

DR. STORRS ON SKEPTICAL THOUGHT.

In the Christmas number of the *Congregationalist* of Boston, Rev. R. S. Storrs, D.D., treats very fully of "Skeptical Thought about Christ." The kernel of the article is in the following two paragraphs, which treat of two phases of unbelief, the latter of which we all come across occasionally, illogical and vague as it is. The first is now only found among the classes who spend their youth in the bar-rooms, and their old age among criminals:

"The furious and essentially vulgar attacks made upon the Master in the last age, by German, French or English unbelievers, accusing Him or His biographers of intended imposture and deliberate fraud, early lost credit and influence among skeptics themselves. The reply which Origen had made to Celsus when a similar assault was violently delivered by that satirical scoffer—that an intentional imposter could scarcely have warned his disciples of the just and searching judgment of God awaiting each man, and could not have moved the inhabited world so as no philosopher, general or prince ever had done. This was seen to be as pertinent an answer after centuries had passed as it had been at first. It plainly discredited human nature to suppose imposture to have gained a prevalence so vast and persistent. It assumed that streams may rise higher than their springs, to suppose an ambitious and lying craft to have been the source of the charities of Christendom, a conscious fraud to have given inspiration to perpetual homage for truth, or the fabrication of false testimonials to have lifted continuously the spiritual aim and attainment of mankind. One might more easily think of places builded on pestilential mists, or of life restored to the veins of the dying by benumbing narcotics. The theory was so inherently offensive as to be its own antidote. The practical sense of men of the world rejected it as unsound, and felt a touch of malignity in it. If it now reappears, it is only amid the insinuated obscenities or rattling blasphemies of some itinerant mountebank, whose influence on the cultivated thought of the time is hardly more important than that of the clown entertaining the casual circus-assembly.

"Almost equally has passed from intelligent minds that theory of self-deception in the Master, and of exaggerated impressions correspondingly made by Him on the minds of disciples, which came in place of the grosser preceding scheme of thought. Very possibly this has still a place in the minds of some who reject the celestial supremacy of the Lord; and the tone of it, like

that of a color suffusing others, may now and then be detected in their writing or thought. But it shrinks instinctively from definite exhibition. The discerning sense of those who wish only to learn the truth feels it evasive and artificial, a mechanical refuge, not a natural conclusion. The theory of self-deception is fairly applied to one whose pretensions surpass his powers, whose aspiring egotism fails to meet a testing crisis, the ultimate definition of whose restricted capacity surprises himself more than others. It will uniformly be found, however, that the measure of such an one by the intuitive judgment of his companions has been more accurate than his own. His ambitious professions have been found unwarranted by his performance. Eccentricity of action has been seen to take the place of promised achievement. The poverty of results has not been masked by the temporary expedients. Even the ethical nature in the man has by degrees revealed its unsoundness, the inordinate self-regard mounting into arrogance, or turning into fevered and fretful vanity; till those who at first had cheerfully accepted him at his estimate of himself, have reacted, sometimes with passionate violence, into pity or disdain. The transient phosphorescence, which represented no intrinsically luminous substance, in vanishing leaves a darkness more dismally complete."

AN ALL-DAY PRAYER-MEETING.

Instead of the regular Monday meeting last week, the Chicago Congregational ministers held an all-day prayer-meeting at the Oak Park church. An excellent program had been prepared by a committee previously appointed, and special forethought was exercised to keep the services of the day free from interruptions, and to secure a season of continuous meditation and prayer. The result was a day long to be remembered by the forty ministers who were present. In the call for the meeting, allusion was made to the many meetings held to discuss plans of work and to develop other than spiritual faculties, and then the question was asked, "Dowe need to examine carefully and prayerfully our motives, our standards of success, and our ambitions; and shall we not give a day to such a season of self examination and prayer, going apart for communion with Christ and with one another." And this was the character which the meeting assumed at the outset and continued throughout the day, not merely because it had been so appointed, but manifestly because of the promptings, and direction of the Spirit. It was a day of searching self-examination, and of earnest supplication for those spiritual blessings which supply all needs.

The need of personal holiness, of an experience