The Second Stage of Freethought: Enterprise.

Continued from 1st page.

So far from disbelieving everything, skepticism went everywhere in search of truth and certainty. Since the church could not be absolutely certain of the truth of its tenets, its duty was to be tolerant. But being intolerant it became, as Julian Hibbert put it, "well-understood self-defence" to assail it. The church fought for power; the thinker fought for truth.

Freethought among the people may be likened to a good ship manned by adventurous mariners, who, cruising about in the ocean of theology, came upon sirens, as other mariners had done beforedangerous to be followed by navigators bound to ports of progress. Many were thereby decoyed to their own destruction. The sirens of the churches sang alluring songs, whose refrains were:

- 1. The Bible the guide of God.
- 2. The origin of the universe disclosed.
- 3. The care of Providence assured.
- 4. Deliverance from peril by prayer dependable.
- 5. Original sin effaceable by year. [English Secularism. grace.
- 6. Perdition avoidable by faith in crucifixion.
 - 7. Future life revealed.

These propositions were subjects of resonant hymns, sermons and tracts, and were not, and are not, disowned, but still defended in discussion by orthodox and clerical advocates. Save salvation by the blood of Christ (a painful idea to entertain), the other ideas might well fascinate the uninquiring. They had enchanted many believers, but the explorers of whom we speak had acquired the questioning spirit and had learned prudently to look at both sides of familiar Will you accept the fair-seeming propositions which had formerly imposed on their imagination were unsound, unsightly and unsafe. The Syracusans of old kept a school in which slaves were taught the ways of bondage. Christianity has kept such a school in which subjection of the understanding was inculcated, and the pupils, now free to investigate, resolved to see whether such things were true.

Then began the reign of refu tation of theological error, by some Main Street from indignation at having been imposed upon, by others from zeal that misconception should end; by more from enthusiasm for facts; by the bolder sort from resentment at the intimidation and cruelty with which inquiry had been suppressed so long; and by not a few from the love of disputation, which has for some the delight men have for chess or cricket or other pursuit

dition of the progress of nations. Where would science be but for open thought, the nursing mother of enterprise, of discovery, of invention, of new conditions of human betterment?

A modern Hindu writer tells us that: "The Hindu is sorely handicapped by customs which are prescribed by his religious books Hedged in by minute rules and restrictions, the various classes forming the Hindu community have had but little room for expansion and progress. The result has been stagnation. Caste has prevented the Hindus from sinking, but it has also prevented them from ris-

The old miracle bubbles which the Jews blew into the air of wonder two thousand years ago delight churches still in their childhood The sea of theology would have been stagnant centuries ago had not insurgent thinkers, at the peril of their lives, created commotion in

it. Morals would have been poisoned on the shores of theology had not Freethought purified the waters by putting the salt of reason into that sea, freshening it year by

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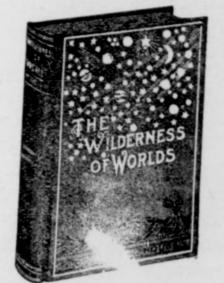
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