

Scripture Text-Book in Schools.

On Sunday evening, December 8th, the Rev W. Morley, at the request of the Committee of the Canterbury Association, preached on the above subject at the St. Albans Wesleyan Church. The text chosen was Isaiah xxxiii. 6—"Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times and strength of salvation." In this passage, said the reverend gentleman, the prophet enunciated a truth of permanent importance and of universal application. Put into modern phrase it might be read thus: "The permanent well-being of a community or a State can only be secured by the freest diffusion of knowledge among the people, and by allowing the fullest liberty." It was pointed out that attempts had been made to build up stable governments regardless of this—sometimes by force, at others by recognition of natural boundaries or race affinities. But again and again they had failed. Instances were given. On the other hand, in Great Britain and the United States of America, however imperfect they still were, the recognition of this principle had been attended with the happiest results. Attention was drawn to the scriptural use of the term "wisdom" as involving acknowledgment of God's Being and authority, and of the supremacy of the Moral Law. The passage naturally and easily, the preacher judged, led him to speak of "The Use of the Scripture Text-Book in our Public Schools." Putting this first on the lowest ground, he advocated it because it was impossible for a man to appreciate, or even understand, our English literature without an acquaintance with the Bible. Our greatest writers were familiar with it, frequently alluded thereto, and often used its very phrases. Many names might be mentioned, but four would suffice—Milton, Shakespeare. Tennyson, Dickens. Working in different fields for diverse objects, all showed their close acquaintance with Bible incidents, and in various ways enforced its lessons. If we wished our youth to be thoroughly educated, surely they should have the material that would help to understand the allusions in their writings. Further, the Bible, as a collection of Books, is the most wonderful and striking we have, and claims on that account an attentive study. Within a compact volume you have sixty-six different volumes, by writers of various conditions, education, and habits of thought, and written at intervals which stretch in all over some 1,500 years. Yet there is in the Book a wonderful unity. According to all competent observers, there is the most closely condensed history, and some of the noblest poetry, pathos, and stirring description to be found anywhere. Through it all there runs a tendency and force "that makes for righteousness." Why forbid the children in our

schools the privilege of access to such a storehouse? Taking higher ground, the Bible ought to be studied as disclosing the only solid and stable foundation of morals. Other supposed bases, such as utilitarianism, custom, and an uneducated conscience were shown to be imperfect and varying as to standard, lacking in adequate sanction, and unable to stand the stress of selfishness and passion. Hooker had defined education as "the means by which the faculty of reason is made the sooner and the better to judge rightly between truth and error, good and evil." The Bible helped to this as no other book could. Yet, again, the Bible revealed to us our relationship to God and the future. If the second table of the Moral Law, telling of our duty to man, was acknowledged to be of the highest value, surely the first, which declares our duty to God, is equally important. Our personal and individual responsibility to God, the doctrine that present acts inevitably entailed future consequences, and that it was in our power to choose good and refuse evil, which are clearly taught therein, have to do with our happiness and usefulness here, and with our relations as citizens, as well as with our eternal existence. Hence it should not be placed under a ban. Against the objections likely to be urged, it was pointed out that no violence was done to any man's convictions when, by the proposed Bill, a conscience clause was provided both for teachers and children. That the Scripture Text Book only contained portions of the Bible was true, but just as in our private reading we selected those portions most likely to be profitable, the same method had been adopted here. No hardship could be pleaded, even by Roman Catholics, as the Text Books had been approved by prelates of that Church, and they had been used in the National Schools of Ireland (of all denominations) for many years. The preacher urged, in view of the whole subject, and that in England the policy of a "purely secular education" propounded in Birmingham twenty-five years since had completely broken down, that it should be thoughtfully considered by all householders and parents, and as an overwhelming majority valued the Bible for themselves, so they would vote that in the Public schools it should no longer be proscribed, but its facts and moral teachings be given from these Text Books.

THE notorious Jane Cakebread, who has just served her two hundred and seventy-eighth conviction for drunkenness, is to go to the B.W.T.A. Inebriate Home, in Surrey, through the efforts of Lady Henry Somerset, who personally visited the unfortunate woman. By this action the B.W.T.A. is doing a work which the government should long since have done.