

of the immortality, not only of men but of animals, than to study the historical and scientific principles involved in what is in itself a matter of fact, and one as to which our belief ought to depend on the evidence. Freethought has not the slightest objection to accepting the doctrine of immortality or any other doctrine if true, but it strongly objects to take a baseless phantasy for a solid fact.

The Freethought Conference at Dunedin has held its first meeting, when the lines of a Federal Union of the Freethought Associations of New Zealand were laid down. A Constitution in outline was adopted by the Conference, and it remains for the different Associations to ratify what has been done by passing resolutions in accordance with the clause which provides for affiliation. The Conference neither did too little nor too much. The basis of Union has been provided; the Constitution is comprehensive enough to allow for expansion in any direction which the consensus of opinion among the Associations may hereafter determine; and Freethinkers may at last realise the fact that they can speak, protest, and appeal in unison on all questions of national interest. The Conference recognised that the constitution must contain the element of growth and development, and was careful not to hamper in any way the action of future conferences. It was wise to give small Associations equal voting power with large, thus to encourage the formation of Societies in small centres of population, and to preserve the feeling of equality. The privilege conceded might of course be abused, but it will not; and it is one of the first principles of federation that the rights of the weakest member as of the strongest are maintained inviolate. It may be said that the objects of the Union are not important or urgent enough to have called for the organisation. The defence of liberty, the abolition of improper privileges, religious or political, the promotion of social well-being, and the elevation of Humanity, may not be ends of great importance in the eyes of *practical* people whose gospel is the ten per cents; but to Freethinkers they are the only ends worthy of the highest moral effort, constituting an ideal which may enlist the enthusiasm and the energies of the best and wisest. The Freethought Federal Union will have plenty of work to do in a wide sphere, and if it be animated by the true spirit of its mission its voice will not be unheard or powerless in matters of legislation and government, in social and political progress.

Suffering becomes beautiful, when anyone bears great calamities with cheerfulness, not through insensibility, but through greatness of mind.—ARISTOTLE.

"Even at this day, and in Europe, ask any of the vulgar why he believes in an Omnipotent Creator of the world, he will never mention the beauty of final causes, of which he is wholly ignorant; he will not hold out his hand and bid you contemplate the suppleness and variety of joints in his fingers, their bending all one way, the counterpoise which they receive from the thumb, the softness and fleshy parts of the inside of the hand, with all the other circumstances which render that member fit for the use to which it was destined. To these he has been long accustomed; and he beholds them with listlessness and unconcern. He will tell you of the sudden and unexpected death of such-a-one; the fall and bruise of such another; the excessive drought of this season; the cold and rains of another. These he ascribes to the immediate operation of Providence; and such events as, with good reasoners, are the chief difficulties in admitting a Supreme Intelligence, are with him the sole arguments for it."—HUME.

Passing Notes.

Mr. William Pratt, President of the Christchurch Freethought Association, left during the month on a visit to the mother country. Before leaving, Mr. Pratt was entertained by his friends. The good wishes of the Freethought party throughout the colony will accompany our stout champion wherever he may be.

The New England Freethinkers' Convention met on the 27th, 28th, and 29th of January at the Paine Hall in Boston. The addresses were interesting, covering a great variety of subjects, and the proceedings were worthy of the memorable event they celebrated—the birth-day of Thomas Paine.

Archdeacon Butt has written to the 'Marlborough Express' denouncing a Fishing Excursion that took place on Sunday. The Archdeacon says "The Sabbath was instituted by the Creator of the world and observed in patriarchal times; again enjoined on Mount Sinai as one of the ten Commandments of God, which form the basis of all morality." This historical gem was placed in the crucible by two correspondents, with the result that the Jewish Sabbath was shown not to have taken place on Sunday! The moral is that the practice of the piscatorial art on Sunday might proceed undisturbed from the thunder of Mount Sinai.

Mr. Bradlaugh has published a manifesto of his attitude as a Freethinker in politics, in which, referring to a hostile discussion in France some four years ago over his criticism of the action of the French Government towards the Clerical Orders, he says:—"It was urged and quite truly, that the Roman Catholic Church throughout its whole history had been the never-ceasing persecutor and oppressor of all aspirations for human liberty. My answer still was and is;—'we should fight with the pen, the press, the tongue, the school; not the gaol or the officer of the law.' If we cannot win with reason, I will not try to win with force." The school of Edgar Quinet prefers to use the Church's own weapons in warring with the Church. Mr. Bradlaugh's doctrine from an English standpoint is incontrovertible. The French Republic would prevent the viper from using its fangs, by drawing them.

A lively correspondence between the editor of the 'Otago Daily Times' and a number of correspondents on the one side, and Mr. Stout on the other, has recently taken place. The editor aspersed the characters of Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant, and Mr. Stout rejoined. At length after several passages of arms the editor became silent and obsequious. The following piece of summing up in one of Mr. Stout's letters indicates the character of the controversy:—"And now as to the charges against Mrs. Besant and Mr. Bradlaugh. I confess I am amused at your audacity—to use no other word. You stated that Mrs. Besant and Mr. Bradlaugh obtained 'notoriety' by publishing an 'unmentionable work.' I challenged this statement. You said the work encouraged prostitution and denounced marriage. I denied that, and challenged you to the proof, and you reply by quoting 'The Elements of Social Science' and a statement by Mr Joseph Barker. Really, sir, this is ignorance appalling in an editor. The following are facts:—1. Mr. Joseph Barker has not been co-editor with Mr. Bradlaugh of the 'National Reformer' since 1861. If, then, the 'notoriety' was obtained before that it is pretty old. 2. There never was a Mr. S. S. Holyoake co-editor with Mr. Bradlaugh and Mr Barker. 3. Mrs. Besant and Mr. Bradlaugh never published the 'Elements of Social Science.' 4. They published the 'Knowlton Pamphlet,' which is not the same work. 5. They never obtained any 'notoriety' by producing or 'publishing' 'The Elements of Social Science.' 6. Neither Mrs. Besant nor Mr. Bradlaugh ever approved of prostitution. And now, having shown that you have grossly libelled an English lady, I feel sure that you will act the manly part by at once and unreservedly apologising to her for your untruthful statements." Orthodoxy in this instance was unequal to a manly part.