

DECAY IN THE BELIEF IN WITCHCRAFT.

A doctrine, the denial of which two centuries ago in New England would have been considered proof positive of infidel tendencies and a long stride towards atheism; a doctrine which the most revered divines identified with a standing or falling Bible; which was commended to favour by the almost concurrent voices of the learned of preceding Christian ages; which bishops and councils had stamped with a solemn approval; on the ground of which death had been inflicted on thousands upon thousands of men and women, especially from the thirteenth century onwards—this doctrine has now disappeared. It is alien to our consciousness. It is no longer included in the stock of religious beliefs. The first skepticism respecting it was resented and deplored by good men as an evidence of the degeneracy "of the present age,"—that had "present age" which good men in every generation have pronounced worse than any other before it. The first signs of the obsolescence of this ancient belief were observed with dismay by sincerely pious men, who rallied for the defence of the faith, and grasped the ark more tenaciously the more they saw it to be in danger. They hurled their proof-texts—"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live;" they spurned the novel interpretations which made the "witch" to be a mere juggler; they shouted, "Sadducee;" they scattered their sarcasms on the effrontery of the new lights who fancied themselves on a loftier pinnacle than the generations before them. All was in vain. The obsolescent belief soon became obsolete. The eighteenth century smiled at the credulity of the seventeenth; and the nineteenth century does the same. Witchcraft, along with faith in it, has vanished. The devils who helped their human allies to pinch and prick sleeping children, sometimes to poison cattle, and upset milk-pails, have taken their flight. Salem is quiet from the incursions out of Tartarus; it is actually, as well as nominally, a city of peace. Gradually, and yet rapidly, men came to disbelieve what they had before believed. Emancipated from the old tenet, they began to deride it as a weak superstition. Spasmodic efforts to save the decaying doctrine proved useless. Even the potent voice of Wesley fell on listless ears.—*Prof. Geo. P. Fisher in Sunday Afternoon for January.*

ANCIENT FURNITURE AND MANNERS.

Half a century ago there was among us a real respect for aged people, outside of the circle of near kinship. Boys and girls on the roadside were not ashamed to "make their manners" to their elders, who, in turn, had the politeness to return their courteous thanks for this youthful civility. That was a good symptom of the social sentiment. But the movement of the spirit of the age has left this mostly behind; and with this respectful feeling for those whose years and position entitle them to an honorable regard, has gone, to a perilous extent, the reverence of many for the authority of the parental rule, for the authority also of the State and the statute-book. It is very difficult to break down a proper habit of esteem for one object, and not involve a weakening of respect for others. It is very difficult to bring up that lad into a trusty, law-abiding citizen, who has cultivated the vice of a contemptuous disregard for his elders and his betters. Sometimes there has been a servile deference to these, which is the leaning over of a virtue to the other side. That is not our danger. Now and then a passion for the antique in the fashion, and the hunt becomes ludicrous in its eagerness after almost anything which has an ancient look and odor. That is not to be laughed at as a folly except in its excess. But if, while we are polishing up and restoring these relics of our fathers' furniture and wardrobes with so much zest, we would revive, at the same time, and re-enthroned some of their sound and righteous principles of honor to whom honor is due, our dwellings and persons would not only receive adornment, but our land would be toned up with a return of stable, healthful public sentiment much needed to allay the fever, and to purge off the impureness of our general social and civil life.—*Sunday Afternoon.*

CONSUMPTION CURED.

An old physician, retired from practice, having had placed in his hands by an East Indian missionary the formula of a simple vegetable remedy, for the speedy and permanent cure of consumption, bronchitis, catarrh, asthma, and all throat and lung affections, also a positive and radical cure for nervous debility and all nervous complaints, after having tested its wonderful curative powers in thousands of cases, has felt it his duty to make it known to his suffering fellows. Actuated by this motive, and a desire to relieve human suffering, I will send, free of charge, to all who desire it, this recipe, with full directions for preparing and using, in German, French, or English. Sent by mail by addressing with stamp, naming this paper, W. W. Sherar, 149 Power's Block, Rochester, N.Y.

JUST PUBLISHED—SENT FREE.

Complete History of Wall Street Finance, containing valuable information for investors. Address Baxter & Co., Publishers, 17 Wall Street, New York.

THE Great Council of Geneva has accepted the principle of the separation of Church and State and appointed a Commissioner to examine the bill designed to carry this project into effect.

THE trial of the Glasgow Bank directors has resulted in the conviction of Lewis Potter, of the Glasgow shipping firm of Potter, Wilson & Co., and Robert Sumner Stronach, the manager of the bank, of the offences as charged. The other directors were found guilty of uttering false abstracts of balance sheets. Robert Sumner Stronach and Lewis Potter, convicted of fraud, theft and embezzlement, were sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment. The five other directors—John Stewart, Robert Salmond, William Taylor, Henry Inglis and John Innis Wright, convicted of uttering false abstracts of balance sheets, were sentenced to eight months' imprisonment.

GLEANINGS FROM THE PRESS.

CHRISTIAN AT WORK. "Looking over any of our great congregations, one is not struck with any evidence of hard times in the appearance and dress of the people, and in going from house to house we do not observe many symptoms of poverty; but when the offering plates are handed round, there, where true Christian spirit would let the pinching appear last, it is seen first, and it remains longest."

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN: "Complaint is often made that teachers of public schools are not fit for their positions, and especially that they will not remain at work for a lifetime. A moment's thought would suggest the reason: their compensation is too small. Pay them better salaries and they will show immediate improvement. In many country places the man who has charge of the minds, morals and manners of the children is paid less than the man who feeds the sheep and drives the oxen."

GUELPH MERCURY: "We have received from the office of the *Canada Presbyterian* this handy little 'Year Book,' giving the fullest and most reliable information regarding the Presbyterian Church in Canada and Newfoundland. It is compiled by the Rev. James Cameron, of Chatsworth, who is admirably fitted for the work. In addition to the calendar and blank memoranda it supplies all needful information respecting the Colleges, Assembly, Synods, Presbyteries of the Church, giving the names and places of residence of every settled minister in the body, together with much other useful matter. It also gives some interesting details about the Presbyterian churches in the United States. To every Presbyterian who takes an interest in his church the 'Year Book' is indispensable."

LONDON CHRISTIAN WORLD: "Notwithstanding all the protests that have been uplifted against it, there can be little doubt that the next few days will see the lotto scheme for the relief of the City of Glasgow Bank shareholders fairly floated. The Rev. G. Robson, Inverness, hopes that the scheme "will be publicly reprobated by the Church of God in the land," and a Free Churchman unknown has strongly advocated the exercise of church discipline on all those who countenance the nefarious plan. Rather awkward results would ensue from the adoption of the Free Churchman's suggestion, for among the chief promoters of the lottery are to be found Sir James Watson, Dr. Anderson Kirkwood, and Sir Peter Coats, who may be regarded as fairly representing the lay element in Established, Free and United Presbyterian churches respectively."

N. Y. CHRISTIAN INTELLIGENCER: "Still we plead for honest money. Gold and silver have come back again. Now let the coins be made worth their face as nearly as possible. Years ago, before the discovery of gold and silver deposits in the Sierras, and when those metals were scarce with us, the coin of the United States was debased in order to keep it in the country. But a great change has occurred, and we are now one of the chief gold and silver producing nations in the world. We have gold and silver to sell. Let the alloy in our coins be reduced and their bullion value be raised. English sovereigns circulate everywhere. They contain 916 5 parts of gold in one thousand. Our coin has 900 parts of gold in one thousand. Why should they not be as good as the British? Cross the line and go into Canada, and our silver quarter is worth only twenty cents, the dime only eight cents. Let us make our coins as pure as possible, introducing only as much alloy as may be necessary to prevent excessive wear. Let us be honest."

NOT in great historical churches, not in elaborately organized politics, has the strength of Christianity resided, but in its power to awaken in individual hearts a sense of personal responsibility, and to place the soul alone with God. It would have been, but for this, long before now a fossil faith and a lifeless tradition.—*Christian World.*

We are like southern plants taken up to a northern climate and planted in a northern soil. They grow there, but they are always failing of their flowers. The poor exiled shrub dreams by a native longing of a splendid blossom which it has never seen, but is dimly conscious that it ought somehow to produce. It feels the flower which it has not the strength to make in the half-chilled but still genuine juices of its southern nature. That is the way in which the ideal life, the life of full completions, haunts us all. Nothing can really haunt us except what we have the beginning of, the native capacity for, however hindered, in ourselves.—*Rev. Phillips Brooks.*

In order that the pulpit may reach all classes with its influence, the preaching should be Biblical. The Bible is the only absolutely non-partisan, non-sectarian book in the world. Philosophical preaching reaches one class, rhetorical address pleases another, the hortatory method suits a third; but the pure Gospel, expounded with simplicity, beauty and force, has charms for every ear, instruction for every mind, and inspiration for every heart. This preaching will exhibit to the world, as the model life, Jesus Christ, who, by offering Himself once for all, forever abolished caste, and established a religion suited to all the wants of all classes in all ages.—*The Methodist.*

THEOLOGICAL students reason that if there be counterfeit money, their must be genuine; so, if there be infidels, there must also be Christians. If this be true of money and religion, will not the same rule apply to "put up" medicines? Do not the cheap and worthless nostrums prove that there are genuine and meritorious "put up" medicines? The great popularity of Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery has resulted in the manufacture of many *shoddy* alternative and tonic remedies, but one after another these have disappeared, the proprietors having found that, no matter how loud they advertise, success depends upon merit. In South America, as well as in this country, the Discovery is the standard remedy for the scrofulous and eruptive diseases. It acts promptly on the stomach, liver and blood, toning up, regulating and purifying the system. It speedily allays all bronchial irritation, and cures the most stubborn cough or cold in half the time required by any other remedy.

BRITISH AND FOREIGN ITEMS.

THERE are 401 Unitarian ministers in the United States. On the gold coast, Africa, last year, were baptized 330 converts.

A new Lectionary was introduced by law in the English Established church on the 1st of January.

THERE are in Great Britain, twenty-one archbishops and bishops of the Roman Catholic church, 2,175 priests, and 1,386 churches.

REV. R. S. STONE, D.D., is to give eight lectures on Bernard of Clairvaux, at Princeton Theological Seminary School.

THE sheep farmers in Scotland estimate their loss by this winter's storms at more than one hundred thousand head of sheep.

THE fact that there was no death sentence pronounced in Ireland during the year past is very creditable to the people of the Emerald Isle.

It is said that a steamer has been chartered in London to take Henry M. Stanley and party to Zanzibar for another exploring expedition in Africa.

THE American Presbyterian church reports for last year thirty-seven synods, 178 presbyteries, 5,232 ministers and licentiates, 5,269 churches, 567,855 members.

A commercial collapse is imminent in Sweden. Further failures are daily expected, and thousands of persons have been thrown out of employment.

A manufactory of paper bricks has been opened in Wisconsin. The bricks are said to be exceedingly durable and moisture proof. They are also larger than the clay bricks.

ADVICES from Yeddo, it is telegraphed from St. Petersburg, state that the Japanese are apprehensive that the Russians intend to annex Yesso, one of the largest islands of the empire.

THE Liberal party of Belgium supports a scheme for an exclusive secular education by the State. And the Roman Catholic Bishops are out in a joint pastoral letter denouncing such a scheme.

"George Arthur," the little boy who in "Tom Brown's Schooldays," showed his colours by saying his prayers in spite of the jibes of his companions, has become Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Dean of Westminster.

FATHER HACINTHE desires a recognition of the old Catholics in France by the Church of England. The Archbishop of Canterbury is disposed to grant his request, but wants further information.

THE General Assembly of the Presbyterian church of Victoria, Australia, has recently been in session in Melbourne. The congregations were reported at 125, with twenty-five unattached ministers.

THE prime minister of England is a Jew, not in religion, but in race; in Catholic France the most important departments of the government are under the control of Protestants; in Turkey the Minister of Foreign Affairs is a Christian.

AN important religious awakening is reported from the City of Mexico. It originated in the Presbyterian mission, and all the Protestant churches in the city are stated to be enlisted in earnest work. A number of prominent citizens are among the converts.

THE Board of Trustees of Oberlin College propose to bring up the endowment to \$500,000. It is a wonder what work this institution has done with comparatively little money. The expenses of the college last year exceeded its regular income by \$11,000.

NINETY-NINE Unitarian churches are without pastors, and not more than twenty-five of them are able, says the "Year Book," to support a minister. "Twenty have given no signs of life for several years, and are probably dead." The number of ministers in the denomination is 401, which indicates an increase of thirteen.

THE fearful plague which for several weeks past has been prevalent in the south-eastern districts of Russia is reported to be spreading with great rapidity. Railway cars from Russia are not admitted into Germany, and severe quarantine measure are enforced on the frontier of the Black Sea and Danube ports.

SEVEN thousand miners are idle in the county of Durham, England. The distress there has not been equalled since the great strike of 1844. A general strike of the iron-workers, numbering 3,500, and the brass founders began on Saturday at Liverpool. Two thousand boiler-makers and shipbuilders are also considering the advisability of striking.

THE forthcoming Baptist "Year Book" for 1879 will show that there are now in the United States 1,102,034 Baptists, an increase of nearly 78,000, with 1,075 associations, 24,499 churches, an increase of about 600, and 14,954 ordained ministers, an increase of 388. The baptisms for the year numbered 102,736.

THE Saxo-Meiningen Legislature has passed a law enabling persons of full age to leave the State Church on going through certain formalities. They may form Dissenting churches on satisfying the Government that their doctrines are not counter to civil order and morality, and are entitled to burial in the churchyards on payment of a small fee.

THE American Board has sixteen missions, seventy-nine stations, 529 out-stations, 1,549 labourers (144 being ordained missionaries from America), 248 churches, 13,854 church members, 1,223 added during the year (the figures in these two items are approximate), 15 training and theological schools, 612 common schools, with 23,982 pupils.

THE municipality of Paris, by a vote of 63 to 3, has resolved to reduce the salaries of the Romish clerical instructors in the schools to the lowest point allowed by law, namely, to 250 francs for males and 150 francs for females. The motive openly avowed is to induce them to resign, and to bring the government to agree to the substitution of lay teachers.