

years in advance of modern science, and the latter has more disputable and unsettled propositions.

I have no occasion to consider whether the pulpit of the day gives sufficient importance and emphasis to ethical culture. I say nothing as to the relative influence, in this direction, of its teaching, and of that of the school. But I fear the statistics as to the number of children availing themselves of such ethical instruction would be startling. Beyond this there is the further consideration that, while the pulpit has certain advantages of its own in the impressiveness of its teaching, the school also has its advantages. To many minds the great ethical truths are made more real if they are taught as the verities of physics are taught. They thus take rank with the laws of nature in their absoluteness and uniformity.

How much scholastic rubbish might we well exchange for an intellectual conviction that it was sure as the law of gravitation that suffering follows sin; that our happiness depends more on what we are than on what we have; that "character not only fixes destiny, but is destiny itself"! These are ethical truths in which all philosophers, from Socrates to Spencer, would unite; and they are such truths as are calculated to regulate the conduct of life. I am not sanguine enough to suppose that the teaching of them would insure righteous living; the mere teaching of truth never insures wisdom; but, unless we are prepared to abandon all teaching on that account, we have no reason to abandon the teaching of moral truth.

I confess that I find it difficult to appreciate the objections that may be made to the outline of religious instruction that I have given. But I should seek to meet both those who think that too much religion would be taught, and those who think too

little would be taught, in a spirit of conciliation.

As to agnostics. There are many noble souls who sympathize with George Eliot when she says: "I have no controversy with the faith that cries out and clings from the depths of man's need. . . . I gather a sort of strength from the certainty that there must be limits or negations in my own moral powers and life experiences which may screen from me many possibilities of blessedness for our suffering human nature." Such agnostics would not be troubled if the faith of childhood were nourished and strengthened by hymn and prayer and holy word; nor, as scholars, would they undervalue the worth of some acquaintance with the literature of the Bible. Undoubtedly there is a small fraction of unbelievers who have no more sweetness than light, and who are belligerent in their attitude toward religion. This class, having men in it ready with voice and pen, make more noise than their number warrants. They are implacable; and as to them, if they have children, society has only to determine whether it will insist on its right to give them religious training while in the public school, or whether, for the sake of peace, it will allow the parent to keep them at home during religious exercises. But if some must lose their benefit, this surely is no reason why all should.

And now as to the Roman Catholics. It may at least be said that they would have no new grievance. More than that, I think many would feel that there was a distinct gain in removing from the schools the reproach of being "godless." I realize that the Catholics are a large class of our fellow-citizens, and that they are sensitive as to all matters affecting the religious belief of their children. The state should in good faith undertake, in the manner and to the extent I have indi-