

THE LOWERED STANDARD.

NOBODY who reads the daily press can have failed to note the remarkable frequency of crimes, great and small, at the present time. In the not very distant past we have congratulated ourselves that disregard for the laws of God and man has been exhibited in a lesser degree here than elsewhere. To-day congratulation under this head would be flattery. The terrible murders of the past few years, not those of imported fields, but of natural home-grown criminals, the burglaries, the thefts, the breaches of trust, the violations of social obligations, are so numerous and so real as to deprive us of all reason for boasting, and to force us to the conclusion that there is something radically wrong. Criminalologists attribute crime to a variety of causes, each tending to its own particular end. Heredity is a potent influence; but it operates in what are termed the criminal classes. Unless we have already created a criminal class, and certainly until recently such could not be said, our wave of wickedness is not the result of inheritance. Depressed trade is another factor. It is always held that when times are strained men's worst instincts assert themselves in the struggle for existence. Thus it happens that frauds and thefts are perpetrated with a view to obtaining what cannot honestly be secured. Our depression, however, has not been severe. Nor have the crimes been of the character which result from privation and hunger. Speaking generally, the offences have come from covetousness and selfishness, weak morals, and a want of appreciation of the duties of man to his Creator and his neighbour. Who is responsible for the conditions we are experiencing? The Churches do their duty in that they inculcate

right ideas and lead into the paths of virtue. The State is equally industrious in its own peculiar way. Its machinery for punishment is designed to curb the appetite for vice. Where then is the fault? Can it be that in sowing the seeds of virtue we wait too long? Do we allow the weeds to take root before we attempt to implant sound principles in the minds of the rising generation? These propositions are closely allied to the subject of education. They cover parental duty in that department of life, Church duty in relation to the young, and the duty of the school in reference to religious and moral instruction. It is difficult, and in fact impossible, to know to what extent parental duty is performed. The degree no doubt differs in various families; but it is to be feared that its average is low. The Church or Sunday-school work is done well; but does it reach the young in respect of whom the parents are indifferent? In the Public Schools we have an instalment of religious teaching. That this teaching is efficient in the moulding of character is sometimes denied, and for this reason it is urged that it should be abandoned. The question is, whether in view of the allurements which beset the young, of the vice that is growing, of the apparent neglect of the religious teaching by parents, and of the difficulty which the Churches experience in the performance of their important work, the last shred of religion should be driven from the schools. The answer is to be found in the results of this policy elsewhere. In Australia the Bible is proscribed, so far as the schools are concerned. English literature is even garbled, in order that religion may be avoided. Many good men and women come