

RELIGIOUS TEACHING IN THE SCHOOLS.

LESSONS FROM THE CHURCH CONGRESS.

THE question of religious teaching in schools is of vital interest not only to all members of the scholastic profession—it is of vital interest to the nation at large; and only a little less important is the question of organising Secondary Education. During the late Church Congress at Exeter, both subjects were discussed; and we propose to lay before our readers the gist of the arguments and statements brought forward on that occasion, as fully as is compatible with the limits of space at our command.

In connection with religious teaching in secondary schools, it may be well in this place to mention some remarks made by the Bishop of London. His lordship said that he wished very specially to emphasise two things. In the first place, a school, although it might very largely take the place of a home, yet could not entirely take that place; moreover, in the case of day schools, so far from their taking that place, the schools were of necessity subordinate to the home, and the teacher could not give religious instruction with real effect if the home were altogether filled with a contrary spirit and were exhibiting no religious life. The Rev. A. O. Hardy, speaking on this subject said: "Parents had complained that their boys had gone to the public schools with such teaching as could be given at home, but had come back with no faith at all. He found that the experience of boys differed, whether they had been in the sixth form or not. There was a general feeling that whilst there was definite teaching in the sixth form there was a great want of it in the other parts of the school. He believed the truth was that whilst there

was on the part of the headmaster a grip on the other subjects, there was not the same grip on the religious instruction."

Another speaker, the Rev. Dr. Wace, principal of King's College, London, still more strongly insists on definiteness in religious instruction. He says:—

"Our great danger at the present time is what is called undenominationalism. Now undenominationalism is founded upon the supposition that some absolute line can be drawn between religious teaching—theological teaching—and other teaching, and that it is possible for a man to study all other subjects satisfactorily, and not to touch religion at all. A very serious attempt is being made, to which I will presently refer, to adopt this principle as a rule for determining whether public support shall be given to institutions for secondary education. Now that which is of first importance for us, I think, to realize, in reference to this aspect of the subject, is that the separation between religious and theological truth and other truth is not possible, and that the higher you go in teaching the more impossible it becomes. It may be possible, no doubt, to teach the multiplication table quite thoroughly without any reference to religion; abstract mathematics may be taught with something of the mechanical accuracy of a calculating machine, but the moment you touch upon the higher branches of learning you touch inevitably upon the great problems of religion and of theology. History, for example, may be taught in a Christian way, in a non-Christian way, or in an anti-Christian sense. To the Christian,