

Passing Notes.

The Protestant Bishop of Liverpool, speaking of the Episcopate recently, said there was no order of men so severely and savagely criticised and unceasingly vilified, sneered at, ridiculed, abused and condemned as the English Protestant Bishops. Unless they were treated with more consideration and fairness, he predicted a day would come when no right-minded man who loved direct spiritual work, and hated wasting precious time in strife and wrangling, would consent to be a bishop at all.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bright of Sydney are at present on a visit to Dunedin, partly for the benefit of Mr. Bright's health, which we regret to notice has not been good. Since Mr. Bright's arrival at the scene of his former successful labors, he has delivered two or three lectures which have been favourably spoken of in the press. Mr. Bright makes many warm friends wherever he goes, and in Dunedin he may be said to be a public favorite. Mrs. Bright also lectures, and her abilities on the platform have been generally acknowledged in Sydney. We trust Mr. Bright's health will be completely restored by his trip. The cause cannot spare him.

"The career of individual man," wrote Dr. Draper, "is of a mixed nature. In part he submits to free-will impulses, in part he is under the inexorable dominion of law. As he advances in life he insensibly changes his estimate of the relative power of these influences. In the confidence of youth he imagines that very much is under his control, in the disappointment of old age very little. Towards the end of his days he finds that the things he has secured are not the things which he expected. He sees that a Supreme Power has been using him for unknown ends; that he was brought into the world without his own knowledge and is departing from it—perhaps in a far-distant land—against his will."

Mrs. Besant has been delivering some interesting lectures throughout England on the "Roots of Christianity," and has the following note on the subject in the columns of the 'National Reformer':—The letters on the "Roots of Christianity" continue to pour in, and I really have not time to write so many answers. Inquirers should ask me at the time of the lecture, and write down the names for themselves. The following were the chief authorities used, and to this list I must refer all future enquirers. "Origine de tous les cultes," Dupuis. "La Bible dans l'Inde." "India in Greece," Pococke. "Egyptian Mythology," Sharpe. "Talmud." "Freethinker's Text Book," part ii. "Asiatic researches, essay by Sir W. Jones." "Translations from the Sanscrit," Muir. "Notes on the Evolution of Christianity," Yorke. "Life of Buddha," "Egypte Ancienne," Champollion-Figeau. "Livres Sacrés de l'Orient." "Wheel of the Law," Alabaster. "Religions of Egypt," Tiele. Works of Josephus.

Mr. Joseph Braithwaite, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Dunedin Freethought Association, has withdrawn from the Association. His reasons are given at great length in a letter which we publish, together with replies from Mr. Robert Stout and Mr. William Pratt. We shall only note here that Mr. Braithwaite appears to have changed his opinions with regard to the future of Freethought since the 10th November, 1883, when a valedictory address appeared over his initials in the last number of the 'Echo.' "We have the satisfaction (he then observed) of knowing that Freethought is sure to succeed in the long run, and that the unessentials of orthodoxy must give way before the ever advancing tide of an educated public opinion." He then proposed to start a monthly issue of the 'Echo' to advocate the eclecticism and latitude of thought which Freethought Associations specially represent and uphold. The difference between Mr. Braithwaite then and now is, that whereas he was identified with a movement that led and formed public opinion, he now prefers to sail with those who with favoring breezes are wafted along on its tide.

An effort is about to be made (says the Wellington 'Evening Post') by a few earnest Christian workers in Wellington to establish in this colony a branch of the World Wide Prayer Union, an organization which has for its object the offering up of prayer for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Branches of the Union are

distributed throughout the greater part of the civilised world, and the membership is said to be exceedingly large. The covenant of membership is as follows:—"Believing that Satan is still the god of this world; that under his reign multitudes of souls are perishing daily; and that the darkness is likely to grow deeper and deeper until the glorious appearance of the Son of Righteousness, I gladly consent to pray often and earnestly—(1) That the Lord Jesus may come quickly; (2) that all believers in all lands may be filled with the Holy Spirit and entirely consecrated to God; (3) that the Gospel may be everywhere preached in the power of the Holy Ghost, and that the 'fulness of the Gentiles' may soon be gathered in." [A sensible and practical proposal. If he should refuse to come, what then? Would he not be morally responsible for the "perishing souls"?]

The Rev. W. J. Williams, Wesleyan, residing in Wanganui, fell a few days since on the point of his own sword, and cried out pitifully. It will be remembered this was the gentleman we had to take to task a month or two ago for his coarse and slanderous allusions to Paine. A local paper contained some references of a not very favorable character to some of the early Wesleyan missionaries. The allusions roused Mr. Williams, who wrote: "Sir, the greater number of the missionaries referred to have passed beyond the reach of slander; some, however, still survive. We have one such in Wanganui, who, bending beneath the burden of more than four score years, has the pain of finding himself in common with his fellow-laborers, the object of a most cowardly and most unprovoked attack in your columns." Yet the writer of these words—intended to elicit sympathy—had no tenderness for the memory of an Infidel! But tenderness was not needed. The truth only was called for, and this Christian Minister was unequal to the demand. His indignation in the case of the missionaries would have been entitled to more respect if his regard for truth had been displayed in speaking of the "mighty dead," who do not belong to the Wesleyan cult.

Personal Notes.

General Thibaudin, the late French Minister of War, has been elected President of the Parisian Freethinkers' Society.

It is said that Professor Huxley's son is the rising young poet of England, and that his friends see in him the future laureate.

There is to be a monument erected to Dr. Samuel Johnson, at Lichfield, England, on the centennial anniversary of his death, December 13, 1884.

Count Von Moltke's mind is failing. His memory is a blank, and he fails to recognise even intimate friends. He is living on his estate at Kreisau, in strict privacy, having ceased all official work.

A funny but thoroughly enjoyable feature of the attentions paid at Ramsgate recently to Sir Moses Montefiore, the Jewish philanthropist, was the singing under his window, in the early morning, by an admirably trained choir of children. First they sang in Hebrew the famous Jewish hymn of Moses, and then "Rule Britannia," which closed the programme, as intended by the teachers who had drilled the choir. But the little fellows had not roused their enthusiasm and trained their voices for so much only, for they concluded by singing "For he's a jolly good fellow."

A German journalist gives an interesting account of the surroundings amid which M. Renan delivers his lectures at the Collège de France. The lecture room is one of the smallest in the College, about thirty feet long and half as wide. Its principal furniture consists of a long table laden with old Bibles, an enormous blackboard, and a faded map. Its sole ornaments are two busts—one of Aristotle, the other of Quintilian. The audience is surprisingly small, consisting mainly of elderly scholars, with here and there a clergyman, a rabbi, or an occasional visitor. Renan appears punctually at the stroke of the clock. He begins his lectures in a quiet, almost indifferent sort of way, but soon warms up, and never fails to charm his hearers.