

interference of churchmen in civil affairs where they have no business—but it was anti-catholic and even anti-christian. These Parliaments suppressed religious orders and confiscated their property, they denounced the Concordat with the Pope, sent back his ambassador, and finally confiscated the Church property, all which was anti-catholic. But they also favoured and occasionally enforced methods of education which regarded the mention of God in schools as a breach of 'neutrality'; in 1902 the Premier Combes was hooted down by his majority for saying that he believed in the soul, and he had to explain and practically apologize for his words. This, no doubt, showed a hostility to Christianity obviously born of the philosophy of Taine and Renan.

In the second place, it is also impossible to deny that many people scattered all over the world regarded France as a decaying nation, and Paris as a centre of corruption. Allusions to this belief were frequent in the press of most countries. How did this notion come to be spread about to that extent? It was owing largely, no doubt, to the existence in Paris of scandalous places of amusement, *which catered mostly for foreign visitors* but which were regarded as representative. There was certainly a considerable amount of injustice or exaggeration in the notion that France was mirrored in its capital, and Paris in its worst theatres. But on the other hand, it would be futile to gainsay that the great novelist of the years 1875 to 1895 was Zola, and the great novelist of the years 1890–1905 Anatole France; and the popularity of these two men was not likely to decrease the impression left by the licentiousness I have just spoken of.

Zola was a talented, industrious man, with a curious sense of literary responsibility united to a complete