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## Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

A NEW  
MESSIAH.

COME, now, this is interesting! Mr. Gladstone, it would seem, has indirectly founded a new religion. If he has not exactly, like Jupiter, produced from his head a goddess, full grown and fully armed, it fact, has become more capacious of late years. From it, there is reason to believe, has issued Mrs. Humphrey Ward in the character of a prophetess, or a female Messiah. Had it not been for Mr. Gladstone's criticism, "Robert Elsmere," Mrs. Humphrey Ward's book, would in all probability have fallen flat upon the world. It would have been found dull, as, indeed, notwithstanding Mr. Gladstone's criticism, competent judges have pronounced it—judges, too, by no means scandalised at its infidel tone, as, for example, Mr. Labouchere. As things are, however, Mrs. Humphrey Ward has been exalted to the skies, and will celebrate her apotheosis in a becoming manner. And yet the female founders of creeds have not been very happy in their success. Johanna Southcote has passed away almost completely into oblivion. Mrs. Gerling, the foundress of the Shakers but a few years ago, is hardly any longer remembered among us. Would it were lawful to wish Mrs. Humphrey Ward a better fate, for would she were about to do something to deserve such. What it is Mrs. Ward is about to do it is not easy very clearly to explain. But there is the foundress's own definition of it:—"To provide a fresh rallying point and enlarged means of common religious action for all those to whom Christianity, whether by inheritance or process of thought has become a system of practical conduct based on faith in God, and on the inspiring memory of a great teacher rather than a system of dogma based on a unique revelation." But this jargon by which it is sought to bring Christ into contempt under the pretence of honouring Him, seems to us in some measure akin to the expression of reverence made towards Him by the Roman Emperor, who, as some historians say, erected His statue among those of heathen gods—Christ was more honoured by the persecuting Cæsars. There is more honesty and less insult in open blasphemy than in this milk and water profanity—"made easy for small minds," as Charles Kingsley's Irish curate says of Puseyism and "Popery." Take, for example, the open blasphemy of Giordano Bruno, the reformer whose statue was erected in Rome the other day by the united Freemasons of the world. "Christ was not God," he says among the rest; "He was a great magician, and having deluded men he was justly hanged, not crucified." Even this imagination of the great magician who deluded men is a finer one than that which lies at the bottom of Mrs. Humphrey Ward's absurd ambition.—But the world no longer believes in magicians, and Christ, stripped of His divinity, cannot attain even to such dimensions. We have to see, then, how Mrs. Humphrey Ward's institution, "Hall," Lyceum, or whatever it may be, will replace as a "rallying point" Mount Calvary, where a Divine Saviour dies to become for the world an ever-living presence; to prove by His ever-present influence that, as one who justly boasted that he knew men declared, He is no man, as those who are men only are men. Mrs. Humphrey Ward, therefore, comes forward in the light reflected on her by a novel, made popular, or rather, perhaps, fashionable, by a powerful criticism, to rally the world in favour of a Christianity that has lost everything deserving for it the name. We shall see how the world will relish or profit by the mess of savourless salt she sets before it.

THE Rev. Minot J. Savage, a well known Unitarian WELL AGREED Minister of the United States, in an article published by him in a recent number of the *Arena* admits the gross injustice of imposing upon a Catholic people schools which, like those of the States, are strongly tainted by Puritanism. "What, then," he says, "is the complaint of the earnest Catholic? The first place it is this—That his children in the public schools are subjected to the teaching of a religion which he not only does not believe, but that threatens their souls with eternal ruin. Now

we must give the Catholic the credit of being sincere and in earnest. In that case, then, there is, from this point of view, no more intolerable tyranny on earth to-day than that which is manifested in the management of our public schools. The grievances which led to the rebellion of the colonies against King George were insignificant in the comparison. Any mere question of earthly politics is as nothing. Were I a Catholic, and did I believe as any honest Catholic must, I would resist such oppression by every means in my power. And if I could not change the school policy of the country, I would pay taxes in its support only on compulsion and under constantly reiterated protest. The position of the Catholic here is impregnable. His cause is that of simple justice. And so long as the friends of the public school allow one just cause of complaint to remain, they are playing into the hands of its enemies. For the foundations of any institution are insecure so long as the cry of injustice is beating against its walls. Let all the real friends of free education labour, then, without rest until all fair cause of complaint is taken away." What Mr. Savage does not see, meantime, is the fact that his argument, a just and true one, applies quite as strongly to purely secular schools, as to those coloured by Puritan teaching or prejudices. It is surely as great a sin to starve a man to death as to kill him with slow poison. Fully extended, what Mr. Savage says deserves the attention of those who anywhere oppose the concession of justice to Catholics.

IT is a rule that when any case is *sub judice* AT IT AGAIN. journalists and publicists generally should refrain from commenting on it. Indeed, if we understand the law aright, they are liable to punishment for contempt of court if they do not do so. We admit, however, that at the distance of these colonies from the old country some relaxation may be legitimate. No opinion published here is likely to affect the course of justice at Home. Hence, for our own part, we did not think it unbecoming to comment pretty freely on the evidence given before the late Parnell Commission. Even here, nevertheless, some measure should also be observed, and it can hardly be claimed as fair or proper to make an attempt to create prejudice and stir up adverse feeling. Yet this is what the cable agency is evidently doing in reference to the divorce case in which Mr. Parnell is concerned. The messages forwarded are clearly framed with the intention of impressing the colonies with the conviction of Mr. Parnell's guilt, and of holding him up to execration as an impostor unveiled. We are given to understand, for example, that his party have withdrawn their leadership from his hands and placed it in those of Mr. Dillon. Following hot upon this preparatory message again comes one to the effect that Captain O'Shea has been offered a bribe to withdraw from the prosecution, so that disgraceful details may not be brought forward. What is all this, we would ask, but to prejudice the case and, in advance, to condemn Mr. Parnell as guilty? It is plainly a breach of the rule, for which there is no excuse. We do not venture to predict what the results of the trial will be, nor, were we within hearing of the court, should we presume to offer any comment on the matter. Under the circumstances in which we find ourselves, nevertheless, we may say without impropriety that nothing would astonish us more than Mr. Parnell's conviction. How Captain O'Shea has been influenced to take these proceedings it would not be right for us to inquire. The trial will take place, and all, no doubt, will be brought to light, and then it will be legitimate to express even strong opinions. But, for the moment, notwithstanding reports of many kinds, we are bound to receive it as the fact that Captain O'Shea looks upon himself as an injured man, and acts sincerely. Mr. Parnell's whole life, meantime, seems completely out of keeping with the accusation brought against him. A self-restrained, cautious man giving himself up entirely to the interests of a great public cause, should certainly be the last whom those possessing any knowledge of human nature could suspect as likely to become entangled in a matter of the kind alluded to. Knowing, moreover, as he must have known, that with the exposure which was, sooner or later, inevitable, his career as a Statesman must terminate—for it is only in the House of Lords that these exposures entail no ruinous consequences—he would necessarily have been doubly on his guard. But in addition to all this the accusation now brought against him is only consistent with what has gone before. He has just come out fully