

the British Empire is, unlike most other Empires, a power for good (we cannot stay to argue about this at present), Australia could never be more than a very junior-partner in the business, and if the Imperial bonds were made closer she would be expected to act in relation to peoples and countries which she could never hope to understand, even if England can.

The arguments of Imperialists, whether selfish, sentimental or rational, do not seem particularly cogent to frighten Australians from nationalist hopes and a nationalist policy. And if the present system is felt to be adequate for the present, and a change in the direction of further individuality is felt to be desired for the future, Australian nationalists must assert themselves against all proposals to set the Empire on a firmer basis by means of anything like a federation.

(To be concluded.)

SLIPRAIL.

## THE FREE RELIGIOUS FELLOWSHIP.

### What It Stands For.

Members of the Fellowship are not asked to give assent to any hard and fast doctrinal statement. The attempt to imprison the truth of religion in rigid form is not only futile, but harmful. The following statement is therefore merely tentative. Those who read it are asked to remember that "the letter killeth, the spirit maketh alive."

The Free Religious Fellowship stands for Freedom with Fellowship in Religion.

I. **Freedom** is incompatible with dogma; i.e., with the attempt to limit, by outward authority, that spirit of inquiry, which is itself a part of true religion. "The only infallible guardian of truth is the spirit of truthfulness." Life is the great sifter of doctrines, and the ultimate court of appeal.

Each member of the Fellowship is therefore responsible for the forms of his own religious belief only.

II. "**Fellowship** is life; the lack of fellowship is death." Religion, like all other human interests, is social, and requires for its realisation the give and take of common life. The Free Religious Fellowship, by uniting its members in the bonds of comradeship and good will, aims at strengthening them to meet the deeper problems of life.

III. **Religion** is a natural and permanent human interest, arising spontaneously from the reaction of man's spirit to his physical and spiritual environment. It can never be fully or finally expressed by any verbal statement, though every such statement may enshrine some imperishable truth. Religion constantly seeks outward expression in acts of worship and duty, but its roots lie hidden in man's nature. In its essence, religion may be described as the aspiration of the spiritual in man towards fuller communion with God, and the constant effort to live the spiritual life made possible through that communion. It is not, therefore, a mere intellectual exercise of emotional luxury, but an adventure of the soul among spiritual realities.

## CURRENT COMMENT.

In the matter of general ideas one does not nowadays look to the academies for light, nor, it must be added, sweetness. Professional culture has come out into the market-place, and its voice is not distinguishable from that of the rest of the mob. The clear and impartial analysis of ideas, which should be the business of culture, is for the moment in abeyance. We find professors writing in the newspapers, but have long ceased to be shocked by the discovery that their temper and their English are those of the surrounding columns. To be sure we have in our own University Professor Tucker, a scholar and a man of taste, who certainly does keep alive the traditions of culture. When the general public was growing hysterical about the Napoleonic qualities of Mr. Hughes, his subtle and restrained satire on the modern Demosthenes was calculated to restore our sense of proportion. This ability to keep poise and balance amid the ferment of ephemeral enthusiasms is one of the finest fruits of a classical culture.

Yet one is inclined to avoid reading a book by a Professor. "Australia," by Professor Gregory, does not sound tempting. One can imagine how our own illuminati would treat the subject. Though some of them have actually lived in the country quite a number of years, there would be a strained air of diffidence in their approach, combined with an honest determination to remember that Australia was a bright jewel in the Crown of Empire, after all. "The characteristic which always seems to me the chief distinction of Australian politics," says Professor Gregory, "is their dominant idealism. The Australian differs perhaps most strikingly from the American or Canadian by being more idealist and less romantic." It doesn't quite sound like a voice from the academies! Professor Scott, studiously compiling his history-books for schoolboys, would be puzzled by such penetrating bits of analysis, and others might even question their good taste. I have been wondering who Professor Gregory is. He surely could not have got his information from the thoughtful articles in the "Round Table."

"The word 'worsen' has, it seems, no place in the vocabulary of a journalist," wrote Mr. Maurice Blackburn in a recent letter to the "Argus." "It is none the worse for that. Approved by Milton, Johnson, De Quincey, Southey, Carlyle and Stevenson, this vigorous and simple English word need not fear the journalist's frown." One can imagine the journalist looking up these names in one of the handy books of reference to make sure of their respectability. The word "worsen" may even be accepted and take a place among the polysyllables that lumber to the leader-writer's aid when he sits down to clothe his proprietor's ideas. But it is rather light and racy for its associates. Our newspapers are written in a confused and cumbersome jargon that the authors Mr. Blackburn quotes would hardly understand, but that every office-boy recognises for dignified English. And a British Prime Minister said of a certain paper that it was written by office-boys for office-boys.