

"ship." The result is that the very country in which this order of men started their first school (Germany) had to expel them in the name of liberty and good government; aye, and even in Catholic France that fiery fiend of freedom, Leon Gambetta, had to give them notice to quit. Legislators of New Zealand, beware! and let experience teach you wisdom. Nor does it come with good grace from Bishop Hadfield, as the colonial representative of the Church of England. So inefficiently did this church employ its vast wealth—the richest corporation in the world!—in the education of the people during three hundred years, that the Education Act of 1870 had to be passed to make public provision for what it had so long neglected to accomplish. And as to the Rev. Mr. Bavin, who spoke as the President of the Wesleyan Church in this colony, he but represented a very harmless sect in the matter of education—

"Who never did a foolish thing
Because they never did a wise one."

This gentleman, however, gave his views before the committee in a far more liberal and well-intentioned manner than either of the other clerics. But if the Wesleyans only desire what the Rev. Mr. Bavin urged, then there is no earthly reason why they should not avail themselves of present opportunities. It is very evident that if the Education Act becomes altered to the desires of these clerics, we shall then suffer all the evils of sectarian strife, which is such a drawback to the efficient working of the School Board system in England.

Y.

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

One of the most singular changes in theological opinion is taking place in the Church of England itself, with a rapidity which must seriously endanger her pretensions to be considered an authoritative guide as to the meaning of that supernaturally inspired book, which is the basis of the Christian religion. If there was one doctrine which more than any other has always been held to be part and parcel of the Christian faith, it is that of the doctrine of eternal punishment. As lately as 1864, the Archbishop of Canterbury stated in his Pastoral Letter dealing with the celebrated Privy Council judgment in the case of "Essays and Reviews," that "the conclusions at which I arrived on the subject of the charge against Mr. Wilson relating to the everlasting punishment of the wicked did not result from any doubt in my mind as to the doctrine of the Church of England upon this point. This doctrine I consider to be clearly indicated in the Communion Service, the Burial Service, the Apostles Creed, and the Athanasian Creed; to the effect that the reward of the righteous is everlasting life, and the punishment of the wicked everlasting death; nor do I conceive that the Church has any more sure warrant for belief in the eternal happiness of the saved than it has for belief in the eternal suffering of the lost." Yet, at least a year before this official utterance of the mind of the Church of England upon this momentous question, Canon Farrar had "indicated" in the article "Hell" in "Smith's Dictionary of the Bible" that he held a totally contrary opinion, and in 1876 preached in Westminster Abbey his five famous sermons subsequently published with notes in a book called "Eternal Hope." Perhaps the most remarkable feature connected with this subject is, that not only has Canon Farrar incurred no penalties for his boldness, but that intellectual and cultivated as well as fashionable audiences whom he addressed, accepted his views calmly and without surprise, a sufficient proof of the direction in which the lay mind at least had been travelling. In 1878 no less than fourteen learned and reverend gentlemen of whom several were doctors of divinity, discussed the question in the 'Contemporary Review' with the result that no two of them thought precisely alike as to the exact meaning of the "inspired record," while on the main question their opinions were about equally divided. The fact is that the truth of the doctrine of eternal punishment cannot be decided by minute scholarship at all. The application of this sort of criticism to the Bible is merely playing the

theological game according to rule. When we have arrived at the precise meaning of the Hebrew word *Sheol*, with its equivalents *Inferi* and *Hades*, when erudition has done its best to prove that every text bearing on this subject, conveyed a very different meaning to St. Augustin or to Calvin, to that which it conveys to a modern Englishman, we have at the most formed some vague idea of what men's opinions were in a state of civilization different from our own. From the heart of things we are as far removed as ever. To us the important question is not what men think but what actually is. Modern science and modern morality stand aghast at the picture presented by a theology derived from barbarous times, showing the merciless tyrant of the universe condemning the vast majority of mankind to endless torments. Even our professional theologians are at length forced by the modern spirit to "read between the lines," for natural selection controls belief as much as it does animal and vegetable life. Beliefs incompatible with existing knowledge die out, and the "survival of the fittest" obtains no less in the moral than in the physical world. Just as Mr. Lecky argues, that the belief in witchcraft disappeared, not so much because the evidence on which it rested was proved to be false, as because other beliefs had taken its place, so is the belief in eternal punishment disappearing in a similar manner and from similar causes. How the doctrine of the Atonement can survive the doctrine of eternal punishment would puzzle even those ingenious scholars who, in the Revised Version of the New Testament, have evaded so many difficulties by substituting Hades for Hell.

R. P.

RELIGION STATISTICS.

The following from Whitaker's Almanack is the estimated numbers of religious denominations amongst English-speaking communities throughout the world:—

Episcopalians	20,000,000
Methodists of all descriptions	15,000,000
Roman Catholics	14,000,000
Presbyterians of all descriptions	10,250,000
Baptists of all descriptions	8,000,000
Congregationalists	6,000,000
Unitarians	1,000,000
Freethinkers	1,000,000
Minor Religious Sects	1,750,000
Of no particular Religion	8,500,000

English-speaking population 85,500,000

MODERN MIRACLES.

The Catholics have a Holy Shrine at Caravaggio, the church of which has been visited this year by more than one hundred thousand pilgrims. The Virgin Mary appears there. An eye-witness, writing to the London Court Journal, says:—

"Each day, at noon, the vision of the Virgin Mary rises from a dark recess behind one of the pillars of the aisle, and the struggles of the thousands of eager devotees to catch a glimpse of the holy apparition are most extraordinary. The shrieks and screams of the victims who are thrown down and trampled on amid the confusion are appalling. Those who cannot approach near enough to the shrine, throw handfuls of copper coin against the iron grating which encloses it, and the shock of the metallic sound amid the deep, monotonous intoning of the priests, seems to produce a kind of frenzy in some of the visitors, who rush wildly about, shrieking, and tearing their hair, and without mercy treading on the limbs of the paralytic patients outstretched upon the pavement. The simple village church, which, in ordinary times, is considered full to overflowing when only containing a few hundreds, is made at this festival to hold not less than ten thousand individuals, who, although suffocating, perspiring, trembling beneath the heat and vapor, yet find strength enough to 'howl' forth their invocations. * * *

"It was curious to observe the sudden excitement of the people on the Piazza Maggiore each time the long, dismal howling of the pilgrims within the church announced the appearance of the misty vapor that arises within the shrine just before the appearance of the Virgin Mary. In an instant all the people fall to the ground, and shriek forth the litany composed for the occasion. The crippled patients flit back upon the stones, the mugs and drinking vessels are left to float upon the surface of the fountain, and then a few moments' silence succeeds the din, and all is calm again."

Comment would be superfluous.

We are pleased to learn that arrangements are likely to be made for the establishment of a Freethought Association in New Plymouth on the basis of the Wanganui one.