural faith, and that all these insidious institutions are equally inimical to reason and science. As a matter of general theoretical principle the statement may pass,