

The Church Guardian

— EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR: —

L. H. DAVIDSON, D.C.L., MONTREAL.

— ASSOCIATE EDITORS: —

REV. H. W. NYE, M.A., Rector, Bedford, P.Q. REV.
EDWYN S. W. PENTREATH, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Address Correspondence and Communications to
the Editor, P.O. Box 504. Exchanges to P.O.

Box 1950. For Business announcements

See page 14.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

SUBSCRIBERS IN ARREARS are respectfully requested to remit at their earliest convenience. The very low price at which the paper is published renders necessary a rigid enforcement of the rule of payment in advance. The label gives the date of expiration.

Will Subscribers please examine Label, and REMIT PROMPTLY!

CALENDAR FOR JULY.

JULY 5th—5th Sunday after Trinity.

" 12th—6th Sunday after Trinity.

" 19th—7th Sunday after Trinity.

" 25th—St. JAMES. A. & M.

" 26th—8th Sunday after Trinity.

THE SCEPTICS CREED.

Unlike the great body of Christian doctrine, the sceptic's creed requires to be re-written at least once in every generation. The clouds of speculation which roll across the blue sky of truth, are for ever chasing each other into obscurity, and leaving the azure without a stain. How many gospels have not been preached to the wearier centuries, each as sure as can be that it alone, and at last, enshrines all that is necessary for man to know, and yet each in turn thrown upon the dunghill by its disgusted votaries. What a standing gibe against christianity, that it is nothing but a "book-faith," and yet what has unfidelity to point to as its memorials but a crumbling mass of half-forgotten and wholly discredited objections in the moth-eaten pages of library top-shelves where the dust is ever deepening? Unbelief has no continuity. Each new objector begins by contemptuously shattering the labored piles of his predecessor, and by building amidst the ruins a new fane to fall inexorably in its turn. Toland boasted that he had "cut out such a piece of work for the Bampton lecturers as would keep them busy till doomsday:" but Toland's Deism was in a generation the bye-word and the scoff of a new school of "thinkers." The Christian Camp "lying four-square to every wind that blows," meets every attack by simply facing in its direction: but the infidel forces are compelled to change their base after every battle, and form new standpoints from which to rush upon the old position.

Still changing forms of infidelity demand altered apologetics; a fact, by the way, which the opponents of Christianity often forget, for they not unfrequently spend their strength in opposing statements of truth which were uttered merely to combat a form of error that was popular generations before their time. Celsus can be effectually answered by Tertullian, but Tertullian's defence would not avail against the infinitely subtler attacks of a Voltaire or a Strauss. Even in a few years we outgrow our armor. "The Eclipse of Faith," that marvell-

ously clever *reductio ad absurdum* which many years ago wrought such havoc among the rasher spirits of evolutionary atheisms, is beginning to lose its applicability, if not its point and pungency, and the arguments need re-writing to date.

This task has been most successfully essayed by an English Clergyman, the Rev. Nevison Loraine, Vicar of Grove Park West London, in a volume entitled, "The Sceptics Creed."* The author of this admirable work has thoroughly saturated himself with the subject upon which he writes, and out of the fulness of his knowledge he speaks with a power that is cheering in its firm conviction and self-centred strength. Few of the many books that profess to deal with modern scepticism are informed with the breadth of thought and the high-toned culture that mark every one of Mr. Loraine's chapters. There, indeed, we have a calm-eyed and courteous disputant, whose thoughts in their forceful sweep are largely their own evidence, such is the ring of conviction which marks every one of them. His theses are "Can the Creed of the Sceptic be reasonably held? Is it worth the holding?"

Here is the opening paragraph, agreement and illustration both in one: "A pathetic mission took me a short time ago to a well-known London cemetery. Passing along its central walk, a fragment of a printed page lying in the path attracted my attention, and stooping, I read in bold type: 'I know the present; of the future I know nothing; therefore I live for the present, and let the future take care of itself.' There lay the sceptic's creed, brief and defiant; there, too, in that grim setting, with a thousand monuments around, bearing their melancholy testimony to the perilous uncertainty and inevitable brevity of the life present, but witnessing also that that life in its darkest hour may find solace in the hope of the bright future."

This is how the author states the sceptic's creed: "The present I know and possess; of the future I know nothing. The things seen are plain and patent to the senses; the invisible is the unknown, and the future is the uncertain. I live, therefore, for the known present, and let the unknown future take care of itself." Now I challenge and controvert that entire position. I deny alike the proven inadequacy of Christian evidence, the destructive results of scientific research, and the hostility of the most cultured thought. Moreover, I aver that the sceptic's creed is intellectually untenable, and morally a morass."

Look on that picture, and on this: "Christianity has its sublime declarations, its noble ethical principles, its historical and internal corroborations; it is a creed confessedly loftiest in thought, purest in principle, illumined with unique splendor of immortal hope, and around it murmur Æolian airs of memory; yet how often it is bartered, an ancient birthright go for a mess of pottage; dropped to snatch at a creed that shuts out God and immortality, and shuts in life within the precarious precincts of the present—a creed of frigid negations, alike without dignity, delight, or expectation."

The basis of the current of argument which follows may be described as a re-statement of Bishop Butler's argument as to probability

the guide of action. "Has the sceptic honestly estimated the balance of probabilities involved in the grand argument for a future life? Or has he striven with earnest impartiality to balance the probabilities in favor of the Christian religion before he separated himself from its ethical control refused its revelations, and rejected its hopes?" The demonstrative evidence of the physicist is not at the command of the Christian apologist; yet the doctrine of a future life and the central truths of the Christian faith are sustained by evidences as powerful to win the assent of enlightened trust, and the homage of moral conviction.

In his disquisition on the attitude of scepticism towards miracles and mystery, Mr. Loraine is at his best. The unsubstantial sophistries of Positivism are unsparingly exposed, and then, in his concluding paper, he presents the solid reality of Bible truth to the grasp of the disappointed seeker. We have only space left for a single paragraph from a volume which we earnestly recommend both to the sincere Christian and to the man trembling on the verge of scepticism. The author is dealing with objections against the Bible: "But," says the sceptic, possibly, 'I cannot accept the theory of the inspiration of the Bible.' What theory of inspiration? The Bible itself has formulated no theory of its own inspiration. The Church has pronounced no authoritative definition of inspiration. Holy Scriptures are their own best witness. Human definitions are apt to be too strait for Divine subjects. Those who know the Bible best, who have drunk most deeply at its hidden springs, have the truest understanding of its inspiration; but they may not be able to define it. Let the earnest, honest sceptic search this sacred literature, look into it with eager and enquiring eyes, even as they who watch for the morning; and upon the horizon of his life will some day dawn a ruddier glow, the herald lights that broaden into day... I, too, have been haunted in the gloom by spectral forms of doubt, disturbing and distressing with their ghostly movement otherwise peaceful hours, and giving many a tremor to the heart, many a trouble to the mind. Even yet... I sometimes imagine that I see the arras tremble, or that I hear strange footfalls on the stair... And in the foregoing cumulative argument it has been my anxious though humble endeavor to help you to face the spectres of the mind and lay them, that at length you may find a stronger faith than your own."

THE death of the Bishop of Salisbury has deprived the Church of England of one of its brightest ornaments. The Rt. Rev. George Moberley, D.C.L., was the son of an English merchant at St. Petersburg, and was born in that city in 1802. At an early age he was sent to the famous Winchester School, from which he passed to Balliol College, Oxford, where he graduated with high honors in 1835. In 1836 he was appointed to the important position of Head Master of Winchester School, which he filled with distinguished success for the long period of thirty years. On his retirement from Winchester in 1866, Dr. Moberley was presented to the rectory of Brightstone, in the Isle of Wight. In 1870 he was appointed Canon of Chester Cathedral, and in 1876 succeeded Bishop