

property, and in this and other ways to put on the requisite political pressure to attain the object in view. There is another reason that occurs to us why property of this kind should be taxed. It nearly always happens that the property increases so much in value in the course of time that the Church is tempted to sell, and is thus enabled to amass wealth by a purely commercial transaction. Bills are frequently brought into the legislature to enable sites of churches to be sold, when no questions are asked if all the parties are agreed. Indeed it can hardly be denied that Church property is simply corporate property held on commercial principles and dealt with for the benefit of the corporation. The justice of taxing the article therefore appears to be maintainable.

The Premier has been imitating slightly the Oracle of Delphi on the subject of Education. He suggested a number of to him impracticable reforms or changes, but his object in pursuing this line of observation is not distinct. So far as we follow his oracular speech, we suppose the speaker to have meant that economy will be promoted in the only practical way by the adoption of a denominational system in towns. On one point the oracle was clear: the Premier is a denominationalist, expressing, however, only his own personal views on the question. But it must not be imagined that the town denominationalist is different from the denominationalist proper; the fact being that denominationalism is impossible in the country districts. We are led to the conclusion that the Sectarians want to control education where there is no trouble, but would throw the expense and responsibility of providing educational wants in the outlying districts on the Government. The Premier may now be accepted as the leader of the denominationalist party. So astute and cautious a politician must have supposed that the party was gaining in strength and would shortly be in the ascendant, or he would hardly have ventured to declare his opinions with so little reserve. It would be well that Freethinkers remember to ask some questions of candidates at the next election as to their opinions about denominationalism. They cannot afford to sleep when the First Minister of the Crown has expressed his hostility to the fundamental principle of the educational system.

Bishop Nevill has been preaching in Dunedin a series of sermons on questions of the day; the subject of the one before us, as reported in the 'Morning Herald,' being "Belief in Nature Examined." The title is somewhat curious, but is explained in the following terms:—"I mean to test the value as far as I can of "that trust or confidence in the physical universe with "its phenomena which we are so constantly exhorted to "maintain as preferable to a similar trust or confidence "in God." There is an assumption here without proof and gratuitous. The Atheist does not say he trusts in Nature. On the contrary he admits its imperfection and even argues from this against the existence of a Creator. The Bishop consequently does not state the Atheist's position, nor the Pantheist's. Referring to two "terms" in the physical universe, matter and force, the result of the ultimate analysis, Bishop Nevill asks:—"are they self-existent or originated?" To the question he replies with a happy sententious confidence as follows:—"If you say the latter, then there remains "a God to believe in; but if the former then you "substitute for the action of an intelligent being the

"operation of blind force." But as there is no evidence at all of an origin of matter or force, there is no evidence of the existence of a God. On the other hand the doctrine of the conservation of energy leads to the conclusion that matter and force never had an origin. The second alternative the Bishop uses to transfix the Atheist on the other horn of the dilemma. But there is no necessity to imagine a "blind force," that is, a force incapable of producing in matter all the forms of Nature. The force and matter had only to contain, not any form of intelligence, but the potentialities which produce Nature in all her forms. Of the essence of matter and force it is admitted we know nothing, as we can only realise phenomena, and until Bishop Nevill can give a complete definition of the terms, his predicate of a *tertium quid* or "God" is illogical. He says again—"carried up to the last analysis, you have not and "cannot have any real, absolute knowledge of Nature "at all, and therefore you cannot predicate anything "about her or about yourself as part of her." This is simply nonsense, for it might be predicated that Bishop Nevill (a part of Nature) could have no absolute knowledge of the thing which he predicated was undeserving of trust and confidence!

The Bishop, after his proof that nature was originated by God, proceeds to show that Nature is not to be trusted, and gives conclusive reasons unconsciously for a distrust of God its creator, at the same time. He asks questions and supplies the answers:—"Then is "she (Nature) always kind, always beneficent? Here "a swollen river sweeps away the villages along its "banks, making men homeless, children fatherless, "wives widows. Here brave mariners have struggled "with ocean billows through days and nights of howling "storms, only to be engulfed at last. There over the "dreary plain the scorching sun has pitilessly dried up "every pool, absorbed every drop of moisture, and men "and beast glare upon each other, drink blood, and "die. The relentless hurricane devastates half a "continent, or the awful cataclysm, amid fierce "thunderings and hellish glares, and darkness that may "be felt, swallows up a 100,000 fathers and mothers, "and leaves, perhaps, their babes to die, unless—" "strange comparison!—the tidal wave should come "and carry them away." Yet this God is supposed to have made this very Nature that engulphs "brave mariners!" The moral question may well be asked, Can we trust a Deity any more than Nature that is so merciless in his creations or originations? If a being endowed with the attributes of Bishop Nevill's God creates a machine which "swallows up 100,000 fathers and mothers, and leaves perhaps the babes to die," the moral responsibility attaches to the God and not to the machine. And just in proportion to the weight of the Bishop's argument, is the guilt of his Deity. For the same reason that an Atheist does not trust Nature, he could not believe in a God who is alleged to have made it so morally and physically imperfect. The Bishop's diatribe against Nature is really an indictment against its supposed author.

A London Artizan, in the 'Fortnightly Review' for January, concludes an article on "The Wives and Mothers of the Working Classes," in these words:—"Depend upon it, no cobbler enjoys making a good shoe as much as the cobbler whose friends in his leisure hours are Shakspeare and Milton; and no woman is likely to scrub a floor the worse or darn a stocking less neatly for having learned to love George Eliot and Longfellow."