

ONE of the most remarkable of modern bequests has recently been made public. Taken separately, perhaps, one or other of its provisions and peculiarities has often been paralleled before, but such a combination of them as it reveals must be of rare occurrence. Its monetary value, for example, and that is in the eyes of the devotees of mammon its most important element, is, to say the least, considerable, amounting as it does to £80,000. This sum does not all go in one direction, though it is all to be devoted to one object. It is to be divided into four parts and handed over in the proportions of £25,000, £20,000, £20,000, and £15,000, to the "Senatus Academicus" of the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and St. Andrews respectively. Adelaide is not wholly unfamiliar with the phenomenon of munificent gifts of ten and twenty thousand pounds donated to its chief seat of learning on North-terrace. In that connection the names of Sir Walter Watson Hughes and Sir Thomas Elder are happily notorious. Doubtless the managers of that institution could make good use of a few more sums of similar amount. But no such lump sum as £80,000 has as yet been devoted to the advancement of education by any of our wealthy men. No blame is attachable to them for this. Certainly none is implied in the comparison. The fact is simply as here stated. Who can foretell what bursts of generosity may distinguish the future of South Australia? She has still, as she has always had, her public-spirited men, and we have no fear that the creditable record of their doings in the past will be disgraced by that of the days to come. It should be said that the author of this handsome legacy, Lord Gifford, was until his death, which took place only a few weeks ago, one of the Lords of the Court of Session, the title by which the highest civil tribunal in Scotland has been known for over three centuries.

As to the purpose of these bequests the terms of the will itself will best explain it. A lectureship or popular chair is to be established in each

of the aforementioned cities with the view of "promoting, advancing, teaching, and diffusing the study of natural theology." That there may be no mistake as to his meaning the testator explains himself by saying that natural theology in the widest sense of the term embraces in his conception of it "the knowledge of God, the Infinite, the All, the First and only Cause, the One and the Sole Substance, the Sole Being, the Sole Reality and the Sole Existence, the knowledge of His nature and attributes, the knowledge of the relations which men and the whole universe bear to Him, the knowledge of the nature and foundation of ethics or morals, and of all obligations and duties thence arising." Whatever doubts may be thrown on the possibility of investigating a field so broad and of sounding an ocean so deep, every one can see with what rigorous precision the object of the testator has been defined. Is there any truth in the insinuation that there is a metaphysic taint in the blood of Scotchmen? It is undeniable at least that they are born with a theological bias and aptitude. And yet it would not be fair to ascribe the idiosyncracies of Lord Gifford's will to causes exclusively hereditary or national. Eccentric or old-fashioned in his notions and designs he may have been, but a mere traditionalist he was not. One of the clauses of the testamentary document gives his reasons for providing for the

teaching of such a subject. He was a man of decided and unequivocal belief. He was "deeply and firmly convinced that the true knowledge of God . . . when really felt and acted on, is the means of man's highest well-being and the security of his upward progress." It is of course beyond our province to calculate the force, appraise the value, or even test the truth of these convictions. It is enough for our present end to say that, all disparagement of the so-called obsolete science of theology to the contrary notwithstanding, here was a man of antique mould enough to profess his belief in it, and to show his faith by the work of bequeathing eighty thousand pounds for its elucidation and propagation.

The special feature of the bequest, however, in virtue of which it may well be described as one of the most remarkable of modern times, is that of the conditions that are to be observed in administering it. In that respect it not only eclipses, it as good as revolutionises the principles of ordinary religious legacies. In British, and especially in Scotch "testaments," it is a new thing, and may turn out to be the inauguration of a new era. Some seven "directions" are laid down for the guidance of the "patrons" and "administrators" of the "endowment." Two of these have to do with the investment and conservation of the money, and therefore call for no special mention, and one with the number of lectures, which is to be left to the discretion of the incumbent of the chair. The fourth and fifth "directions" come nearer the region of novelty, for they ordain—the one that the professor is to be appointed for two years only, eligible, however, for re-election till he has served a period of six years in all, and after that he is to be excluded from the list of possible candidates; the other, that the lectures be public, open not to students only, but to the "whole community without matriculation" and at a nominal fee. But it is the remaining two that are so startling in their nature. The first says—"I wish the lecturers to treat their subject as a strictly natural science. . . . without reference to or reliance upon any supposed special, exceptional or so-called miraculous revelation. I wish it

considered just as astronomy or chemistry is . . . but the lecturers shall be under no restraint whatever in their treatment of their theme." In Germany all branches of theology have long been subjected to this method of handling ; but in Scotland, and even in England, such a thing is all but unknown. The other "direction" is one more liberal still. It provides that the lecturers are to undergo no test, to take no oath, to make no declaration of belief or promise of any kind. They may be of any denomination or of none ; of any religion, or, popularly speaking, of none. They may be "so called sceptics, agnostics, or freethinkers." But the patrons are instructed to use diligence to secure that they be "able, reverent men, true thinkers, sincere lovers of and earnest enquirers after truth." There will no doubt be many a heavy heart in Scotland, and possibly in other places, too, at the propounding of a scheme to them looking so anarchical as this. For our part, like the testator himself, we believe that in the long run nothing but good can come of it. Moral truth—truth of any kind—is as indestructible as the scientific "atom." Patient examination only leads to the more complete unveiling of the lustrous face and the ineffable form of truth. But be that as it may, the preparation of such a will by a profoundly