

From an English telegram we learn with regret that Mr. Bradlaugh is held to have voted illegally in the House of Commons. In other terms, the Court has decided that a member cannot swear himself in. We presume Mr. Bradlaugh has appealed. The costs in the case must be enormous. Would it not be opportune and fitting that the Freethinkers of New Zealand sent him a New Year's Gift, to be placed at his sole disposal? The great English champion is fighting the world's battle of Freethought, and ought to be sustained. We invite suggestions, in order to place something definite before our readers next month.

The Pope's encyclical on Masonry (from which we give an extract in another column) is an instructive document, deserving of more consideration from Freethinkers than we can give to it in our present issue. The arraignment is really an indictment against the principles of modern civilisation. What Popery condemns modern liberty extols. Masonry, in its practical or administrative aspect, probably differs in different countries, but if it is the embodiment in all of the principles set forth in the Encyclical, it is entitled to the respect of Freethinkers. In a word, Masonry is a great Freethought Federation. We hope the Pope's account of it is correct.

An Insurance Agent encloses us the following extract from the report of a meeting of the congregation of St. John's Presbyterian Church, Wellington: "A gentleman in the meeting deprecated the idea of insuring the premises, and instead of doing this they, as Christians, should commend the buildings to the protection of God." The reporter observes on this: "It is hardly necessary to state that these suggestions did not meet with the approval of those present." Our Insurance friend supplies the comment: We have competition enough, heaven knows, but this attempt to start a new office up above is too much. At what figure would he put the *capital*? Let us add our own—why did God allow his house to be burnt down?

The Radical Review advocates national organization based upon State secularization. "We should," it says, "rejoice over nothing more than the unification of the body of the American Liberals on a platform embodying the principles of social and political reform as well as those of freethought specifically. But, as that is a matter of impossibility, remembering that some Liberals are Greenbackers while others are Hard-Money Men, some Prohibitionists and others Anti-Prohibitionists, some Free Traders and others Protectionists, some Socialists and others Democrats, etc., we deem it desirable that there should still be at least one strong organization in the United States that will valiantly battle for universal mental liberty."

The general election has witnessed a remarkable triumph of the spirit of Liberty over that of bigotry and intolerance, in the return of Mr. Robert Stout for Dunedin, and Mr. John Ballance for Wanganui. Both are avowed Freethinkers, and occupy official positions in the Freethought Federal Union of New Zealand, being President and Vice-President respectively. Into both elections were imported the religious question, and the drum ecclesiastic was beaten furiously. Mr. Stout defeated his clerical opponent by a majority of 240, and Mr. Ballance polled 336 votes more than the next candidate on the list. It need hardly be said that in each case the majority was principally made up of the votes of Christians who refused to have their religion dragged through the mire in a political contest. It is more than probable that many of the men who made the appeal to the odium theologium cared about as much for religion as the religious wife-beater or the religious murderer.

When we love our brother for the sake of our brother, we help all men to grow in the right; but when we love our brother for the sake of somebody else, who is very likely to damn our brother, it very soon comes to burning him alive for his son's health. When men respect human life for the sake of Man, tranquillity, order, and progress go hand in hand; but those who only respected human life because God has forbidden murder, have set their mark upon Europe in fifteen centuries of blood and fire.

Gems.

FROM W. K. CLIFFORD'S LECTURES AND ESSAYS.

Where it is presumption to doubt and to investigate, there it is worse than presumption to believe.

If men were no better than their religions, the world would be a hell indeed.

Truth is a thing to be shouted from the housetops, not to be whispered over rosewater after dinner, when the ladies are gone away.

Do I seem to say: "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die?" Far from it; on the contrary, I say: "Let us take hands and help for this day we are alive together."

To become crystallised, fixed in opinion and mode of thought, is to lose the great characteristic of life, by which it is distinguished from inanimate nature—The power of adapting itself to circumstances.

Bring your doctrines, your priesthoods, your precepts, yea, even the inner devotion of your soul, before the tribunal of conscience; she is no man's and no God's vicar, but the supreme judge of men and Gods.

If there is one lesson which history forces upon us in every page, it is this: Keep your children away from the priest, or he will make them the enemies of mankind.

It cannot be true of my race and yours that to keep ourselves from becoming scoundrels we must needs believe a lie. The sense of right grew up among healthy men and was fixed by the practice of comradeship. It has never had help from phantoms and falsehoods, and it never can want any.

No real belief, however trifling and fragmentary it may seem, is ever truly insignificant; it prepares us to receive more of its like, confirms those which it resembles before, and weakens others; and so gradually it lays a stealthy train in our inmost thoughts, which may some day explode into overt action, and leave its stamp upon our character for ever.

It is idle to set bounds to the purifying and organising work of Science. Without mercy and without resentment she ploughs up weed and briar; from her footsteps behind grow up corn and healing flowers; and no corner is far enough to escape her furrow. Provided only that we take as our motto and our rule of action:—Man speed the plough.

The dim and shadowy outlines of the superhuman deity fade slowly away from before us; and as the mist of his presence floats aside, we perceive with greater and greater clearness the shape of a yet grander and nobler figure of Him who made all Gods and shall unmake them. From the dim dawn of history, and from the inmost depth of every soul, the face of our father Man looks out upon us with the fire of eternal youth in his eyes and says:—"Before Jehovah was, I am!"

W. C. A.

WENDELL PHILLIPS' RELIGION.

We know what Mr. Phillips' opinions were on religion; for, in a conversation that we once had with him on the subject, he informed us, and his religion came as near to that of Thomas Paine's as any of which we ever read or heard. It was simply "to do good," and that was what Paine said was his religion. We suggested to Mr. Phillips, in the conversation to which we allude, that his friends would like to have him give a lecture expressive of his views of Christianity. He said that he would, and he did. The lecture was given in the Indiana Place Chapel (formerly Rev. J. F. Clarke's). We were present, and heard Mr. Phillips say that Christianity, as he understood and believed it, did not consist in joining a church, nor in subscribing to a creed, nor saying prayers, nor hearing preaching, nor belonging to any sect, but that it meant an upright and useful life, and in being kind to the poor, the unfortunate, the outcast and the oppressed; and, in this connection, he mentioned the benevolence of the Good Samaritan, whose conduct Jesus approved, though, said Mr. Phillips (with a twinkle in his eye), as that philanthropist was travelling on Sunday, some people probably called him an infidel! The religion of Wendell Phillips was in no sense theological, but entirely philanthropic; and, whether he is called a Christian or by any other name, his whole career illustrated the truth of the familiar couplet of Alexander Pope:—

"For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."
—'Boston Investigator.'