

was going on in the religious sphere. So it is at the present time; but the prospect of change now opened before us is even greater than that opened by the Reformation. The Reformation withdrew the authority of the Medieval church on which belief up to that time had rested, and it thereby gave a tremendous shock to religious faith and to society; but it left another authority, that of the canon of Scripture, undisturbed. Christendom still felt firm ground beneath its feet. There was an assignable limit to the disintegration of belief. But what assignable limit is there now? The rate at which disintegration is going on you may measure by looking back over the literature of the last twenty, nay of the last ten years. For my own part, having followed the discussion with as much attention and as open a mind as I could, while I admit that much is gone, irrevocably gone, of that which we learned at our mother's knee, I still hold fast the conviction that the religious instincts of man point true, that his spiritual nature is a reality, that his spiritual aspirations have an object, and that from the ashes of dogma and legend, religion will arise purified, renovated, reconciled with reason and with science, to exercise a more practical influence than ever over the life and hopes of man. But amidst our present doubts and divisions I see the impossibility of including theology among the subjects of a national education. Your difficulty with the teachers is as great as with the pupils or with the parents of the pupils. You cannot set a teacher to instil anything which he does not himself believe. If my reading of the situation is true, the day will come when in all our schools we shall again teach as the most precious and vital of all knowledge, the relations of man to God; at present, in schools destined as these are for the benefit of all religious

denominations alike, we shall probably have to be content with teaching the relations of man to man.

For teaching the relations of man to man, special provision is made in the clause which I have quoted. The teachers are directed "to instil into the minds of the pupils such views and principles as will give them a true appreciation of those mutual obligations in all human relations on which the welfare of mankind is based." No doubt these words have a definite meaning. There is reason to believe that social morality, at all events, is now capable of being taught more clearly and in a more efficacious manner than it has hitherto been. The very fact that the religious sanction has been weakened by criticism and doubt, has led inquirers to examine more closely the secular sanction of those duties on the fulfilment of which the existence of civil society depends. I do not myself profess to believe that they have yet discovered any new motive power sufficiently strong, in the case of ordinary men, to supply the place of religious hopes and fears. The service of humanity is the new motive power proposed; but in the first place you have to prove the unity of humanity, which at present remains a moot point, many men of science positively denying it; and, in the second place, you have to shew why humanity, in the absence of any spiritual bond or aim of the human race, should be sacred, and a rational object of self-sacrificing love. Still, I do not doubt that, by the aid of recent investigations, social duty, with the secular rewards of its performance and the secular penalties of its neglect, may be more practically and impressively presented even to the young. Those who possess the special gift—a rarer one than is commonly supposed—of writing school books, will find here a worthy field for their powers.