

from the Rev. A. W. Gordon, Victor Harbour:—"Professor Jethro Brown's judgment on religious belief is either a grave reality or mere frivolous phrase; and with a little meditation on the authority upon which it rests, the mind inclines to the latter. There is an intolerance of judgments made by the unqualified in art, science, and industry; and the work of the common policeman who catches the thief is much more respected and applauded than the plans and methods of the scientific detective, which give the thief time to escape. It is the difference between theory and knowledge. The scientific detective occurs in theory, while the big 'bobby' has already had a hand-to-hand scuffle with his man and put him into ward. And so the judgment of the least educated man who has undergone a spiritual experience is alone valuable besides the amassed judgments of those who profess but academic honours and a contempt for religion. The competent judge of religious tendencies is the religious man, and only he who has undergone a spiritual experience ought to gain respect. Let the teachers speak for themselves. I happen to have a letter from a country teacher of a fairly large school, who asserts that the church has builded greater than she knows, and infers that she is an indispensable ally to the teacher and to the school. Then why the professor emphasizes as a cause 'the progress of scepticism in thought' is hard to understand. The 'progress' is no more conspicuous in regard to religion than in anything else; nor is it any more progressive. In the days of Luther and Knox was it not even more progressive? Perhaps much more suppressed. Let us hope that the day will never come when scepticism will be anything else than progressive. And as far as the 'multiplication of the forms of pleasure or entertainment unassociated with the churches' as a further cause, is concerned, turn to any age you will, and I challenge the professor to point to any period of the church's life wherein the spirit of religion was unassociated with pleasure or entertainment more than it is to-day. Perhaps the professor's authority, after all, is the 'one pastor who dares not speak of certain things to his congregation.' At any rate, although unwittingly, we have been given the most conspicuous cause of the 'waning religious belief.' Too long the Christian Church has suffered on this account. Was she not established for the purpose of 'preaching Christ' and His message? And if there is any man within the church who 'dares not' do this work, his only honest course is to leave it. From the chair of philosophy we do not expect to listen to what the professor says he does not know; and from the Christian pulpit we ought not to have men preaching for Christ, whose word he does not believe, and is afraid to preach. With regard to Emerson's dictum, it can merely be rejected on the ground of our progressive scepticism regarding his competency to judge as a spiritual critic. In other words, it is doubtful whether Emerson ever had a spiritual experience in the religious sense. He shifted about a good deal, and it is hard to know just what he thought regarding 'faith in divine causes.'"

from Thos. Reddin, Mount Gambier:—"Professor Jethro Brown is reported as having said 'Most men either thought of Christ as philosopher or saint, or thought of Him not at all.' Surely 'most men' is too sweeping. It is the professor's conviction? And is he 'judging others by his own peck?' Permit me to say it is not mine. A pastor assured him he 'dared not speak of hell.' That pastor must have thought he ought to speak of the stern reality of hell, or why talk about not daring to do it? He who has not the courage of his conviction will never rout the prophets of Baal. The mention of his cowardice elicited 'laughter.' It ought to have evoked cries of 'Shame!' I venture to say some of the professor's hearers did not join in the laughter. The statement, 'My people would not stand it' (the teaching of the stern reality of hell), reminds one of 2 Tim. iv. 3—"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." I am a Methodist preacher, and for me 'the sovereignty of God, the Divinity of Christ, the hope of Heaven, and the stern reality of hell,' as taught by Christ, remain solid truths. Professor Brown says—"Where are they?" Let him emerge from his intellectual cloud and move among the hearts of men, and he will find them there. He will pass away, but these truths will never pass away."

TEACHERS AND THEIR MISSION.

The proceedings of the Public School Teachers' Union Congress offer an interesting study in conceptions of duty and methods of service. On the opening day a fine assembly of teachers listened attentively to eloquent and stimulating disquisitions from friendly counsellors concerning school aims and objects, and the grave and growing responsibilities attaching to the task of instructing the young. In subsequent sessions the members of the union engaged in the consideration of the deficiencies of the education system, the advocacy of schemes of reform, and the trials and difficulties—many of them remediable—incidental to teaching in the national schools. Some of the lessons learned from practical experience are in striking contrast to the ideas of outside theorists. On a supremely important point, happily, unanimity prevails. Endorsement was heartily given to the sentiment expressed by His Excellency the Governor that the main asset to be looked for from education is character:—"Uprightness, truth, and honour are the qualities upon which character is founded, and those qualities form the basis of that patriotism and love of country which are identified with the great traditions of the Anglo-Saxon race." No outlay on education could be too large if it would assure to the State a high standard of citizenship—self-disciplined, industrious, and devoted to duty. This conviction has been increasingly apparent in recent years, and it is producing beneficent effects in relation to school influences and the assistance given to youths and girls to make a fair start in life. In this vast southern continent the exceeding sparseness of the population accentuates the need of developing men and women who shall rightly esteem and use the exceptional privileges associated with Australian nationality. The teachers, therefore, may in spirit address to themselves the inspiring words which Shakspeare put into the mouth of Richard II.:—

Look not on the ground  
Ye favourites of a king! Are we not high?  
High be our thoughts.

The demand on teachers in reference to the formation of character should always be kept in view, but it would be a serious mistake to burden them with responsibilities in that regard which more properly belong to others. In his able and brilliant address Professor Jethro Brown appeared to assume that school teachers should be willing to relieve "other powers" of tasks which they may be either unwilling or incompetent to perform satisfactorily. He believes that, as an ally of the teachers, the churches have lost some of their former power; that the discipline of the family has relaxed; and that the spirit of authority has weakened. Undoubtedly, the present is a transitional period, and in some aspects old interpretations of religious faith have lost their potency; but these conditions do not justify the conclusion that the churches are unable now to accomplish as much for the child as they did formerly, or that the child is less disposed to be helped by their ministrations. The outlook for the Christian faith would be gloomy indeed, if

its appeal to the child mind and affections is losing effect. It is singular that so keen an observer as Professor Jethro Brown should have formed a somewhat disparaging view of the influence of the churches at a time when they are assisting to emphasize—as the Professor himself is doing—the superlative value of character training, and are devoting more attention than ever before to the organization and improvement of Sunday schools, with manifest advantage to many thousands of boys and girls who receive Biblical instruction and kindly counsel in those institutions. If the churches follow the teacher as they once did, they should promptly mend their ways and recover the lost power. The State cannot hope to advance in strength and true prosperity without the reverential, religious spirit, and that cannot be maintained and fostered without an all-conquering faith in and sense of dependence upon the Supreme Being. Both the school and the church are therefore vitally necessary to the Commonwealth, and they must work in sympathy.

The social value of rank has certainly become insignificant in Australia, but something far better is promised in the "dream of a new aristocracy, based not on birth or wealth, but on mind and character." The public, as well as the teachers, may profit by the suggestive remarks of Professor Jethro Brown and Mr. Angas Parsons, M.P., regarding the best ways in which

the most valuable factors of the school may be profitably exercised. But the fullest consideration must be given to the teachers' own experiences as narrated at the conference. Plainly, they suffer from substantial grievances, and the interests of their pupils are thereby unavoidably prejudiced. The school has been made too much of an experimental ground for faddism, and the curriculum is overloaded. In the language of a lady speaker, "Efforts are made to teach too much to the child, as though it was never going to have any more education after it left school." Apparently, the failure of the continuation classes can be fairly attributed to intellectual nausea. Instead of leaving school with an abiding love of learning, the average boy is tempted to follow the example of Toots, who, after a severe cramming under Dr. Blimber, set himself heartily to forget everything he had been taught. The "rights" of the growing boy or girl call for the abandonment of all cramming, all over-examination, and everything else which directly or indirectly tends to retard healthy development. The school-going period must be extended, and teachers and children relieved of undue strain. As the Acting Minister of Education has promised that amendment shall be made in the schedule of subjects taught, the teachers may reasonably expect that their carefully devised proposals for the reorganization of the Department, and their requests for fresh concessions to themselves, will, so far as is expedient, meet with Governmental approval. A new Act, covering primary, secondary, and higher education, in all their branches, must soon be added to the statute books. One of its special purposes should be to ensure to youths skilled training in useful occupations, including agriculture.