

SCIENCE AND THE INFINITE. By SYDNEY E. KLEIN. William Rider & Son.

WILLIAM RIDER and SON have moved from Aldersgate Street to Paternoster Row, but unless they are very careful they will find themselves in Carey Street. What can have come over the firm that it publishes a book written by a man who knows his subject?

For "Science and the Infinite" forms the most admirable sketch of what should surely be a great and important work. Mr. Klein shows clearly and simply the nature of what we call the Infinite, and proves that the great step to be taken is for the soul to recognize its oneness with that. But in Book 4 this conclusion is given as the result of definite experience. *See* pp. 80 and 87. Mr. Klein however, seems to prefer a sacramental solution of the problem, and advocates in almost too unveiled a manner the cult of the Phallus, which he understands, evidently enough, in its best form.

We could have wished that he had given us twenty diagrams instead of one. We could have wished that his English were less latinized and his sentences shorter, and—most of all—we could have wished that his book had been published in a more important form. The world is deluged with cheaply-got-up books of this kind, and it is difficult for the outsider to distinguish the cornerstone from that which should be "heaved over among the rubbish." Now a book should be a very holy thing. If it be truth, it is that which we most reverence, and it is impossible to expend too much care and loving kindness in its worthy presentation. Considerations of the cost of production are the death of literature. Publishers are so ignorant of the value of books that they issue any quantity of worthless stuff. They have no idea of what will catch on with the public. They produce things as cheaply as possible, with the American philosophy, "It's a good bet if I lose!" Such a book as Mr. Klein's loses immensely by this vulgar presentation. Rising as it does to heights of sublime poetry, it is a shock to be constantly brought

back to the twentieth-century illusion, which is the very sham he is trying to expose with its rage for hurry and cheapness, by the inferior paper and inferior printing. A book of this sort should have been produced, if not quite like the Medieval Books of Hours, yet in a form which represents the highest developments of the particular art used in its production. These things do not seem to matter now. They will matter enormously in a hundred years, and it should be for that part of the Now which we stupidly call the Future that books should be produced.

This is particularly the case with a book which deals with science. It is the common idea that science is practical. It does not occur to the average man that science is holy. He does not see that the microscope is a magical instrument in the truest sense of the word, as it assuredly is when its use leads one to such results as Mr. Klein has attained. Science has appeared principally practical. People say, "Look, it has given us the telephone and the motor-car!" They have not understood that science may be a religion. To most people, especially so-called religious people, God means one in their own image, the shadow of themselves thrown, enlarged and distorted, upon the background of their own ignorance—not the image of themselves as they really are, but the image of those vile insects which they think themselves to be. The evangelical Christian asserts God to be mean, revengeful, cruel, huckstering—a small tradesman in a provincial town. A single blade of grass is sufficient contradiction of the existence of such a monster. Even where the people have had no God their Great Man was fashioned in the same way. Buddha is only a magnified Buddhist. In their fierce life calm seems the only good, and so their Buddha sits eternally smiling on a lotus. Even the most elevated thinkers seem to cling to the idea of a personal God. This is because they are themselves enmeshed in the illusion of personality. It is the personal and temporary self to which they cling.

They have perhaps got rid of the idea that the body is real, but the highest ideas in their mind still appeal to them. They say (in the best cases) that God is Light, Love, Life, Liberty, but they still suppose him to be a person possessing these attributes. Hardly ever, save by virtue of spiritual experience of a high order, is that conception transcended. Personality is a limitation. As long as one thing is distinguished from another there are two things; and there is only one thing. Such a conclusion Mr. Klein faintly foreshadows. I am not certain whether it is his reticence or his ignorance which prevents him from adumbrating the further conception which we have set forth in Book 4 and elsewhere.

It is very well that these conclusions, such as they are, should be restated. There is, of course, nothing new in them. They were stated by myself in almost the same language in a good deal of the poetry which I wrote when I was nineteen years old. Such perception is the birthright of the poet. But even immediate intuition of such truth is of less value than the knowledge obtained by conscious experience. The rediscovery of these truths much later in life had for me all the force of a new creation.

We wish that Mr. Klein had gone deeply into the means of attainment. He seems to be of that school which holds that such attainment is the result of miracle, perhaps of accident. He does not seem to realize that there is a perfectly simple and straightforward method of arriving where he has arrived—a method which is good enough for all, and about which there is no doubt and no difficulty beyond the essential one of sticking to it. I hope that the perusal of Book 4 will enlighten him on this point, and enable him to write a Second Part to his book which shall detail this method in language which may reach those minds to which Book 4 does not appeal.

A. C.