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PAGANISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

A STUDY IN MORALS.

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I.

MANY valuable suggestions have of late been made with regard to secular education in the schools, but very few examples have been given to show that ethical training may be successfully carried out without religious instruction. For the average Christian, a theory is not sufficient to induce him to forsake his orthodoxy for the scientific course adopted by the Rationalist. He requires no proof for the divine origin of his own religion, but he is very exacting when the Agnostic seeks a hearing. But more curious is the fact, that several prominent sceptics have not only expressed their desire to keep religious education in the public schools, but have foretold that to deprive the child of Biblical instruction would subject it to a great moral loss.

Proof, however, is not wanting to justify the remark, that a high condition of morality is attainable without the assistance of any form of superstition, and that the introduction of Christianity into a heathen country has not only at times failed to improve the moral life of the people, but has been the means of lowering it. Japan is of all highly-civilized nations the most irreligious, but, at the same time, the Japanese are a moral people. Among them, Christianity makes very little headway indeed, and the few who have been converted are chiefly drawn from the lowest classes. For the past two centuries the followers of Buddha have been steadily decreasing, and the educated classes are now quite indifferent to religion. Confucianism has been the means of shaping the Japanese character from the commencement of the seventeenth century, and, whatever defects they may have, a missionary has not hesitated to speak of the Japanese as being frank, honest, faithful, kind, courteous, confident, affectionate, and loyal.

Leaving Japan, let us devote our attention to the inhabitants of Greenland. Dr. Nansen, the explorer, has written a very interesting work ("Eskimo Life"), in which he speaks of the social evolution of the Eskimo. They appear to have migrated from the shores of the Behring Sea and founded a settlement in Greenland about the fourteenth century. In a work by E. Astrup, a comrade of Lieutenant Peary ("Towards the