

overloaded safety valve, forgetting that if the steam had been allowed to escape sooner it would not have burst at all. Christianity is the name for the way in which men thought about their relation to unseen powers and to each other for nearly eighteen centuries of European civilisation. It was based on faith in God and devout obedience to his supposed will, both of which were to be infinitely rewarded in another state of existence. The time came when, in France at any rate, men found that gradually kings and priests, and those whose interests seemed bound up with that of king and priest, used the tremendous power which this faith gave them, not for the advantage of the mass of the people, but for their own. Against falsehood, tyranny, ignorance, and selfishness, men like Rousseau and Voltaire, appealed to truth, liberty, knowledge, and sympathy, and the old social order fell amid violence and excesses which disgraced "the revolution" but proved how corrupt had been the antecedent conditions. In no small degree, thanks to the spiritual revolution then created, whose effects are far wider spread and more permanent than the historical one, there is every probability that such social and political changes as may be due to modern freethought will be in no way revolutionary, but will recognise the scientific truth, that permanent progress can only arise from the development of order.

It is suggestive, and ought to shake people's faith in the conservative value of the so-called religious sanctions, that Mr Henry George's unjust and revolutionary proposal to nationalise the land by what is virtually the confiscation of the property of land owners, is largely due to his conviction that "the Almighty, who created the earth and man for the earth, has entailed it upon all generations of the children of men," hence, "though his titles have been acquiesced in by generation after generation, to the landed estates of the Duke of Westminster, the poorest child that is born in London to-day has as much right as his eldest son." In his later book, "Social Problems," there are not wanting indications that Mr. George is prepared to attack other forms of property on similar grounds, and to advocate breaches of public faith on the highest religious principles. In short, it is just as easy to preach the divine right of robbery now to sympathising audiences as it was formerly to preach the divine right of kings. It is perhaps more than a coincidence that Rousseau, who was the most directly revolutionary of the literary precursors of the reign of terror, was also the most reactionary force in religion.

THE POET.

He is a poet who lays stone to stone,
As well as he who builds the lofty rhyme.
We have stone poems dating from the prime
Of Athens, and three thousand years have flown
Without the ivy of oblivion
Loosing one fragment of the pile sublime,
Reared on Troy's ashes in the eldertime
By the blind islander. The Parthenon
And Had are ideas like in kind,
But differently expressed. It matters not
What the material moulded to the mind
If the result matches the artist's thought.
One builds a stately pleasure house in rhyme,
Another builds a poem in stone and lime.

DOUGLAS B. W. SLADEN.

—Melbourne Leader.

To endeavor to work upon the vulgar with fine sense is like attempting to hew blocks of marble with a razor.

An able man shows his spirit by gentleness and resolute actions; he is neither hot nor timid. — Chesterfield.

Passing Notes.

We have received a note from Mr. Pratt, in Melbourne at the time of writing. Mr. Pratt intended leaving for England by the Liguria on the 16th May.

In one of the essays of "George Eliot" lately collected and published, the author deals with the habit of "unscrupulousness of statement" which pulpit oratory is apt to encourage. Perhaps it is safer (says the Melbourne Argus) to extend the generalisation a little further, and to say that this unscrupulousness is a besetting sin of the oratory addressed to the public in any way which exempts it from criticism and contradiction.

The 'Liberal' contains a verbatim report of a discussion in Sydney, between Mr. Robert White and Mr. Thomas Walker, on the Question: "That Theism is superior to Atheism in meeting the intellectual and moral requirements of mankind." Mr. White affirmative and Mr. Walker negative. The debate is a very able one. Our opinion is, and it may be taken for what it is worth, that Mr. Walker shows much greater power than his opponent. Perhaps he has the stronger case.

Mr. Joseph Symes, feeling the want of a Freethought paper in Melbourne for helping forward the movement, has succeeded in floating a Company with a capital of £500, for the purpose of starting a weekly paper to be called the Liberator, of which he will be editor and sole manager. Judging by his former contributions to the London 'Freethinker' it will probably be run on the same lines. The first number was to have been issued early in May. We wish our contemporary the success it is certain to obtain in Mr. Symes's hands.

Mr. Bradlaugh's present Parliamentary position is that he is being sued by the Government for penalties for voting. His answer is that he is not answerable under the statute, meaning that he has taken the oath and complied with the conditions required to make him a perfect member of Parliament. A dictum of Mr. Justice Stephen's favors Mr. Bradlaugh's contention. If Mr. Bradlaugh should win he will only be kept from exercising his privileges by brute force. If he should lose the penalties will be paid, and his appeal to the constituencies will not be weakened. The penalties sued for amount to £2500.

Charles Bradlaugh, seen through the French eyes of M. Philippi, of 'Les Temps,' is "the genius of cavil personified, with the muscle of a tiger, crouched down in the jungle of the most tangled legislation of the world; perpetually occupied, not with extricating the spirit of the law, but with trying to discover its weaknesses." [This is a good illustration of that Gallic wit that sacrifices truth for the sake of the sentence. Looked at seriously, M. Philippi's disordered fancy yields nothing better than a gross caricature of a man whose motives and actions are beyond the sketcher's comprehension.]

Mr. Bradlaugh, in a public letter addressed to Sir Stafford Northcote, denounces the conduct of the right hon. gentleman in vigorous and dignified terms. The moving of the resolution in the House of Commons, which excludes Mr. Bradlaugh from the precincts of the house, is described as mean, spiteful, and unworthy of an English gentleman. Sir Stafford Northcote and those who have acted with him are declared to have brought Parliamentary Government into contempt by upholding the House of Commons as "the chief law-breaking assembly of the world." "You have," he writes, "won sympathy for me throughout the land; you have made Northampton stand by me closer than ever; you are now awakening the country to stand by Northampton." Mr. Justice Stephen, when dismissing the suit which Mr. Bradlaugh had instituted against the Sergeant-At-Arms advised that an appeal should be made to the constituencies. Mr. Bradlaugh tells Sir Stafford Northcote that he intends to make that appeal. "Already," he concludes, "I hear it, too, on the day when, from my place in the House, I move.—That all the resolutions respecting Charles Bradlaugh, member for Northampton, hindering him from obeying the law, and punishing him for having obeyed the law, be expunged from the Journals of this House, as being subversive of the rights of the whole body of electors of this kingdom."