

## ZOLA'S TRIAL.

BY G. W. FOOTE, EDITOR "FREETHINKER."

ONE of the greatest judicial farces on record has come to an end, and Zola has been found guilty of libel. The jury's verdict was unanimous, and the judge sentenced the defendant to twelve months' imprisonment—the maximum allowed by the law—besides ordering him to pay a considerable fine and the costs of the prosecution. This lovely judgment was fiercely acclaimed by the mob in court, as well as by the vast mob outside. The Army was vindicated, and the man of letters taught his proper place. The said man of letters, however, by no means bows to the decision. "They must be cannibals!" he exclaimed as the verdict of "Guilty" was delivered. It is not quite clear whether he referred to the jury or to the howling mob. At any rate, the exclamation recalls Voltaire's *mot* about the Paris mob—half tiger and half ape.

We have called Zola's trial a farce, although it has a tragic aspect. He was prosecuted for libel, and mainly for insulting the Army; and day after day his virtual prosecutors swore to their own innocence, while he was not allowed to ask them a single question that might prove their guilt. They were also allowed to harangue the jury about "the traitor Dreyfus," but when it came to details they pleaded reasons of State for their silence. Esterhazy himself turned his back to Zola's counsel for an hour and a half while questions were put to him, declining to give a single answer, and the judge supported him in this contumacy. General de Boisdeffre plainly told the jury that the safety of France depended on their finding Zola guilty; if they did not, he intimated that the General Staff would resign, and as war might come very soon, much sooner than many people suspected, Frenchmen would be led like sheep to the slaughter. This miserable, this infamous appeal to the craven instincts of the crowd was allowed to pass, and the glamor of his many victories; but the latest phase of militarism in France is simply and utterly contemptible.

In the background of all this sorry performance stands the sinister figure of the Church. The leaders of the anti-Jewish agitation in France are Catholics, and the length to which it has been carried may be seen in the general belief that if Zola had been acquitted there would have been something like a massacre of Jews in Paris. The Catholic Church has always hated the Jews. They will not have more than one God, which is a standing affront to those who have three; they persist in rejecting Jesus Christ; and on the top of all this obstinacy they persist in being a little more, instead of less, moral than their Christian fellow-citizens. For centuries the Catholic Church compelled Jews to traffic and lend money. Everything else was forbidden them. And now, when a Gentile is after a bargain, and finds a Jew in front of him, instead of cursing the bigotry