

by other worshippers at the shrine of the Unknowable. The author of the work under notice, for instance, makes the following positive confession of faith:—"But the Great First Cause, as I conceive Him, fills all space, and possesses attributes which supersede and infinitely transcend the mere human attributes of knowledge and will. But for these attributes we have no name; and I for one refuse to apply to them names which mean something vastly inferior, and possibly altogether different in their nature" (page 75). Yet the author had only just been naming attributes of a purely human conception. Having found a "Cause," Mr. Bithwell endows it (or rather "Him") with *greatness* and *seniority*. The humility of refusing to name the attributes, ought to have begun at the beginning, for the conception of a "Great First Cause" is less daring than to clothe "Him" with such attributes as omnipotence and omniscience. While the writer objects to the term omnipotence, he speaks confidently of the "Almighty." It appears that this Agnostic clings to his Bible, only he refuses to accept "the perversions of priests or the glosses of schoolmen." The "Cause," moreover, of which no attributes are to be predicated—"God the Unknowable"—"manifests himself in the universe, in society, and, above all, in the 'soul.'" If this be so, the term Unknowable is misapplied. But the humility has merged in a boundless confidence before the last article of "The Creed" is reached, and we are told that "the Governor of all Worlds is *wise*, and *good*, and *strong*" (page 135). After this the reader will not be surprised to hear that "the modern doctrine of Evolution has been assumed throughout these pages." The morality of the "Creed" appears to be of an unimpeachable character, and very liberal sentiments are expressed. But as these qualities are not rare among modern formulators of creeds, they can hardly be appropriated as distinctive of Agnosticism. It is wonderful how much the author appears to increase in knowledge of the Unknowable as he proceeds toward the end of his book—an evolution so rapid that if the work had only continued for another 100 pages or so, he would probably have known all about "Him."

B.

The New Zealand Craftsman and Masonic Review.
Wellington: Lyon and Blair.

We welcome very heartily the first number of the 'Craftsman,' especially on account of the broad and liberal tone which characterises the editor's work. It cannot be the boast of the fraternity that their journals and magazines take as a rule a high stand from a literary point of view, and it is a pleasure to find a considerable advance in this respect in the pages of the 'Craftsman.' Masonic discussion is too often governed by a slavish adherence to ritual, and is seldom animated by the spirit of progress which should govern great institutions. If the 'Craftsman' can manage to steer the independent course which marks its first number, it will probably find a large number of friends who believe in something more nourishing than the dry husks of forms and ceremonies. There is a sentiment in one of the contributed articles—"Prerequisite for Masonic Initiation"—to which we must take objection. The writer, placing his construction on the phrase "reputable circumstances," says:—"Men in receipt of a pound or thirty shillings a week usually, and married, with families (be they large or small, some five, some ten, some fifteen, &c.), cannot afford the luxury of Freemasonry; for it is a *luxury*, only to be enjoyed by those who are in comparatively easy circumstances." Is not this degrading Masonry to the Club level? Masonry is described as a system of morality; but if the above interpretation is correct it must cease to bear the title. The editor apparently is not likely to sympathise with the doctrine, and for the credit of Masonry we hope the moralist who draws the line at thirty shillings a week does not represent the opinions of more than an insignificant minority. There was a certain man whose price was "thirty pieces of silver," who also would not have been considered in "reputable circumstances."

Spirit or Matter—An Inquiry into the cause of Life and Organisation: A lecture by Archibald Campbell.
Auckland: A. Campbell, 1884.

This lecture has been printed by request in pamphlet form. It inquires into the operations of the material forces of Nature, finding in them the secret of all that is and the promise and potency of all that is to be. Though no subject has been more exhaustively discussed than Materialism, Mr. Campbell places it in a new light by the felicity and originality of his illustrations. The law of growth, the ever-changing combinations of the elements, produces life in its various forms. Spirit by the process of elimination is finally identified with mind; but mind itself, upon being analysed, is but "accumulated consciousness," the "store of personal experience." The assumption that there is one originating force is met by the statement of fact that "the struggle for existence everywhere apparent shows an incessant conflict of forces," and "the conflict is life, all the life there is." The lecture is the product of profound observation and reflection, and is worthy of a high rank in the field of Freethought literature.

INFLUENCE OF FREETHOUGHT ON THE FAMILY.

The following is the synopsis of an address delivered before the New England Freethinkers' Convention in Paine Hall, Boston, January 27th, 1874, by Miss Susan B. Wixon.

Once, the human mind was curbed, repressed, enslaved—held in bondage by the lash of fear in the hands of ignorance and superstition. Science slowly dawned upon the childhood of the race, and, one by one, it broke the clanking fetters that held the mind of humanity a prisoner, in a dungeon of darkness, and bade the liberated thought be free forever and forevermore. And to-day, Freethought, that once was palpitating, shrinking, afraid to set its foot upon the solid ground, stands firm, defiant, eager to meet the hosts of earth, heaven, or—any other place, for it knows that it is right, and, in our time, the right need not falter, need not whisper under the breath, as did Galileo in that other time, but may speak out bravely—"The world does move!" and we know it.

Once, the very stoutest mind dared think *free* thoughts, for well was it known that such thinking brought men in peril of life and limb. On every hand, the stake, the guillotine, the gibbet, menaced with fire and blood the free thinker and the free speaker. The red hand of persecution was raised, and superstition, dark and forbidding, attended by hate and vengeance, was abroad. The Spanish Inquisition, in power for nearly five hundred years, with its five million victims, with its subterranean dungeons, with its rack and thumb-screw, with all the barbaric tortures that human ingenuity could devise, or human demons suggest, commanded the thought of the world to be still—to lie prostrate in the dust, nor dare be honest with itself.

But "All things come round to him who will but wait," and slowly, imperceptibly, almost, like a fair flower springing up amid the decay and ruins—like the pure white lily that rises from the mud and smiles in beauty above the waters of the lake, so has Freethought budded, unfolded, and spread its petals of wondrous beauty around the world. As the polar star to mariners upon the sea, and travellers o'er the land, guiding them safely to harbour and to home, so has Freethought steadily appeared, in spite of persecutions, in spite of storms of bigotry and hatred, in spite of ignorance and fierce malignity, more cruel than the grave—a brilliant star of hope and promise to all the people of our planet, beneath whose gentle influence the world grows tender "with charity for all and malice toward none."

To-day, with all its mistakes, with all its drawbacks, is the very grandest and greatest period that was ever known, and it is so because of the progress of ideas, because of the liberality and freedom of thought which shall yet break every fetter of the human race, banish forever poverty, crime, sin, and shame, and ultimately