

BOOK REVIEW.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE. By WILLIAM A. PURRINGTON. New York :
E. B. Treat & Co. 1900.

One of the most interesting books we have ever read has recently been issued by Treat & Co., of New York. It is Mr. Purrington's "Exposition" of "Christian Science," with the sub-title of "A Plea for Children and Other Helpless Sick." Before considering this collection of essays let us ascertain what is meant by Christian Science, using for data the quotations given in the "Exposition." It appears then that Mrs. Eddy's "Science" is based on the threadbare philosophical theory that nothing exists but mind. This is her statement of this familiar and impractical idea: "Disease is an impression originating in the unconscious mortal mind, and becoming at length a conscious belief that the body or matter suffers, . . . a growth of illusion springing from a seed of thought, either your own thought or another's.*" Acting upon this idealistic theory, her treatment of disease is as follows (we quote Mr. Purrington)†: "First of all, buy Mrs. Eddy's books and have the patient do so . . . Next, deny that there is any disease, and make the patient agree with you. 'Remember that all is mind and there is no matter. You are only seeing or feeling a belief, whether it be cancer, deformity, consumption, or fracture that you deal with.'‡ Having thus established that the disease does not exist, you next proceed to 'meet the incipient stage of disease with such powerful eloquence as a Congressman would employ to defeat the passage of an inhuman law'§ Further, 'If you only address the disease mentally and speak the truth to it, 'tumors, ulcers, tubercles, inflammation, pains and deformed backs . . . all dream shadows, dark images of mortal thought, will flee before the light.'|| This then appears to be the kernel of the so-called "Christian Science." How reverent its Christianity is, will appear from this quotation from the high-priestess' "Miscellaneous Writings" at pp. 51, 52: "'Are both prayer and drugs necessary to heal?' says the interlocutor, and Mrs. Eddy replies: 'It is difficult to say how much one can do for himself, whose faith is divided between catnip and Christ; but not so difficult to know that if he were to serve one master he could do vastly more.'" To convince the skeptical—if possible—Mrs. Eddy has collected in her "Miscellaneous Writings," various testimonials of cures wrought under her system! The following for its unconscious humor deserves quotation.¶¶ "A dear little six-year-old boy of my acquaint-

* "Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures," p. 182.

† "Exposition," p. 21.

‡ "Science and Health," p. 297.

§ *Ib.* p. 322.

|| *Ib.* p. 301.

¶¶ "Miscellaneous Writings." p. 408.

ance was invited by his teacher, with the rest of his class in Kindergarten school, to attend a picnic one afternoon. He did not feel that he wanted to go; seemed dumpish, and, according to mortal belief, was not well; at noon, he said he wanted to go to sleep. His mother took him on her lap and began to read to him from 'Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures.' *Very soon he expressed a wish to go to the picnic and did go.*"

That any one of ordinary intelligence could believe in such a nonsensical theory as above outlined, seems scarcely credible. And even if they do, it would appear to be no one's else business. However, as Mr. Purrington points out, the case is different when this absurd system is practiced on children, and what is the same thing, on helpless sick from whom physicians are excluded. It is there that the Common Law steps in and in its great wisdom declares that the deluded fool who excludes a physician and endeavors to staunch another's severed artery by arguments such "as a Congressman would employ," is guilty of manslaughter at least. It appears, however, that in some states, under existing statutes, it is impossible to reach similar cases. Some of the medical acts do not apply since the mummery of the Scientists does not come within the statutory definition of the practice of medicine. These people also claim exemption because they are practicing religion. It is devoutly to be desired that in those jurisdictions where it is impossible under existing law to punish such people for causing the death of another, that means may be devised for that end. The practical difficulty is, of course, that such laws unwisely framed, might give room for criticism as savoring of religious persecution, and thus ensure a cheap martyrdom to the blinded zealots. However, it seems that a law making it a misdemeanor to attempt to cure for recompense without having first been passed by a board of medical examiners would cover the case to the extent of reducing the number of those who live by Christian Science.

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