

both addressed the Convention ably and earnestly. The last speaker was Mrs. Clara Neyman, of the Society of Humanity, New York. Those in charge of the programme certainly followed the example of Christ at the Marriage Feast by reserving the best to the last. Mrs. Neyman, though a German, speaks English fluently, and her appearance, address, and purity of language are rarely excelled. We are informed that she intends entering the lecture field as a Freethought speaker, and we predict that she will not lack profitable engagements. She has but to be heard to be appreciated. We would give our readers an abstract of her paper but prefer to publish it in full in our next issue. Altogether we came away from Rochester pleased with our visit.

We cannot agree with our friend Mr. Evans when he says—as he does in his article on superstition and cupidity—“that the world should feel grateful that scientists and philosophers can pursue their studies of nature without fear of priestly fanaticism or mob ignorance,” and again when he says that “thinking men and women can now safely pursue their study of the natural laws of the universe with no heavier penalty than the withdrawal of favours by the fanatic.” Should we feel grateful that Mrs. Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh are now under sentence in England for studying the laws of pro-creation and endeavoring to impart knowledge on that subject to the world? Should we feel grateful that the stripes on the back of that “honest man and good physician,” L. J. Russell, of Bell County, Texas, were inflicted by a Christian mob? Should we feel grateful that D. M. Bennett, of New York, is under indictment for blasphemy through a minion of the Young Men's Christian Association, Anthony Comstock? We confess we are unable to see anything to be grateful for unless it be that Christians can now only legally fine and imprison for what they once could and did punish with death; but what Christians could formerly do by law they now do, as in the case of Dr. Russel, without law, but nevertheless with impunity. Until every law which forbids men to think and speak freely upon all scientific and religious subjects is swept from our statutes, the freedom of which Englishmen and Americans are so wont to boast, is as mythical as are the stories of the Jews.

B. F. Underwood, Esq., who is so well and favorably known by Canadians, will be in attendance at the Convention to be held in Albert Hall, Toronto, January 22 and 23, 1878, and will lecture on the evenings of above dates, and on the evening of the Sunday previous. After the Convention he will be open to engagements in any part of Canada, and we hope our friends will avail themselves of the opportunity to secure his services. Communications may be addressed to him at this office in our care.

We are pleased to be able to announce to our readers that two well known writers and thinkers—Mrs. Elmina D. Stonker of Virginia, and William Emmette Coleman of Fort Leavenworth, Kansas—have consented to become contributors to this JOURNAL.

We have a goodly number of communications which we are compelled to hold over for a future number.

B. F. Underwood lectures at Nevada, Ohio, November 26, 27, and 28. And at Riverton, Ill., December 1st and 2nd.

## SUPERSTITION AND CUPIDITY.

Superstition is an ignorant dread of some unseen influence which takes form in the mind of man in accordance with the education, or want of education, by which his infancy has been surrounded. In the absence of a true knowledge of natural forces, man's reason is obliterated in a belief in ghosts, hobgoblins, fairies and other supernatural excrescences that frighten his unbalanced mind. These make him the victim of increasing apprehension of the visit in his earthly affairs of some spirit of good or demon of evil, but chiefly the latter. He strives to cajole the one by adulation, whilst by form or faith he hopes to cheat the other. Cupidity is also a leading principle in primitive man, and is always wedded to the most unscrupulous in civilized nature; and this faculty making an early discovery of the superstitions susceptibility of human ignorance made it the stepping stone to priestly power and personal aggrandisement. Not only can a prince commander lead an army of ignorant fanatics against the lives of nations, but the priestly few can always command the respect of the fanatical many merely by the enchantment surrounding a religious mysticism. But a few years since, the superstitious dread of a greased cartridge in India enabled the princes and priesthood of Delhi to sacrifice thousands of lives in the abortive attempt to recapture their lost power in the superstitious East, and millions of lives have been sacrificed upon the same altar of blind superstition, led by insinuating cupidity. Perhaps in the East we have the purest fanaticism in the world, but wherever we look, whether into ancient or modern history, the same aspect meets our view. Christian slaughtered Saracen, receiving in turn the contempt with which the Moslem always looks upon the hated Gior, and amongst Christians themselves they not only extracted the teeth of their elder brother the Jew, but they made endless raids upon each other; just as the priesthood of each contending sect chose to “let slip the dogs of war.” But a short distance in the vista of time in the past, brings us to the days of the burning of witches, hanging of heretics, wheel, rack, and thumbscrew. Even in the present day how often we meet that self-complaisant but ignorant fanatic, who believes he has (what he vulgarly calls) got religion; mark the silent contempt with which he views his more intelligent neighbour, whose enlightened enquiry has emancipated him from the withering thralldom of ignorant fanaticism. The feeling of the fanatic always is, that he is the recipient of special favours of the Holy Ghost, or that the God that, if anything, must be to the commonest understanding Omnipotent, Omniscient and all pervading in mercy and justice has filled him with a heavenly essence not obtained by his fellow man. How little the world dreams of the vast debt of gratitude it owes to the leaders of Freethought and full enquiry in all ages; to the host of martyrs to philosophical reasoning, and scientific research, that have given their great lives, not for money, but for pure love of the race. Should the world not feel grateful that the present age is so fruitful of scientific and philosophic minds, and that Darwin, Tyndall, Huxley, Spencer, Mill and others, could pursue their studies of nature without fear of priestly fanaticism or mob ignorance. Thinking men and women can now safely pursue their study of the natural laws of the universe with no heavier penalty than the withdrawal of favours by the fanatic, whose deluded mind should only excite their pity, whose insane claim to the receipt of a ghostly gift should bestir the better informed to increased efforts to instruct the bigoted and to unburden the fanatical.

J. ICK EVANS.

Men say their pinnacles point to heaven. Why, so does every tree that buds, and every bird that rises as it sings. Men say their aisles are good for worship. Why, so in every mountain glen and rough sea-shore. But this they have of distinct and indisputable glory,—that their mighty walls were never raised, and never shall be, but by men who love and aid each other in their weakness.—*Ruskin.*