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The Rev. T. Le Menant Des Chesnais recently gave a lecture in the Theatre Royal, Wellington, on "Animal Magnetism and Spirit Mediums," which furnishes a striking example of the survival of modes of thought among even educated theologians, long ago abandoned by the laity. After giving a sketch of Mesmer's career and theories, the rev. gentleman said "it was absurd to compare the effects of magnetism, whether real or apparent, with the miracles of the New Testament, or of those of the old saints. When," he asked, "did spirit mediums restore sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, or raise the dead to life." Allowing for mere trickery and the effects of imagination, he declared that "in respect to Spiritualism, it was undeniable, from history and sacred writings, that the spirits of the dead could be evoked." Admitting the reality of the "marvellous phenomena heard of so frequently," which "it would be unwise to deny," he expressed his opinion that "spirit mediums were evidently as much under the influence of the demon (as represented by fallen angels) as the ancient Pagan priests and the ministers of Buddah and Brahma." No doubt just as much, that is just as little. "For that the evocation of spirits was an effect of magic produced by the demon no one could deny." "In conclusion," said the lecturer, "I boldly say, from sincere conviction and scientific investigation, that Spiritism is one of the most dangerous engines of the demon to ruin Christianity and morality, bringing back in a new form idolatry or demon worship." Some of the hearers of this marvellous discourse must have been reminded of the times of Apuleius, and have thought for a moment that the second and the nineteenth century had somehow got mixed. In "the Golden Ass" Lucius was by magical arts changed into a donkey. Was the romance of Apuleius typical of the ultimate fate of dogmatic theology?

The lecture alluded to above gave rise to quite a lively correspondence in the columns of the 'N. Z. Times.' Mr. Chantrey Harris, its proprietor, argues, with considerable force, that when the Rev. M. Des Chesnais "finding himself face to face with the unaccountable, evokes Satanic aid" to account for spiritualistic phenomena, he argues "precisely as did the Scribes and Pharisees to account for the phenomena produced by Jesus Christ. 'He hath a devil,' was the cry; 'he is mad.' So with the Apostles. 'Paul, Paul, much learning hath made thee mad.'" To this summary mode of dealing with the subject Mr. Harris, as a leading Spiritualist, naturally objects. He says:—"We Spiritualists are not mad, or, in other words, under demoniac control, but speak the words of truth and soberness, inspired from the highest and purest natural sources. We have quite discarded the supernatural as a theological fiction." This last sentence quite accounts

for the antagonism of the Catholic Church, only it implies a very wide extension of the meaning of the term natural; and another writer, signing himself "Investigator," seems to admit the truth of most of the supernatural elements in the Bible. Practically, the Spiritualists have taken possession of the Biblical fort and turned its guns against the churches. To outsiders the whole proceeding is very funny. Because certain residual physiological and psychological phenomena cannot at present be explained, those Spiritualists who "discard the supernatural" attribute them to spirits, and those who accept the supernatural, to demons, neither party having any good ground for knowing what either spirits or demons are, their laws of action, &c., their very existence being purely hypothetical. Thus they explain facts of which they know little by fictions of which they know less. In this respect the ancient Jews and the modern Spiritualists are very much alike.

"Father Des Chesnais in explanation" is the heading of another letter to the 'N. Z. Times,' in which the Rev. Father replies to "Investigator" in the best theological style, heaping up authorities against him which he is pleased to call scientific, such as "Dupotet's Mysteries of Magic Unveiled" (large edition, pp. 50-153), Lecanu's "History of Satan," Brownson's "Spirit Rapper," Gougenot des Mousseaux, Phenomena of Magic, and Ancient Spiritism, the Mediums of Magic, the Ways and Manners of Demons in the Nineteenth Century, and J. E. Mirville, one of the greatest authorities on this subject, in his "Fluëdic Manifestations, Profane and Sacred Manifestations, Apparitions, &c." (Paris, Wattlier and Co., 6 vols. 4to, 1863); "The History of the Devil, Ancient and Modern," &c., &c. "If 'Investigator' had read these works," concludes the good Father triumphantly, "he would not have affirmed, as he did, that my opinion was unique, unscriptural, and not in accordance with facts," and he then proceeds to batter him with citations from Scripture and logical deductions from certain texts. The controversy is wound up by a letter from "Investigator," inserted as an advertisement, which, if a harsh, was also a prudent act on the part of the editor, as there is no reason why a correspondence of this sort should not run on for ever. The world is full of books, which, from those of the Schoolmen to the latest production of a medium under "control," or the last essay of an "Earth Flattener," can be made to furnish authorities and a show of reason for any absurdity, and even the direct interrogation of nature, if undertaken "in a prayerful spirit," as "Investigator" recommends, may lead to equally fallacious results. The scientific spirit, which aims at exact truth and draws a sharp distinction between a fact and an inference, is not yet sufficiently diffused to make the researches of untrained amateurs of much value when they form "harmonious circles"

to investigate obscure phenomena in which they have an intense personal interest. Even a doctor often thinks it is unwise to prescribe for himself.

If we are not mistaken in the identity of "Asmodeus," the writer of those notes on social and other matters headed "Round the Corners," in the paper quoted from above, there is a cause for his dislike to Freethinkers who do not happen to be Spiritualists. "Enjoying the fullest liberty," he says, "those stupid Freethought people are degenerating into license. "But the other day they shrieked and clamoured for "the right of private judgment, and to be permitted to "entertain particular views. Now, having secured "these privileges, they turn round and, kicking up "their heels at all and sundry, disclose the cloven hoof "of the severest dogmatism and intolerance, and openly "sneer at and deride all who do not think exactly as "themselves. They don't consider other people's feelings, not they, but deliberately say nasty things in "advertisements, and wilfully, and of malice aforethought, outrage some of the holiest feelings of their "fellow creatures." Any manifestation of malignity, bigotry, or intolerance of feeling, is undoubtedly wrong, and does far more harm to the cause advocated than to that of its opponents. Considering the example set by orthodoxy in all its forms, it is little to be wondered at, however much it may be regretted, if those who dissent from received opinions occasionally fall into a similar error. It does not follow, however, that all modes of expression, or courses of conduct, which happen to hurt some people's feelings, are wrong. The very existence of Freethinkers must hurt a great many persons' feelings, and if no feelings must be hurt no reforms can be effected. Certainly, Christianity has never shown the slightest tenderness to opponents in this respect. The "churlish priest," at the grave of Ophelia, expresses the attitude always taken by the church and its adherents with regard to human feeling. The rule clearly is that no *needless* pain shall be inflicted, but those who suffer from it are not always the best judges how much is required to produce the desired effect.

Sydney Smith remarks:—"We are a good deal "amused, indeed, with the extreme disrelish which Mr. "John Styles exhibits to the humour and pleasantry "with which he admits the Methodists to have been "attacked; but Mr. John Styles should remember that "it is not the practice with the destroyers of vermin to "allow the little victims a *retro* upon the weapons used "against them." Perhaps the "stupid Freethought "people" have in some cases come to regard "Asmodeus" and his likes among the Spiritualists, much as Sydney Smith regarded the Methodists, and "are convinced a little laughter will do them more harm than "all the arguments in the world. The "nest of "sanctimonious cobblers" routed out by Sydney Smith have their parallel in the gentlemen who form "harmonious circles," and receive the revelations of chairs and tables in a "prayerful spirit," and on the strength of utterances lightly assumed to be those of disembodied spirits—for even admitting the facts, there are dozens of more rational explanations of them—accept so much of the teaching of the Bible as accords with them, and are in fact quite prepared to discard the teachings of science and common sense in favour of worn-out superstitions patched up with new

fanaticism. A text and a table seem of equal authority, and a future state of gibbering idiots affords them the "consolations of religion." Any attempt to examine the question dispassionately is discountenanced, in view of the importance of re-establishing the discredited doctrine of immortality. The oddest part of the whole affair is that the history of spiritism seems almost forgotten, and its modern dupes have gained nothing from past experience. An article in the 'Westminster Review' for July and October, 1857, on "Spirits and Spirit-rapping," might be read by "Asmodeus" and his credulous friends with considerable advantage.

Mr. Joseph Symes in an able article in the 'Liberator' on "The Originality of Jesus" quotes from a lecture of the Bishop of Melbourne the following passage which he says "may very well be taken to describe the position of himself and the churches in antagonism with "Freethinkers." In reading it substitute clergy for "scribes," and an Atheistic lecturer for the Galilean peasant:—"Men looked up to them reverently, "and thought themselves honoured by 'dusting themselves with the dust of their feet.' Conceive, then, "the startled amazement, the ineffable scorn, of such a "learned clique as this when it found a young Galilean "peasant, without its own learning, seizing in his hand "of might, rending away and scattering that sacred "hedge which with ages of toil they had succeeded in "building, and which kept the way of the *tree of life*. "It was intolerable insult to them. It implied that all "their learning was useless, and all their pride "contemptible. The scorn and fury of the classical "scholar of the last century, when we heard some "audacious scientist call his making and capping of "verses useless trifling, would be as nothing to the rage "of the Jewish scribe. For the learning of the scribe "was not only his wisdom, but also his religion. It "was the key with which he opened or shut the kingdom of heaven, the authority by which he bound on "men's consciences or unloosed those obligations which "regulated all Jewish thought and life. To deride that "learning, to set it at naught, to cast it out as useless "lumber, yea, as god-dishonouring falsehood, was to "confound thought, to break up society, to let in "heathenism, to bring on the reign of chaos and "ancient night. They had nourished a serpent in "their bosom. Whence had he got his insidious "thoughts, his desolating enthusiasm? He must be a "madman, a demoniac. He must either be silenced "or destroyed. The more clearly we see that to be the "feeling of the Scribes and Pharisees, the more readily "we shall adopt the merciful judgment of St. Peter, in "his second sermon after Pentecost:—"I wot that "through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers."

When for Paley's simple idea that the New Testament furnishes us with the testimony of the "original "witnesses of the Christian miracles" who required much the same amount of evidence as most men would require to prove the truth of a miracle in the present day, we substitute the proved historical fact, that like the old, the canon of the New Testament was a gradual growth, it is at once apparent that we are not dealing with direct testimony at all, but with heresy evidence, only taking such definite form as we have in the four Gospels towards the end of the second century. Considering the nature of Jewish tradition, the learned ignorance and gross superstition which prevailed at the

time, mingled as it was with the distorted reflection of Greek philosophy, we may be certain that myth and fable form a large portion of what Christians regard as facts too sacred to be questioned. Such facts usually turn out to be fictions.

In the characteristic reply to the criticism of the Duke of Argyll, by Henry George, in the July number of the 'Nineteenth Century,' after instancing a number of heartless cases of evictions and cruelties perpetrated upon the Highland cottars and crofters, he says:—  
 "No one can read of the atrocities perpetrated upon the Scottish people during what is called the improvement of the Highlands, without feeling something like utter contempt for men who, lions abroad, were such sheep at home that they suffered these outrages without striking a blow, even if an ineffectual one. . . . The reason of the tame submission of the Highland people to outrages which should have nerved the most timid, is to be found in the prostitution of their religion. The Highland people are a deeply religious people, and during these evictions their preachers preached to them that their trials were the visitations of the Almighty, and must be submitted to under the penalty of eternal damnation." This indictment is the heavier, coming from so orthodox a writer as Henry George.

However, it seems to us that Henry George, in attacking what he calls "the prostitution of their religion," is acting as illogically as the man who expects to find "a grape on thorns"; or who should curse a fig-tree for not bearing fruit out of season; for surely this, what he calls contemptible non-resistance to outrage and wrong, should be the natural result of teaching, founded on the divine command "that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." No, no, Mr. George! the "prostitution of religion" does not lie in the non-resistance of evil (or shall we say the emancipation from the Christian religion), but in the exercise of the self-reliant virtues and manliness which conduce to true progress and civilisation.

In these days, when the belief in a personal devil and a natural hell is fast being relegated to the mythological or Jack the Giant Killer age, it is refreshing to find an Anglican clergyman bold enough to warn his hearers, in no measured terms, to beware of the wiles and cunning of the horned, hoofed, and oxtailed gentleman. This was lately done by the Rev. Mr. Copinger, when conducting a kind of revival or hysterical movement in the Anglican Church at Marton, a small town about thirty miles from Wanganui. That such hell fire denunciations should be made by the ignorant and fanatical soldiers of the Salvation Army is scarcely to be wondered at; but when such a respectable and apathetic body as the Anglican Church reverts to first principles, we begin to wonder if the millennium is at hand, or that second coming of Christ, so confidently predicted by St. Paul and other mistaken enthusiasts, and founders of the Christian faith. That there is a great evolution in belief now going on in the Protestant Churches, cannot be denied; and the ignoring by the more cultured of these gross and cruel beliefs held by the early writers of the New Testament, is one of the most striking proofs. However, we cannot but think that the clergyman of whatever Christian sect is the

more honest and orthodox man, who day and night, presents to his hearers in unmistakable language, the horrors of the eternally damned!

That these vivid pictures of hell are believed in by some few poor wretches, is instanced by the cases, happily rare, of religious madness and murder. For should the conviction be borne upon the mind, in all its naked horror, that a man's own children will in all probability be burned eternally, what we say is more commendable than taking the lives of these children before they are old enough to commit a responsible sin. Such a case as this did actually happen in America a few years ago, and the church held up its saintly hands in pious horror, and denounced the murderer. We hold that the Christian churches are in many cases responsible for such atrocities, and that they are rare is only because—thanks to the spread of Freethought and scepticism—few people now believe that their God is a demon.

The organ of the Catholic Church in this colony has given reasons (see article quoted in another column) for "making the education question the most important of all." The Emperor Napoleon's words are repeated: "My duty is to hinder the morality of my people from being poisoned, for Atheism is the destroyer of all morality, if not in individuals, at least among nations." On these words the 'Tablet' comments as follows:—  
 "With Atheism ruling among them, therefore, the nation who will in the future inhabit New Zealand, will be an immoral nation, and no people can be great or prosperous without morality." The conclusion logically follows from the premises, no doubt, but as the proposition, that "Atheism is the destroyer of all morality," is not admitted, the conclusion must be postponed. More especially does the proposition appear a groundless assumption, when one atheistic nation cannot be pointed to to supply the experience wanted to support it. On the other hand there is ample experience to prove that very religious nations have been grossly immoral—it might be maintained that the more religious the more immoral. The city of Rome is an illustration of the fact that a great army of priests, and a great many prayers, do not make the people less leud, less depraved, than in the most sceptical city of Europe.

The authority selected is charming. Napoleon's admission that there might be a doubt about "individuals" destroys any force there may be in his assertion. For as the aggregate of individuals constitute the nation, the aggregate of moral persons would give us a moral state. But we cannot accept the dictum of such an authority as of any value. His idea of what was moral and immoral was so curiously exemplified in his life and actions, that we should be inclined to think his opinions on the subject are things of which the advocates of Christianity should be ashamed. Napoleon, had he lived in an earlier period of the world's history, would have set himself up as a God, and established a worship of himself, like so many great conquerors. There are many traces of this incipient worship, and we will give one. In one of his letters to his wife, Josephine, this egotist and moralist says:—"I have a right to answer all your complaints by an eternal I. I am a person apart; I will not be dictated to by anyone." Now an "Eternal I" appropriately enough denounces Atheism, for Atheism

denounces the worship of every "Eternal I," and is consequently eternally opposed to every usurpation. It is a very high tribute to the morality of Atheism to find that it does not receive the sanction of an "Eternal I." There is another "Eternal I" situated in the "Eternal City," who demands something of the nature of worship in absolute obedience, and it is the glory of Atheism that it wages eternal war on this eternal representative. Atheism in religion is republicanism in politics. Napoleon, who violated his oath to the nation, has no moral claim to speak with authority on either subject. And all "Eternal I's" are usurpers.

## Passing Notes.

A paragraph is going the round of the dailies to the effect that "General" Booth has issued an order that every day, at 12.30 sharp, the soldiers of the Army shall make the sign of the letter "S," to signify that they are saved.

The New South Wales Episcopalian clergymen lately held a meeting to discuss the religious education question. The Primate, in opening the meeting, said that "he respected the conscientious opposition of the Secularists, although he deeply grieved over it." The difficulty with the clergy seems to be that they cannot get funds enough. They require £1,000, and only get £400 to £500. Resolutions were passed urging the necessity of religious education, and also requesting pecuniary aid. The interest taken by the parents may be gauged by the financial support accorded, while it is evident, from the fact of their raising funds, that the clergy are not willing to perform the task without payment.

Mrs. Besant, in the 'National Reformer,' says:—"A Sir William Fox writes to the 'New Zealand Times,' charging me with advocating free love, and for evidence relies on my having published the Knowlton pamphlet. As Sir W. Fox quotes from the indictment and from the judgments, I am afraid that he is wilfully dishonest, for he omits from the charge of the Lord Chief Justice and from the verdict of the jury the express declarations which gave the lie to the allegation he makes. The Knowlton pamphlet did not advocate free love, and I have never advocated free love. Sir W. Fox is maliciously untruthful." The 'National Reformer' adds:—"We have to thank the Editor of the FREETHOUGHT REVIEW for its earnest reply to the coarse attack by Sir Wm. Fox."

In a speech made at Northampton after the recent verdict in the case of the Queen v. Bradlaugh, Mr. Bradlaugh said:—"It has been said, and is said now—whatever your views might have been, at any rate you damaged your position by the letter you wrote on May 20th, when you said if you took the oath you would be using words that were 'idle and meaningless,' and that in using those phrases you insulted the House, and all people who held different views; and you are yourself to blame, and must accept the punishment. Now, it is curious that the very words of assertion which I said I regarded as 'idle and meaningless,' Lord Coleridge, in his charge to the jury, said: 'I agree with Mr. Bradlaugh that these words are not a portion of the oath.'"

In reviewing Dr. Noah Porter's "Christianity," Mr. Bradlaugh answers the author's assertion that Christianity "gives life to human society. It refines its manners; it perfects its civilisation; it renders its laws more just and their administration more perfect; it fosters and popularises education," "Had," asks Mr. Bradlaugh, "it done this in France up to 1780? The church was rich, the people poor; the nobles luxurious, the masses ignorant, starving, and helpless; the administration of justice was a mockery. Had it done it in England up to 1728, when court favourites of easy

virtue nominated bishops, and men were hanged at Newgate by the dozen for trivial offences? Had it done it in the United States in 1860, when the Northern and Southern Christians butchered one another by thousands? Or in Europe in 1870, when French and Prussian Christians sowed the fields with corpses and telegraphed praises to the Lord? Had Christianity fostered and popularised education amongst the English agricultural laborers in 1865?"

The Sydney 'Telegraph,' in reviewing the Stout-Vogel ministry, had the following remarks on Mr Stout:—"Mr. Stout, the nominal Premier, is unquestionably the strongest among the younger politicians of New Zealand. He is a very subtle debater, a lawyer of high standing, an honorable opponent, a lover of all forms of culture, and—a very pronounced 'freethinker.' As a 'freethinker' Mr. Stout has never 'stood behind a tree.' He is more than frank, he is aggressive. He openly fights with his side. Never before has a man who is avowedly hostile to the Churches held the office of Premier of one of these colonies. The relations between him and the people will therefore be watched with much interest. One thing, however, is certain: Mr. Stout is a man who would feel that he debased himself if he allowed his personal views in regard to religion to influence his public conduct."

At a debate on "Religion in Schools" lately held in the Technical College at the School of Arts, Sydney, some interesting speeches were made. The first speaker (Mr. Rose) maintained that the State could not teach a form of belief which would be satisfactory to all parties. He maintained that the principles of morality had been settled for ages, whereas the principles of religious belief had been a subject of contention for centuries, and the various sects had not yet been able to agree with respect to such principles. The Freethinkers, the Jews, the Unitarians, &c., had as good a claim to have their views represented in the school curriculum as have the Church of England or the Roman Catholics. Under the old Denominational system there was more immorality than at present. He contended that there was a third party growing up who claimed to be represented, and who objected to have any form of religious belief taught to their children. Amongst the other arguments used against the state teaching religion were the following: "Men had differed on matters of religion throughout all time, and probably would do so to the end of time; and hence no religious doctrines ought to be taught in our schools, because such doctrines generated feelings of bitterness and rancour." "By allowing any clergyman or any persons delegated by clergymen to interrupt the business of State schools, the advantages of such schools would be contracted."

The Bishop of Melbourne has lately expressed his views on drinking, to an interviewer from a Sydney paper. Dr. Moorhouse said: "I see that Mr. Booth considers the act in itself a wicked one, and compares it with the sin of theft or murder. I do not believe that the act itself is a sin. If it was so every one who sells a glass of liquor would be incarcerated in prison, and the drinker would be treated as a receiver of stolen goods. I would either go much farther or not so far. I greatly admire those teetotalers who take the pledge without any need for doing so, but merely for the sake of example. I think that they are acting on the loftiest of Christian principles. I took the pledge when I was a young man, and I was for some years a teetotaler. It was to me no sacrifice; but my work was very exhausting, and I was told by one of the ablest physicians that I must either drink a glass of wine at dinner or greatly diminish my labours. I felt it right to take wine rather than cripple myself in my work. If I may buy a glass of wine, another may sell it, and yet not be committing a sin; for if it be sinful for a man to sell drink, it must likewise be sinful for me to buy it. The business of a wine merchant or a publican, when properly conducted, is not in itself sinful. I think it a very dangerous one. Liquor may be useful to some and deadly to very many. It has produced more misery and moral ruin than almost any of the evil agencies of civilisation. On that account it is necessary to keep the trade under supervision."

The Old Testament revision is now complete, but is not to be published till Easter next, as Convocation have to approve of it first.

A short time ago there were no fewer than six theatres and public halls devoted to Freethought gatherings on Sunday evenings in Sydney.

Petitions against the proposed Blasphemy laws have been presented to the General Assembly from the Auckland Rationalistic Society by the Hon. Mr. Stout, and from the Wanganui Freethought Association by Mr. Levestam.

The 'Liberal' says that now that small-pox has broken out in Sydney there will be a shriek for more vaccination, and it adds, "more filth instead of more cleanliness." As vaccination is compulsory in Victoria and optional in New South Wales, the contrasted statistics ought to tell a tale if vaccination affords the protection claimed for it.

At the "welcome" tea meeting to the Baptist minister in Wanganui lately, one of the speakers dwelt very forcibly on the fact that the Freethinkers in Wanganui were more than ordinarily aggressive, and that they stuck well together in their efforts against Christianity. The continual allusions made to Freethinkers from pulpits and religious platforms show that the Christians recognise the fact that they cannot now overlook the opposition of Freethinkers.

In a late number of the 'Liberator,' Mr. J. Symes offers £20 to any person who can tell the number of a bank note, the bank it is issued from, the value of the note, the title of the book in which the note is placed, and the numbers of the pages between which it is placed. The challenge remains open till Christmas. If it is possible to tell the number of a bank note under one set of conditions, why should it not be possible to give all the above particulars, though the conditions be different?

Freethinkers, not only in New Zealand, but all over the world, will watch anxiously the progress of Sir George Grey's "Affirmation in Lieu of Oaths Bill." It will be remembered that last year this measure passed the Lower House, but the Lords, in their wisdom, threw it out, and it remains to be seen whether they will do so again this year. That it is time that the oath was done away with no one can doubt who has experienced the formal and meaningless manner in which it is generally administered.

The Otago Chinese mission does not appear to be a very successful business, judging by a report in last month's 'Presbyterian.' On one Sunday "only one man came to hear the Gospel this afternoon." Another paragraph says that when asked why they did not go to church they reply, "Ah Don no good—him not belong any church." One Chinaman who had been baptised in Victoria is said to "have little or no grasp of the reality of Christianity." Chinamen are not the only persons who have to plead guilty in this respect. The results of the waste of time expended by missionaries in trying to convert the "heathen China" are seemingly nil, and possibly the effect of reading such reports may lead Christians who give to foreign missionaries to enquire whether the results are ever really satisfactory.

At the recent sittings of the District Court in Wanganui an indictment for perjury was laid against one who had given false testimony. The document was full of the ordinary legal technicalities, but most prominent were the phrases which set forth that the accused "had not the fear of God before his eyes," and that he had committed this crime "to the great displeasure of Almighty God." It was proved to the satisfaction of the jury that perjury had been committed, but if the clauses mentioned are of any use, it should have been proved that he was guilty in these respects. If they are not of any real use, why should they not at once be dispensed with? The oath is the source of the trouble. If affirmations only were demanded, the penalties for "bearing false witness" could remain as now, and the above meaningless forms would be for ever done away with in our courts of justice.

Under the heading of "The only Firm Foundation," the Dunedin 'Tablet' has the following: "As we have been accused of making an attempt to injure the welfare of the Colony in making the education question the most important of all, and that to which every other should give way, it is incumbent on us to show that we act in good faith, believing that on the education question the welfare of the colony hangs. We shall therefore now quote the decisions of two men of great eminence as to the necessity of the Christianity which it is undoubtedly and with open acknowledgement sought to destroy by means of secularism. The first of the men we speak of is the Emperor Napoleon, who said, in reference to the atheistic advocacy of the astronomer, Lalande:—"My first duty is to hinder the morality of my people from being poisoned, for atheism is the destroyer of all morality, if not individuals at least among nations." With atheism ruling among them, therefore, the nation who will in future inhabit New Zealand will be an immoral nation, and no people can be great or prosperous without morality. The second of the men we allude to is the great Lacordaire, who thus accounted for his conversion from Freethought to Christianity:—"I have reached Catholic belief through social belief; and nothing appears to me better demonstrated than this argument:—Society is necessary, therefore the Christian religion is divine; for it is the means of bringing society to its true perfection, adapting itself to man, with all his weaknesses, and to the social order in all its conditions." We claim, therefore, and on high authority, that in making the education question the first of all, we are endeavouring to establish, on the only sure and unfailing foundation, national morality and the social order—without whose establishment all other measures, whatever may be their wisdom or necessity, would be vain and worthless."

In the 'N.Z. Presbyterian' for September is a leading article on the Dunedin Young Men's Christian Association, which places very strongly before its readers the reasons for the decline of that institution, for that it is declining the report of the Association itself acknowledges. The 'Presbyterian' states four reasons for this:—1. "It has not been true to its designation. It is neither of young men nor for young men—it is composed of young men, fathers, and grandfathers, and has in no special sense either banded young men or helped young men." 2. "It has taken upon itself functions which do not belong to it. It made itself, for example, a tribunal for the trial of heresy, and excommunicated a member, or more than one, and in a very summary way, because he believed he could hold Christianity along with evolution." 3. "It has allowed itself to be too deeply tinged with the spirit of an exclusive pietism." 4. "The Association has never made clear to itself for what purpose it exists." The article concludes by giving advice to the members of the Association to re-organise if they desire success, but it also adds—"It is open to question whether these societies are successful except in large centres of population, where materials are abundant for all institutions, whatever may be their idiosyncracies." The failure of such institutions has been a noticeable fact all through the colony, as instanced in the case under consideration, and at New Plymouth, where the fittings have had to be sold, and in the moribund association in Wanganui. The first reason given by the 'Presbyterian' reminds us of a speaker at a Y.M.C.A. tea meeting, who said he did not know why it was called a "Young Men's" Association, unless it were that as the members were either *very* young men or very old men, it was considered the average age might be put down as being young. Not knowing for what purpose such societies may exist, we can quite believe that they would delight to have a heresy hunt, and no one more heretical could they have found than one who tried to hold evolution and Christianity together. The 'Presbyterian' tells us that "no church would have done this." Probably not now, but it is not so long ago that they would have done something similar, and, even now, the clergy as a whole do not hold with evolution. But the question really is, can a man be a Christian and an Evolutionist at the same time? If so, whereabouts in his creed does he place

the six days creation, the fall, &c.? The third and fourth reasons call for no special remarks at our hands when the orthodox 'Presbyterian' makes them.

The farce of ordering children committed to Industrial Schools to be brought up in some particular religion was made manifest at Christchurch recently. Two children were committed to the Burnham Industrial School, and the R.M. enquired as to their religion. It was said that they had been in the habit of attending the Salvation Army, but as this sect was not represented in the institution, His Worship declined to make an order that they should be brought up in accordance with the teachings of that body. "Finally," says the 'Press,' "it was discovered that at some time the children had attended a Presbyterian Church, and the order was made accordingly."

## Science Notes.

Multiplex telegraphy is occupying great attention at the hands of electricians. Delany's system is marvellous. Moreover, the possibility of "tapping" the wires, and deflecting the message that is being sent (so much in vogue in recent campaigns), is now rendered impossible. One line of telegraph will henceforth serve two towns of ordinary size, and it is expected the nuisance of the spider's weblike crossings of telegraph wires overhead will shortly be abolished. It is said that with six Morse circuits the Delany system is capable of transmitting all that the most expert operators can send. No fewer than 72 independent circuits have been recently worked by one wire.

The planet Saturn has been very brilliant of late, and placed well in the sky for observation. Two French astronomers, Messrs. Paul and Henry, were fortunate enough to distinguish, outside the known established rings of the planet, and around the principal or Cassini's division, a new ring, brilliant and perfectly defined. This has not hitherto been perceived. They think that Encke's division (indicated in most if not all the published drawings of Saturn) is the result of an optical illusion, and that the phenomenon would be produced by the brilliant ring they have just discovered.

We have not quite settled the matter of the phenomenal sunsets, which, unlike anything else meteorological, appear to have been observed all over the world. Mr. Prince, a well-known meteorologist, thinks they were due to the crystallisation of saline particles from masses of sea-water ejected in the form of vapour into the upper regions of the atmosphere by the eruption at Krakatoa, and afterwards diffused above large portions of the earth's surface. He thinks the fact that the greatest displays have been seen during the coldest weather can only be accounted for on the theory that the crystallisation of saline particles is a great factor in their production.

M. Pasteur, since publishing his report on inoculation for rabies, has received communications from people in every part of the world who have been bitten by dogs, and over whose lives hangs the terrible possibility of madness. To such people the news that inoculation will act as an antidote to the poison lurking in the system must come like a gospel. They are, accordingly, offering themselves for inoculation. Numerous French medical students, also, with that reckless courage for which they are remarkable, have offered themselves for experiment. But M. Pasteur has declined them all, for he is not as yet ready to proceed to the human subject; so he confines his experiments to his dogs, which just now must be having rather a lively time of it. And yet M. Pasteur is one of the most humane of men, notwithstanding the calumny of his detractors, and doubtless inflicts no more pain than he can help. He tells us he "could never kill a bird for sport," but that he does not hesitate to do so in the cause of science. But there are people who imagine that sport has claims on animal life which science has not!

Experiments have recently been made at Harvard College, in the United States, with a view to test the value of Electric changes in the atmosphere as indications of coming weather changes. The observations have been very satisfactory, although they are not full enough to justify conclusions. Coming changes in the direction of the wind, rainy weather, and approaching storms are all foretold by the apparatus. The latter is that substantially devised by Sir William Thompson. It photographs every change in the electricity of the air, and also indicates the degree of change. America has all along taken a leading part in meteorology, and promises to maintain it.

Professor Weissmann, a distinguished German naturalist, has recently published a work on the *Perpetuity of Life*, in which he shows that single-celled animals cannot be said to suffer *death*, inasmuch as there is no observable end to their phases of development, as compared to the death of the higher many-celled animals. In the *Protozoa* there arises an unending series of individuals, each one of which is as old as the species itself. Consequently, natural death only occurs in many-celled organisms, and not among the single-celled ones. The professor maintains that life is a perennial and not a periodically interrupted state. When it was first introduced on the earth it went on without interruption, only its form changed, and the individuals of all, even of the highest forms which are living to-day, have descended in unbroken continuity from the oldest primeval forms.

The great comet of 1882 has proved to be one of the most interesting which has appeared for many years. The American astronomers paid especial attention to it, and three of them calculated its orbit, but their calculations by no means agree, one making it to be 712.1 years, the next 793.9 years, and the third 843.1 years. The peculiar nature of the nucleus of the comet is alleged to be the cause of this uncertainty in calculating the period of its orbit. Instead of being a single bright body, the nucleus was composed of a row of small nuclei. By supposing its period to be 751 years, it would coincide with the bright comets which appeared at that distance in time in 1132 A.D., and previously in 370 B.C., of which there are historic accounts.

Mr. Mathieu Williams contends that arsenic taken internally in very small quantities is an antidote against malaria and epidemics, and he even goes so far as to recommend that fever hospitals should be regularly supplied with arsenical vapour. He states that if he lived in New Orleans, or any other fever-stricken place, he should cover the walls of his rooms with highly-charged arsenical papers. From some published researches of well-known Italian physicists, it appears that railway drivers, firemen, guards, porters, &c., engaged upon the lines which traverse the malarial districts of the Campagna, where exposure for a single night is usually followed by a dangerous attack, have been supplied with arsenic in increasing doses, until the latter reached eight millegrammes daily. This treatment has proved marvellously effective, not only in withstanding the malaria, but in curing people already attacked by it as well. Mr. Williams recommends that the hotels in the vicinity of the Campagna, the Pontine Marshes, the Maremma, and all other malarious or fever-stricken regions, should be papered throughout with brilliant-green arsenical wall papers, and painted with "Scheele's green," or other similar arsenical pigment.

At Cardiff, Mr. Bradlaugh addressed 2,500 persons, and received a most enthusiastic greeting.

A few months ago we noticed in these columns the fact that the Dunedin City Council had granted the use of their Town Hall for the Freethought Conference and now we have to mention that the Christchurch City Council have decided to allow "Ivo" to give Freethought lectures in the Theatre Royal on Sunday evenings, and also to allow a charge to be made at the doors. In the same paragraph of a Christchurch paper which mentions this, we notice that the City Council decided to take steps to stop the Salvation Army processions and band playing.

## Progress.

The Nelson Freethought Society have taken a step which shows that they are progressing. Two rooms have been built adjoining the hall in which their meetings are held, one of these is used as a public free library, and the other as a reading and class room. One noticeable feature in the library is that the Bible and Prayer book are placed on the table, and it is intended that they should remain there.

We have received a letter from Mr. L. Macneill, President and Hon. Sec. of the Picton Freethought Association, from which we are glad to learn that satisfactory progress is being made there. One member has demonstrated his enthusiasm by building a new hall for the use of the Association, in which meetings are held every Sunday. Mr. Macneill says:—"Our cause seems to be looking up, and I think we may reasonably expect a great addition to the ranks of Freethought. So mote it be." We should like to hear more frequently from Picton.

## WELLINGTON FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

Mr. W. Tyrrell, Secretary of the above Association, supplies the following notes:—

Our cause is gaining strength in Wellington. Since my last we have had a gentleman (Mr. Sawkins) lecturing for us, under engagement for a course of four lectures, viz., "The Reign of Law," "The Secret of England's Greatness," "The Shams of Christianity," and "Judas and Jesus—a Comparison." With these lectures our membership has increased, and if other Societies can engage with this gentleman they will very much tend to forward their strength. His terms are liberal, and, like Mr. Crook, he will work with the Associations.

Our choir is steadily progressing, and we have also formed a dramatic club in connection with the Society, which will tend to further us with the younger members, who require something more to keep them alive.

I am sorry to say we cannot form a Lyceum yet for children. What we require is two or more good teachers, which, unfortunately, at present we are deficient of, but we hope to get them in time.

Yours truly,  
W. TYRRELL, Secretary.

Lyceum, Sept. 18, 1884.

## NELSON FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

We have much pleasure in publishing the subjoined letter from the Secretary of the Nelson Freethought Association:—

SIR,—Since my last communication I am happy to say our Association is still progressing. At our last quarterly meeting our accounts stood, as heretofore, with a fair cash balance in its favour. We have lately had completed a reading room and library, which is open *free*. This step, there is every probability, will be the means of spreading Freethought principles, also of encouraging our members. There are many signs of the progress of the movement gaining ground outside the Association. We have now on the Educational Committee a majority of one, and at the last election for our Representative in the Parliament House, a Mr. Piper, who is connected with the Christian Young Men's Association, a member of the Blue Ribbon Army, and supporter of the Salvation Army, was defeated, Mr. Lovestam having obtained more than two to one votes; and during the last week the same gentleman (Mr. Piper) was defeated as a candidate for a City Councillor by Mr. Robertson, a staunch well-known Freethinker, and a Committeeman of our Association, by a majority of 64 per cent. I also saw, to my surprise, on the reading room table at our Institute four numbers of the 'Secular Review,' which I have not seen on any previous occasion.

Since the return of our President from his tour, which he had to make for the benefit of his health, he has delivered some very excellent lectures to audiences well filling our Hall. In a short time Mr. Isaac Selby will visit us, and will deliver some lectures in our City.

Although we are quiet in our work, there are visible signs in many directions that it is not only telling, but felt, by the orthodox party, and we cannot help thinking that it is not many years since that two such staunch men as Mr. Stout and Mr. Ballance would have been kept out of the honourable position they now occupy in our House of Representatives.

I beg to acknowledge through your columns the receipt of sundry packets of literature from our mutual friend, "BLUE PENCIL," and wishing all such sincere friends to the cause long life, health, and prosperity,

I remain, &c.,  
EDW. PLAYER,  
Hon. Sec. Nelson F. A.

Sept. 18th, 1884.

## CANTERBURY FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

The following is Mr. F. C. Hall's report for the past month:—

SIR,—Our month's work has been as follows:—Aug. 17, "Spiritualism, the Latest Superstition," by "Ivo" (second); Aug. 24th, "Two Battlefields," by "Ivo"; Aug. 31, "Two Addresses at the Seventeenth Anniversary of the Boston Free Religious Association," by Mr. F. C. Hall; Sept. 7, "Humanity *versus* Spiritualism," by "Ivo" (third); Sept. 14 (at the Theatre Royal), "Who are the Infidels?" by "Ivo." This lecture went grandly, and was well applauded. There were between 300 and 400 present. "Ivo's" three lectures attacking "Spiritualism" gave very great satisfaction, and has tended, I believe, to many giving up wasting their time on this thing.

The third annual meeting of members took place at the Hall on Thursday, 4th September. There was a good attendance. Mr. C. J. Rae was voted to the chair. After approval of the minutes, the Treasurer read his statement of accounts, which showed a balance in hand, after writing off £14 to the piano fund, of £20 1s 2d. The following officers were elected for the year ensuing:—Mr. W. Pratt as President, Messrs. C. J. Rae and R. Pepperell as Vice-Presidents, R. Pepperell as Treasurer, F. C. Hall as Secretary, B. Button as Musical Director, J. M. Thompson as Choir-master, Thos. Williams as Choir Secretary. Committees:—Library—A. H. Maclean, C. Scholfield, and B. Bull. General—Messrs. Biltcliffe sen. and jun., J. Pepperell, R. Brown, E. George, J. Little, S. Parker, and J. Brooks. Votes of thanks were passed to outgoing officers and committee, also to the lady superintendent and to the lady pianist of the Children's Lyceum.

Yours faithfully,  
F. C. HALL, Secretary.

Christchurch, Sept. 20, 1884.

## AUCKLAND RATIONALISTIC ASSOCIATION.

The work of the Auckland Rationalistic Association for the past month is thus summarised by Mr. W. C. Dennes, Hon. Sec. of that body:—

SIR,—The Auckland Rationalistic Association have continued on in the even tenor of their ways since my last monthly report, and very little of a public nature has occurred that would interest the Freethought or any other body. That energetic young advocate of Freethought, whose promise in the future, if he sticks to it, is decidedly encouraging (I speak of Mr. Isaac Selby), gave us his farewell lecture last Sunday week. It was one of the best of the series, and drew a very good house—good in respect of numbers and liberality. For two Sundays past we have given excellent programmes of music and recitations, in addition to the lectures, having been assisted by several members of the Dramatic Troupe, who are generally very willing helpers in the cause of Freethought, without making any specific charge at the door, but reminding visitors by advertisement that a voluntary gift of a shilling was expected as they entered. The plan, so far, has exceeded our expectations, and I believe as much money has been taken as by making a fixed charge, and also as large audiences got together. It is the intention of the executive of the Association to communicate with the Government on the subject of charging for admission, previous to bringing on a test case. As our late member for Newton (Mr. Wm. Swanson) puts it, it is a great shame that a private individual, or small body, should be put to heavy expenses in order to find out what the law is. We are a law-abiding Association, but the difficulty is—we do not know what the law is!

Our belligerent young lecturer, Mr. Isaac Selby, has had the presumption to challenge the bishops, priests, and deacons of Christ's various churches in Auckland, without finding a single champion of the faith either able or willing to come forth.

We still steadily increase in numbers, and, I trust, by the end of our first year's existence as an Association, will number two hundred.

Yours, &c.,  
W. C. DENNES, Hon. Sec.

Auckland, Sept. 19, 1884.

## WANGANUI FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

The following is the report of the proceedings of the above Association for the month:—

SIR,—During the past month there has been little of importance to report. The usual Sunday evening attendance has been about the average. The President gave a most interesting lecture, "J. S. Mill's Life and Philosophy," which was listened to with great interest, as the speaker had evidently taken a great deal of trouble to make himself acquainted with the subject. One of the members, at the following meeting, read a paper on "Paine's Political Writings," which had been prepared with great care. Other papers and readings by the members have also been given.

We are much indebted to one of our members for the trouble he has taken to prepare a large number of prettily-painted shields, on which are inscribed the names of prominent Freethinkers, past and present. Each shield is surmounted with two flags crossed, which has a most pleasing effect. These shields are placed on panels all round our Hall.

I much regret to say that our Secretary has sustained a bereavement in the loss of his only child. Personal friends and a large number of the Association met the coffin at the cemetery gate, and followed it to the grave. This is the first occasion on which a Free-

thought funeral has taken place in Wanganui. Our President, in a most impressive manner, read "Whence and Whither," by Colonel Ingersoll, which was written by him on the occasion of the death of a child in 1882.

Mr. Pharazyn said he had been requested to say a few words on this melancholy occasion, otherwise he would have preferred to keep silence, as the truest expression of sympathy, for he could not make use of the ordinary commonplaces of Christianity, and talk about submission to the will of Providence and the hope of eternal life. No doubt such considerations were a consolation to those who believed in the old theology, but, to be consolatory, the belief must be real. To a man plunged in the depths of poverty it would be a consolation if he really believed that he was the heir to a large fortune; but, to tell a man that such was the case, with no evidence at all—but merely to comfort him—would not console him, but would be an insult to his understanding. To lose those who are dear to us can only be regarded as a terrible misfortune. The real consolation is the knowledge that, though they may have missed much happiness in life, they have also escaped all risk of pain and sorrow. Those left to mourn their loss know this also, that, great as their present grief may be, time is the great consoler, and that in years to come it will hardly be remembered as a pain. He would conclude by assuring Mr. and Mrs. Buckrell of his deepest sympathy with them personally, and that of all their friends now present.

A. D. WILLIS,  
Treasurer W.F.A.

Mr. Bradlaugh was requested to speak at the Franchise demonstration in Hyde Park, but could not, owing to a previous engagement with the Rhonnda miners.—'National Reformer.'

A correspondent writes in the 'National Reformer,' discussing the advisability of a badge for Freethinkers. The matter was discussed at the last N.S.S. Conference, and rejected.

On the road to Hyde Park cheers for "Charlie Bradlaugh" were given while passing the Prince of Wales.—'National Reformer.'

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Entering Milford Sound ... ..	1	0
In Milford Sound ... ..	0	6
Paikakariki (Wellington) ... ..	0	6
Waitangi Falls (Bay of Islands) ... ..	1	0
Waitakeri Falls (North of Auckland) ... ..	1	0
Lake Taupo ... ..	1	0
Lake Mavora (Otago) ... ..	1	0
Among the Ranges, Queensland (Otago) ... ..	1	0
Wellington Heads ... ..	1	0
Lyttelton Harbour ... ..	1	0
Timaru Breakwater ... ..	1	0
Port Chalmers and Otago Heads ... ..	1	0
Ocean Beach, Dunedin ... ..	0	6
Breaksea Sound ... ..	1	0
Otira Gorge ... ..	1	0
Taramu Creek ... ..	1	0
Bowen Falls, Milford Sound ... ..	0	6
Entrance to Dusky Sound ... ..	0	6
Head of Dusky Sound ... ..	0	6

REDUCTION IN PRICE OF LAST YEAR'S CARDS.

In order to further increase the sale of last year's cards, the publisher has decided to reduce the price of the large size to 6d each, and the small ones to 3d each. They have been carefully reprinted this year, and many corrections made in the drawings. Over 3,000 of these cards were sold in Wanganui last year to send away to friends out of the Colony, and the publisher is confident that when his new cards are seen, a most extensive demand will arise.

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Pending further arrangements, F. C. Hall Esq., the Secretary of the Christchurch Freethought Association, has kindly undertaken to take charge of and distribute THE FREETHOUGHT REVIEW in Christchurch.

Those willing to undertake the agency for places not named are requested to communicate at once with the publisher.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"ONE OF THE MANY" (Ngairi).—We regret your communication was received too late for insertion in the present number. It shall have a place in our next.

A FREETHINKER.—Also too late for this issue. Will appear next month.

# The Freethought Review.

WANGANUI, N.Z.: OCTOBER 1, 1884.

## THE CONSERVATIVE FACTOR IN PROGRESS.

THE idea, that it is the function of Conservatism to resist, in order that progress may be constant, has taken a prominent place in the minds of many of the greatest philosophers of the age. This doctrine applied to religion means that a clinging to orthodoxy prevents a revolution which would sweep away all that is beautiful and holy in the religious life. It is one of the unmistakable principles of organic life that it should tend to preserve its own existence; and what is true of the individual is true of the race. The same law applies to thought. A man's idea is a part of himself, and he naturally clings to it as a part of his being. It is also his own, his property, and to part with it, unless it be compensated, is a surrender of the means of existence upheld by the law of self-preservation.

It follows from this that a small reform is more easily effected than a great one; that a series of small reforms are accomplished more readily than one reform of the same equivalent as the series. The principle of compensation must come in to satisfy the conservative mind that what he is parting with will be more than restored in some other form. When this stage of thought is attained, there arises the liberal desire to advance, and then a coalition of ideas takes place between conservatism and liberalism. The conservative cling-

ing to old forms, with the liberal movement in the direction of modification and change, are the constant phenomena of social, political, and religious movements. The feeling of the Conservative is that what he is used to and has virtually formed a part of his existence, is necessary to society, which would be injured by any attack on one of its essential principles. For that to which habit has accustomed us is commonly accepted as true and necessary. The conviction of the Liberal is arrived at by an intellectual process that advancement must take place from changes adapted to new wants and varying circumstances. But this intellectual conception is itself largely indebted to one of the most obvious and certain laws of Nature. The laws of the Medes and Persians that changeth not, were in flat contradiction to the principle which made change itself throughout nature a law more imperious than any ordinance of an Eastern despotism. The Medes and Persians worshipped conservatism, and denounced the complementary element of progress as a false god whose priests were the enemy of the State. The result was national decadence and death.

But let us consider the other extreme. Nihilism connotes all that is destructive of existing social and political conditions. (It is said that it stops short of the religious in Russia, where many of the condemned Nihilists have been careful to have the prospects of their future existence assured through the intervention of the priest). Now it will be seen that the Nihilist occupies the opposite pole to the Conservative, who is governed entirely by his feelings. He is convinced that his lot is bad, and that it can only be improved by the absolute destruction of all that exists. If he could only make a clean sweep, there might, in his imagination, be substituted a state of things which would realise an approach to a perfect ideal. He imagines society cannot be worse, and might be better. It is hardly necessary to criticise such doctrines. It may, however, briefly be observed that society is the resultant of the action and interaction of all its units; and if the Nihilist began to reconstruct from the foundation, he would find the same elements suiting themselves as before to the laws of their being and of their environment. Nihilism in Russia is met by a hard and fast conservatism as rigid and unyielding as that of the old Eastern empires: and thus the two extremes of thought are in violent conflict. On the one hand we have the worship of ancient traditions as factors of national strength. On the other, the worship of an ideal which gets rid of the past altogether, and sets up an object apparently perfect because divorced from all that has gone before.

It would be unphilosophic to say that progress may not be the resultant of this conflict. For it is difficult to say that a mild liberal demand for reform would have any material effect in overcoming the resistance of a form of government founded on the conservation of existing privileges. The emancipation of the serfs shows that resistance may lead to a revolution, for the act of the autocrat in freeing his serfs was as much a revolution as if the serfs themselves had won their privileges by the sword. The deduction indeed is that if we find a conservatism which accepts the Medo-Persian law, we may expect a Nihilism which displays itself either in practising the Gospel of Dynamite, or in proclaiming the freedom of many millions of serfs. The landowners clung to their traditions, and looked with wonder and alarm at the action of the Autocrat become Nihilist.

In most constitutionally-governed countries, where play is given to all the forces, there can be neither one extreme nor the other. Conservatism is modified by the intellectual conviction that traditions are not always necessarily good and wholesome. There is established in consequence an intellectual hierarchy which preaches change as the herald of progress, and modification as the law of ultimate perfection. In this respect evolution in politics has long been accepted as the vital principle of the English constitution. The Conservative instinct of clinging to old forms and existences has required that all proposed changes shall be carefully examined before adoption; while the

liberal ardour for improvements has overcome the resistance at the weakest points—the places where progress requires that the advance guard of reform should enter.

In religion, we have long had in the West the oligarchic and Nihilistic conflicts of the North. A priesthood, ready to condemn to everlasting punishment every man who dared to question the Medo-Persian law, long maintained a reign of absolutism, subject however to periodical outbursts of Nihilism. But the intellectual strides of modern criticism, protected by the spirit of liberty in politics, has sapped the authority of that most ancient of despotisms, the wielder of supernatural power, allowing Liberalism to assert its authority. The best aspect of the Conservative factor, and its only useful one, is to defend all that it thinks worth defending in religious systems. In clinging to the supernatural it may do an unconscious service to humanity in preserving, for instance, the feeling of reverence for age and character, and so expand the higher morality which some call worship. As point after point of the untenable is yielded, the iconoclastic force, which is aggressive in proportion as conservatism is unyielding and dominating, will be transformed into a reforming Liberalism, constructive rather than destructive in its effects, and acquiring a positive character and beliefs of its own. The churches themselves may one day become Temples of Humanity in which a hell-fire and the wrath of an idealised Eastern despot in the character of Jehovah, will have gradually been replaced by the necessity of purity of life and that duty each one owes to the society of which he is a member. The Conservative factor in human nature will have the credit of preserving some of the good, notwithstanding the fact that it has resisted the process of elimination which has been necessary to the result.

B.

### THE CHURCH ON "BAD BOOKS."

THE Napier 'Daily Telegraph' of the 23rd ult. contains the report of a sermon by the Rev. Father Cassidy, which, as it is typical of much that passes for argument—both in the Catholic and Protestant Churches—against Freethought, is worth examination. Taking for his text the words "And their speech spreadeth like a cancer" (II Timothy, 11 ch. 17 v.), the Rev. Father dilates with much eloquence upon what is generally called modern progress. To judge from his opening remarks, one would suppose that his sympathies were entirely with it, and that we had at last found that *rara avis*—a priest, who was also a Liberal. "This," he says, "is the age of advancement—the reign of progress—the century of invention. It is a time when the mind and will of man look round for new fields of activity, new fields of labour, pushing the limits of their knowledge and desires farther and farther into the realms of the unexplored and inexperienced. Steam and electricity, science and art, literature and wealth—are all progressing. Activity is the reigning power. The dash and go-ahead of the men of the present day is a source of admiration for ourselves, and would be a cause for astonishment for those who have not long since passed away. The human mind, surrounded with all the glory of past experience, and buoyed up by the enlightenment it daily receives from countless sources of information, is showing great signs of its superiority over the mind of all preceding centuries. The mind of the human race, like the mind of the individual, has its infancy, its youth, its manhood." After illustrating this growth into "glorious manhood," he continues: "Thus the mind of the human race has grown stronger and stronger, and its powers of doing evil have grown stronger too." So far so good. It is evident enough that power may be used for good or bad ends, just as dynamite may be used to blast away dangerous rocks at the entrance of a harbour, or to destroy innocent passengers in a railway train, or harmless servants in a club kitchen. Fools and rogues have misused power ever since the world began. The Rev. Father, however, is not thinking of any such truism as that. He pays a tribute to liberalism, but is to be feared, like "the Greeks, even when they offer presents," and introduces an enemy into the liberal camp, opening the attack as follows:—"But amid

"the many ways at present under its control of bringing scandal over the land, of spreading sin and immorality, of destroying every virtue, of corrupting the young, debilitating the strong, and sending down the old to unhallowed graves; of robbing the family of peace, society of stability, heaven of citizens, of ruining, in a word, the glorious destiny of the human race—there is no stronger, surer, or more expeditious way of doing all this than the propagation of infidel, scandalous, and immoral books. The enemies of God and man know this well. They are fully aware of the power that printing and publishing places at their disposal, and they struggle earnestly to carry out their terrible propaganda of ruin and misfortune with great determination and advanced skill. Their work is already manifest all over the world; in the capital, or in the solitary village among the mountains; in the palaces of the rich, or amid the ruins of misery and poverty that fill the sickening homes of the friendless and the poor. Let us then summons before the tribunal of human justice the writers of these scandalous productions; let us lift the curtain that their brilliant sentences or glowing imagination may have thrown upon them, and look round us in life to witness the evil they may have scattered over the land." All this is a little vague, and the good Father himself would probably find some difficulty in discovering what are the distinct propositions hidden behind this "curtain" of rhetoric. The lifted curtain sometimes only discloses a gaudy daub. His meaning is, however, sufficiently indicated further on, when, after admitting that all the writers of whom he disapproves are not equally guilty—we believe Mill just escaped the INDEX—he goes on to denounce those "writers who pretend to believe, and exert themselves to make others believe, that there is no God, who look upon life as the outcome of Nature, the last stroke of fatality, the bottled sunshine of Winwood Reade; who say there is no such thing as good or evil, that it is only the result of associations and ideas; who laugh to scorn the existence of another life once we have shuffled off this mortal coil, and say when we are dead all is dead for us and dead for ever. There are other writers who endeavour to destroy the divinity of Christianity, though they recognise a divinity of some sort or other. But both are guilty of many crimes that cry aloud to Heaven for vengeance, and crimes that must eventually bring upon the perpetrators the curse of God and the odium of all good men." In other words, the Catholic Church, being in possession of absolute truth, would prohibit all men from seeking for relative truth, the only truth known to mankind at large; and because she can no longer burn authors and books, making light of her pretensions, refers that pleasing task to a God made in her own image, the image of a conceited, narrow minded priest, trained in slavish deference to traditional authority, and filled with a learning having about as much relation to the reality of things as that of a Chinese mandarin. When the Rev. Father talks of "the curse of God and the odium of all good men," he is only unconsciously gratifying that insolence, hatred, and revenge which too many human beings are so ready to feel against those who do not conform to their own sentiments. As is usual with orthodox preachers, Father Cassidy is grossly unfair in the manner in which he attributes to the writers of what he calls "bad books" all the consequences which in his opinion must flow from erroneous doctrine, or what he holds to be such. After enlarging upon the sins of intemperance and violence, culminating in the crime of murder, he says:—"But greater than these, than all other crimes, is that crime that that murderer of soul and body, that emissary of Satan, commits, who studies with might and main to overthrow the first principles of revealed truth, who employs all his talents, science, and ability to drive away every thought of God and His existence from the human mind, to render the passion of man more violent, to open up the road of systematic immorality, and scatter broadcast the germs of ruin and spiritual death all around. The writer of an infidel book is thus a murderer, since he destroys all thought of responsibility, and ignores the existence of good and evil and any such thing as crime, and is the cause of driving others to be guilty of taking away innocent life. The ordinary murderer's hand is short; it cannot do its work of destruction but in the limited sweeps of its limited powers. But the writer of bad books stretches his guilty hand all over the world,

"staining it with blood, and blackening it with gloom." In other words, a large proportion of the world's great thinkers and scholars, from Bruno to Herbert Spencer, deserve hanging, or worse, in the opinion of this charitable gentleman, who is careful to lead his hearers to suppose that they not only did harm as a matter of fact, but did it wilfully of malice aforethought. Did it never occur to the Rev. Father that there are other ideals of right conduct than those endorsed by his Church, and that other men may be as conscientiously anxious as himself to leave the world better than they found it by the use of means of which he is incapable of seeing the real force and effect? We have quoted largely from Father Cassidy's sermon as the best mode of showing how silly and shallow his arguments are, and, had we space, we should gladly publish the whole of it, as a "shocking example" of controversial cunning and unfairness. Certain it is that stuff of this sort will not impose upon any mind of ordinary intelligence. We have tried the experiment with perfectly successful results. Even his picture of the "dead body of the young man by the wayside, with the empty revolver lying near," who he supposes shot himself in consequence of reading bad books, called forth the remark that the catastrophe was more probably due to bad drink, and a reference to the pious Woodville murderer of his wife and children, whom he hoped to meet in heaven (after being deservedly hanged on earth), as a reward of his faith in Jesus. The truth is, the whole question turns upon thinking freely and freely expressing the results of thought, or not really thinking at all. Liberty has its drawbacks as well as its advantages. If people are allowed to think and write as they please, to gather all the fruits of experience, and not only those crab apples which the clerical gardeners cultivate with so much assiduity, and which mankind are beginning to find sour and unwholesome—a fruit *not* to be desired to make one wise—they will occasionally make mistakes. Bad and rotten fruit will often be mistaken for that which is good and fresh. Some will eat, and persuade others to eat, unripe fruit, and suffer the usual penalties. But mistakes made in the world of thought are usually "corrigible." There is no such thing as intellectual cholera. Nations and individuals may make many blunders and yet live. They may return scratched and torn from the wrong path, and yet if they persevere will find the right. All experience shows that liberty is an essential condition of moral, mental, and material progress. It is no selfwilled invention of men impatient of restraint, as the Churches usually assume, but is part of the organic nature of things. Its ultimate effect is to produce that "moving equilibrium" of society which is as opposed to stagnation as to anarchy. Scientific in means, social in aim, modern civilisation regards theologians, of whom Father Cassidy is the type, with the respect due to their good intentions, but with the pity not unmingled with contempt, called forth by their ignorant fanaticism and remarkable economy of truth. If Father Cassidy belongs to that section of his Church, which, as Pascal long since demonstrated, acts on the maxim that "the end justifies the means," he may rest assured that in this Colony at least no good end will be served by misrepresenting the aims and principles of his opponents, who have at least this advantage over him, that they know both sides of the question, while, if he takes the advice he gives to others—never to read "bad books"—he can only know his own.

R. P.

## SOWING THE SEED.

All who observe the tendency of public opinion must be convinced that Freethought is making rapid strides throughout New Zealand. Wherever one intelligent Freethinker takes up his abode, there are soon to be found in the neighbourhood a number who have forsaken their orthodox opinions. Without any seeming attempt at proselytising, a Freethinker may sow seed which will produce, in a short time, tenfold that of the aged tree whose blossoms it is his duty to shake to the ground. Personal experience has taught the writer that there is little difficulty in shaking the orthodoxy of a straightforward, inquiring man. Nothing is more convincing than the mere mention of scriptural absurdities, and the young convert will soon express himself as astounded at his own credulity in believing things which the slightest honest reasoning may show to be fallacious. No man whose assistance is to be of any

value to the cause will become a full-blown Freethinker all at once. With him it requires time to develop freedom of reason, and to shake himself free from the teachings with which he has been instilled from childhood. A chance remark on some ridiculous scriptural clause may prove to be valuable seed. It will set the man thinking, and one after another the difficulties and absurdities of the tenets of the Christian creed will crowd themselves upon him. He may not say much about it for a time, but his mind is at work the while. Presently, he will forego the "inspiration" of the Old Testament, and seriously state that it is a compilation of Jewish tradition, just like the mythological and traditional worship of other nations. He will have seen in this groundwork of the Christian religion inconsistencies, contradictions, instances of brutal cruelty, and barbarous legislation. But he still sticks to the New Testament. He cannot understand its compilation as a tale without any good foundation. The miracles, resurrection, alleged prophecies, and so on, are not to be put aside without inquiry. But how is the necessary information to be obtained? The fact is, it is very scarce, and certainly not commonly within the reach of the people. In proof of this, I have delivered addresses in which I have dealt with the pre-existing and parallel mythologies of other nations, and several of those present have afterwards asked me whether the statements made were really true. This shows the interest which would be taken in the matter if Freethought literature were only better available. By unassuming argument much work—and that of a substantial kind—may be done. A clerical friend of mine was full of divine inspiration when I first met him. I referred him to several passages the very reverse of honourable or humane, and now he says the Bible is only inspired where it says "Thou shalt." Thus the work is begun, and there is no saying when it will end—never. A man's eyes once opened, he will himself soon advocate the cause, and, in turn, he will become the teacher of others. In other words, he will in a short time prove a true Freethinker, whence have "sprung eye-openers" in all quarters. Thus the work goes on. One man speaks to another and sets him thinking; the other takes it up and becomes a soldier in the cause; and so it grows day by day, till now, where but a few years ago a man hardly dare acknowledge himself a Freethinker, the cause has firm root, and its disciples have become the most honoured members of society. There is much yet to be done, but if every Freethinker be outspoken, and sow a little seed as he has the opportunity, that seed will soon develop itself, and will in turn drop new seed, till Freethinkers become as thick as the trees of a pine forest, and the cause of Liberty, Truth, and Light shall rejoice in the mighty hosts following in its train, whose banner is "Onward to Victory!"—till all the earth shall have forsaken her delusion, and man's object in life is the welfare of his fellowman.

E. A. H.

## AN INFIDEL'S PRAYER.

The following extract from the 'National Reformer' gives a few further facts relating to the story we published in our last. Perhaps the colonial papers which published the original would like to copy it:—In the 'National Reformer' for May 25th (page 362) we quoted from 'The Christian' a story, professing to be taken from a paper called 'The Truth,' of an infidel young man alleged to have been struck dead while delivering a blasphemous prayer at a Young Men's Christian Society, date and place not given. It turns out that the paper called 'The Truth' is published at St. Louis, Mo., and is edited by the Rev. J. H. Brookes, who now professes to have had the information from the Rev. W. Staymaker, Presbyterian Minister, Pass Christian, Mississippi, who pretends to have had the story from Dr. T. N. Angin, of Birmingham, Alabama, who is supposed to state that the young man was a Dr. A. T. Jones, of Birmingham, and that the incident happened at Gainsville, Alabama, date not given. We shall be glad if any of our United States friends will enquire into the subject, and we especially bring it to the notice of the 'Boston Investigator' and the 'New York Truth-seeker.' We shall also be glad if Mr. H. L. Green will get some of his Alabama correspondents to look up the facts.

## Correspondence.

## THE CIRCULATION OF THE BIBLE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE FREETHOUGHT REVIEW.

SIR,—The enclosed letter was sent to the editor of one of the Timaru papers, but it is unnecessary to say it was rejected. I wonder would it have been rejected if it had been a letter of the regular orthodox type, containing a lot of fulsome adulation of Christianity, interspersed with vulgar abuse of Freethought and Freethinkers? I think not. Is it any wonder that religious error and superstition continue to flourish when the Secular press lends itself so readily to the deception? This should cause Freethinkers to set the higher value on their own organ, seeing that the greater portion of the press of this country endeavours to crush out infidelity by a system of misrepresentation and suppression. Without an organ of their own to look to for justice, Freethinkers could be maligned and slandered with all the spleen and venom which religious bigotry is capable of using, and would have no remedy whatever. The following is the letter referred to:—

SIR,—I read your leader in last evening's paper anent the proceedings of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and also attended Mr. Baker's lecture on the same subject at the Odd Fellows' Hall. With your permission, I should like to make one or two observations on both the leader and the lecture. Taking your leader first, you say—"From the Seventy-ninth Report we find that the *five income* of this Society has been £112,428, and the receipts from the sale of Bibles £98,068." From this it will be seen that the amount obtained in the shape of voluntary subscriptions exceeds by nearly £15,000 the whole sum realised by the legitimate sale of the Bible. It would be interesting to know, Sir, how the operations of the Society would be affected by the sudden withdrawal of this voluntary assistance? Why should the *word of God* have to rely on the charity of the benevolent, on powerful organisations, on persistent personal canvassing by a great army of paid priests and pedlars, in order to introduce it to races of people who should have had it at the beginning, if the book is really what it professes to be? The fact that it is not a universal Bible is one of the strongest arguments to prove that it is of purely human origin. A little further on you say:—"The Secularist may deny its Divine origin, and may gainsay its inspiration, but deny that it is the Book of Books, in respect to circulation, no one can." Secularists do not want to deny it. So far as its claim to Divinity is concerned, its circulation is a matter of very little consequence. Does it naturally follow that because it has the largest circulation of any book in the world it must therefore be Divine? Apply the same argument to anything else, and see how ridiculous it is. The most widely-known medicines in the world are "Holloway's Pills and Ointment." They have been advertised in every newspaper and in every language on the face of the earth, and for every other box of any other kind of medicine you will find at least half-a-dozen boxes of Professor Holloway's—therefore "Holloway's Pills and Ointment" must be Divine! Wonderful logic, is it not? Is the truth of any book to be measured by its popularity? If so, Quida's novels would contain a greater measure of truth than the "Elements of Euclid," and the reliability of newspapers would be estimated by their circulation. Then you go on to speak about the *Heavenly* efforts of such organisations as the British and Foreign Bible Society to circulate the *Word of God*. What surprises me is that, in spite of all these stupendous efforts to thrust this particular book upon the world as the veritable Word of God, infidelity should be correspondingly on the increase. Can it be possible that people grow sceptical just in proportion as their knowledge of Scripture increases? It would seem so. In speaking about the conceit of Rogers, that "men would get up some fine morning and find the Bible a total blank," you say that a new Bible could easily be collated from memory, and you go on to reflect upon it thus:—"What an index of the characters of individuals would be got from the several contributions! The Sectarian parsons would be sure to remember texts that told in favour of their respective views; the man of the world would have his appropriate texts; the gloomy, melancholic individual would have a special set of verses; we should see 'each man in his humour and no mistake.'" Why, this is exactly the early history of the Bible. For centuries there were only two or three copies of the Bible in existence, written in a fragmentary fashion, and entrusted to the keeping of a few superstitious, credulous, and fanatical monks. Now, what was to prevent these monks from manipulating the manuscripts just as their caprice or personal interest dictated? Do we not see the influence, not of *one*, but of *many* minds, on the Bible by the readiness with which it accommodates itself to anyone's opinions, be they good or bad? Again, I ask, is it any wonder that the Bible should have a larger circulation than any other book, considering the powerful agencies at work on its behalf, and the fact that the greater number of those in circulation, especially in heathen countries, have been given away for nothing. It is a poor book that people will not accept for nothing. Concerning Mr. Baker's lecture, with reference to the Society's proceedings in India, Persia, Asia, and elsewhere, I have nothing to say. The lecturer indulged in a good deal of self-glorification at the way in which the Society's agents (himself amongst the number) have been pushing the circulation of the Bible in those countries. Now, I take leave to say that many of the methods adopted by the Society agents to spread the Gospel in those countries are highly discreditible, and taxing the forbearance of the people just a little too far. If Buddhist, Brahmin, or Mohammedan priests were to peddle their sacred wares at every street corner in England, and enter, uninvited, the houses of Christians for the purpose of propagating their religious doctrines, they would very soon come to be looked upon by Christians

generally as a public nuisance. Christians are fond of pointing to countries where Christianity is the prevailing form of belief, and saying—"See to what a degree of civilisation we have attained through the influence of Christianity! What would the world be without the Bible? Wherever you find Christianity you will find civilisation, therefore civilisation is due to the influence of Christianity." This may be good Christian argument, but it is not sound logic. There is such a thing as taking "what travels along with a thing as the cause of the thing," as Ingersoll puts it. One might, with as much reason, say—"See to what a degree of civilisation we have attained through the influence of felt hats and paper collars! What would the world be without felt hats and paper collars? Wherever you find felt hats and paper collars you will find civilisation—therefore civilisation is due to the influence of felt hats and paper collars." It is said that the missionary enters a heathen country with a Bible in one hand and a bottle of rum in the other. Whether this is literally true or not is no great matter, as the one naturally follows, if it does not accompany, the other. Civilisation introduces so many destructive vices into every heathen country that the terms "civilisation" and "extermination" are coming to be looked upon as almost synonymous. With one hand civilisation offers the heathen something which professes to show him how to obtain "salvation," and with the other gives him another thing which so effectually civilises him that very soon there is not a heathen left to "save." Mr. Baker admitted that the two most powerful agents in destroying "caste," especially in India, were the Bible and brandy—rather a curious combination, truly! I should like to have reviewed Mr. Baker's lecture at some length, but I am afraid I have already exceeded the space at your disposal. I am well aware that the opinions expressed in this letter are rather heterodox, and doubtless, in the interests of "religion," you will consign it to the oblivion of the waste-paper basket, but I hold that, in a free country like this, a man should not only have the right to entertain such opinions, but the right to give them through the only available channel—the public press. It may be considered a wise policy to burk discussion on matters that are likely to give offence to people of the "goody-goody" type, but it is a policy that will never make permanently popular any public journal adopting it. A newspaper professing to be an "organ of the people" should not only speak the truth itself, but should allow the truth to be spoken, without fear or favour, and should endeavour, as far as possible, to reflect not *one* side but *all* sides of public opinion. This I take to be the legitimate function of a newspaper.

I am, &amp;c.,

J. R.

York St., Timaru.

"BLUE PENCIL."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE FREETHOUGHT REVIEW.

SIR,—Would you kindly allow me a brief space in your columns to acknowledge the receipt of a parcel of Freethought literature from "Blue Pencil," for which I beg to tender that gentleman my warmest thanks, and to assure him that nothing shall be wanting on my part to make good use of the information contained therein.

Yours truly,

THOS. G. LEACH.

Inglewood, Sept. 18, 1884.

The Swansea town council after having a few weeks before given permission to the bands to play in the parks on Sunday, have been induced to reverse their decision. The police reported as to the improved conduct of the lower classes while the bands were playing. A strange argument against the bands was adduced by the Rev. Dr. Morgan to the effect that the Salvation Army have been tremendously injured. This to most people would have rather been a recommendation than otherwise.

Tounguenof, according to the 'Freidenker,' was in youth an Hegelian, but ultimately became an agnostic. Thus he did not deny that life after death is possible, but declared openly that it did not attract him, but, on the contrary, seemed terrible. "What should I do through all eternity?" he used to say. "How could I fill up this incomprehensible abyss? Is my petty personality worthy of becoming eternal? How I could live without a body, I cannot imagine."

At the third annual meeting of the Freethought League of Germany, Dr. Ludwig Büchner, who presided, delivered an address on the Woman Question, in which he maintained that woman should stand equal with man in rights and opportunities. The 'Radical Review,' referring to a report of the meeting printed in a German paper says: "The lecture was well received, and several other speakers emphasized it as the special duty of Freethinkers to help woman in her hard struggle for better conditions of life. And yet the great mass of women stand aloof from Freethinkers, and side with the Christians, who, to use the language of one of the prominent English journals, say that 'to marry, to bear children, to be mistresses of families, to give no occasion to the adversary to speak evil, to learn in silence with all subjection, such are St. Paul's precepts of the gentler sex.'"

## A GLANCE AT THE 'TIMES.'

Amongst the products of nineteenth century civilisation there are few things which present so broad a field for thought as the columns of a daily paper. Our colonial press may well be considered one of the wonders of the age. With a population not exceeding one-half of that of the City of Glasgow, cut up into provincial districts, and subdivided into numerous small townships—some of which are honoured with the title of "city"—the largest of which has fewer inhabitants than many an English parish, this colony supports a vast army of newspapers, men of all grades and conditions, from editors down to printers' devils; and every town, as soon as it can boast of two hotels, a church, and a "lock-up," endeavours to establish its local journal. This is a healthy sign of the mental activity of the age, but the quality of such journals must necessarily be greatly influenced by their surroundings—even the largest of them—dwarfs considerably when compared with that leviathan of daily papers, the London 'Times.' A copy of the issue of June 16th came to hand by a late European mail, and though to me English news has long since lost the charm it once had, there is still something about the 'Times' which strongly attracts an Englishman. In the sheet before me there is much to interest the earnest Freethinker. Under the heading "Hospital Sunday" I find reports of the sums collected and the sermons preached at various places of worship in the metropolis. Dr. Vaughan, of the Temple Church, treated his hearers to an eloquent defence of pain and suffering, showing, amongst the various good things arising from such an unpleasant source, "such a noble spectacle as was seen when English women of birth and station left their luxurious homes in England to minister to English soldiers in the crowded hospitals of the East." The establishment of hospitals and dispensaries was also dwelt upon as evidence of the good resulting from pain and suffering. At the same time, the donations that day were said to be "for Christ's peculiar work, namely, counteracting the destructive agencies of evil." Space will not permit me to analyse this Rev. Dr.'s arguments, but I think the contradictions will be apparent to most of your readers. The matter is too serious to jest upon, but the ludicrous aspect of the sophistry of Christian charity mongers will present itself, and calls to mind the kindness of the proverbial Irishman who pushed his friend overboard for the sake of shewing his devotion by jumping in after him, and both were drowned. The next paragraph was equally interesting:—"At Christ Church, Westminster-bridge-road, the Rev. Newman Hall, in making an appeal on behalf of the fund, said it was a curious fact and a matter for regret that not more than half a million out of the more than 4,000,000 inhabitants of London heard this appeal made from the pulpits within the metropolitan area, the rest not being church or chapel goers." What a startling admission from a pillar of the church. In another paragraph I was informed that out of the four millions who dwell in London, upwards of a million seek and obtain relief in the hospitals and dispensaries of that wonderful city. Reading the above statements of facts set me thinking—and from my old home in London to my present home in Christchurch was a very natural transition. We have a hospital here. Even here, in this infant city, the seeds of misery have been sown, and that ugly and pernicious monster, Poverty, has found—not a home—for poverty destroys the substance, and leaves pinched Penury to weep and dream in sorrow of ideal shadows of that holy sanctuary—home! What a sin it was that the miserable results of feudal barbarism should have been brought to these fair isles; that lordly rights over the soil should have been granted, and sold for a few pieces of glittering coin. When I reflect upon the history of the English people, and consider how demoralising are the influences of a landed aristocracy, a state-endowed church, and the not yet exploded theory of the "rights divine of kings," I am not the least surprised at the existence of pauperism, and that feeling of dependency which so largely obtains among the working classes and retail

dealers in the old country. When I began my colonial life I fondly hoped that pauperising influences would never exist in this colony. That they do exist is a fact deeply to be deplored. For a people to become truly great they must possess the spirit of independence and self-reliance. Let every man have his fair share in the national estate, and win by his own industry the rights which now grim poverty compels hundreds to accept as charity. There would be plenty of channels for the healthy flow of benevolence and philanthropy without the degrading influences of eleemosynary aid. *Revenons à nos moutons.* We have wandered. On another page of the 'Times,' in contrast to the poverty that cries for help, we have a glowing account of a royal marriage in Russia, where all is pomp, and splendour, and glittering military parade. I turn with loathing from these records of barbaric pageantry, and again my eye rests upon a different theme. Boldly defending himself and his country's cause, I see a stalwart figure—"In my mind's eye, Horatio"—standing before three Judges of the land; against whom are pitted five of the ablest lawyers in England. Bravely, coolly, and resolutely the champion disputes the issue, inch by inch. The Law Courts of Great Britain, and the Bar of the House of Commons have witnessed some stirring struggles between right and might, but I question if history can produce a parallel to the protracted persecution of Charles Bradlaugh and his continued and unflinching defence. My paper contains a report of the first day's "trial at the bar." The telegraph cable has long since conveyed to us the result of that trial, but to me there is something peculiarly interesting in every detail of this noble fight for justice. I feel sure that the Freethinkers throughout the world must feel a glow of pride when they think of the brave man who has so long sustained the heat and burden of the fray. *Apropos* of Bradlaugh, I was greatly pleased the last time I had a chat with Charles Bright. He told me that on one of his lecture nights at Auckland, the whole of the audience sang with great enthusiasm my song, "Hail to Bradlaugh," as published in the REVIEW. I wish our people here would go in properly for congregational singing. I am convinced that it is one of the strong arms of the orthodoxy, and if Freethinkers generally adopted it—who knows but it might awaken a much abler muse than mine? But I must finish, or you will need a sheet as large as the 'Times.'

CHARLES J. RAE.

Christchurch, Aug. 25, 1884.

## PRAYING FOR A REPORTER.

We transcribe the following from the 'Reporter's Magazine,' which takes it from an American shorthand journal. The article is entitled, "Praying for a Reporter," and reads as follows:—"The Salvation Army prayed for a Philadelphia reporter thus:—"We have a reporter here, a miserable reporter, a sinful reporter, a servant of the unholy newspapers, a good young man gone wrong. Satan has made him obstinate, and he will not yield to persuasion and be saved. Oh! help the wicked reporter. Help this reporter. The devil holds the fort in this reporter's brain. He is going to hell. Hallelujah! Oh, may he join the Salvation Army; oh, give him repentance. He is a type of all reporters, and they are all a wicked lot' The lieutenant stopped, to give the reporter a chance of kneeling. The men and women soldiers, shouted 'Save the reporter; help the reporter; down with the devil. I was wicked once, but now I am pure.' The lieutenant then began again. 'Oh, kill this reporter, kill him, take him away, that he may do evil no more. He is too obstinate to yield. He knows he ought to, but he is too proud; all reporters are. Oh, strike this reporter down; he is the devil in disguise."

"Uno," a traveller, in a letter, compares the state of Freethought in the various colonies. In Sydney it is "tolerated"; in Melbourne "it had no public recognition," but he adds "in New Zealand how different," and then he gives a few particulars of Dunedin and Christchurch societies.—'National Reformer.'

## OBJECTING TO SUNDAY LECTURES.

(SYDNEY EVENING NEWS.)

On the 18th instant a deputation, consisting of Rev. Dean Cowper, of Sydney, Revs. T. B. Tross, M. Archdall, E. D. Madgwick, S. Fox, G. Martin, W. G. Taylor, S. Wilkinson, and Pastor Allen; Messrs. J. H. Goodlett, H. G. Pieton, W. Russell, B. Short, J. Aitken, W. Pratt, and R. Chadwick, waited upon the Colonial Secretary (Hon. A. Stuart) for the purpose of drawing his attention to breaches of the law in regard to Sunday observance.

Dean Cowper, in introducing the deputation, said that advertisements appeared in the daily papers with reference to entertainments given in theatres and other places on Sundays, which he thought were most injurious to the good order and morality of the people.

Other members of the deputation entered into the subject more fully. Amongst the arguments used against the conduct of Dr. Hughes's lectures was the following:—That gross blasphemy was spoken at the theatre; and blasphemy was a crime in the eye of the law, and therefore ought to be stopped. Suppose, said the speaker, a meeting was advertised for a gathering of forgers, forgery being a crime, such a meeting would be prevented by the authorities; a meeting on Sunday night for indiscriminate sexual intercourse would be prevented by the police, and the lectures referred to ought on the same ground to be suppressed. Reference was made to the interposition of the Colonial Secretary in the case of Mr. Proctor, the astronomer, and it was pointed out that if, in the matter of such high-class and instructive entertainments as were those of Mr. Proctor, it was found necessary to stop them, so much more was it necessary in the case now under discussion.

Mr. Stuart, in reply, said he could not agree with some of the remarks made by Mr. Russell with regard to the power he had of stopping these entertainments. What he was called upon to do was not to explain what he thought ought to be done, but to tell them what, in his position as controlling the administration of the law in the matter, he could do. He was not clear as to whether he had the power to stop these entertainments; rather the other way, he thought. He thought he had no power to stop them under the law as it at present stands. With regard to lectures, accompanied by music, he did not see that they were brought within the operation of the Act. The law no doubt, gave the Colonial Secretary power to grant licenses in certain terms; but he could not see that the licenses gave the power to stop the holding of such entertainments as those complained of. Doubtless the licence prevented on Sundays, Good Friday, and Christmas day, the giving of performances or stage entertainments, but these lectures could not be brought under this part of the prohibition in the license. The prohibition was explained in the schedule, and such did not appear to alter his reading of the law. He was referred to the action which had been taken in Melbourne, where, it was alleged, these entertainments had been stopped by Mr. Berry. Well, Mr. Berry was mistaken as to the power he had, and they were again proceeding as they had done in the past. He (Mr. Stuart) had wired to the Chief Inspector of Police in Melbourne to know under what law these lectures had been stopped. In reply, he had received a telegram, which he read, to the effect that they had not been stopped, nor had the police any power to stop them; and, also, that none of the licenses had been cancelled. With regard to the stoppage of Mr. Proctor's lecture some time ago, that prohibition by the Colonial Secretary of the day was not legal. With regard to the question of blasphemy, he was not quite sure that the law would touch it or whether it was in the power of the Colonial Secretary to prohibit or stop a lecture altogether because it might contain some expressions of a blasphemous nature. As to the cancellation of the licence such would require other and different proceedings than those suggested by the deputation. He would look into the report of the lecture they had left with him and see what it contained. He would be compelled to act very carefully.

After a little further discussion, the deputation thanked the Minister and withdrew.

The Sydney 'Town and Country Journal' says that Gerald Massey's lecture on Shakespeare was one of the finest intellectual treats ever given in Sydney.

## EXTRACTS FROM INGERSOLL.

The home where virtue dwells with love is like a lily with a heart of fire,—the fairest flower in all the world.

The time may come in which this thrilled and throbbing earth, shorn of all life, will in its soundless orbit wheel a barren star on which the light will fall as fruitlessly as falls the gaze of love upon the cold, pathetic face of death.

We do not know, we cannot say, whether death is a wall or a door; the beginning or end of a day; the spreading of pinions to soar or the folding forever of wings; the rise or the set of a sun; or an endless life that brings the rapture of love to every one.

My heart bleeds when I contemplate the sufferings endured by the millions now dead; of those who lived when the world appeared to be insane; when the heavens were filled with an infinite horror, who snatched babes with dimpled hands and rosy cheeks from the white breasts of mothers, and dashed them into an abyss of eternal illume.

He (Humboldt) was never found on his knees before the altar of superstition. He stood erect by the grand tranquil column of Reason. He was an admirer, a lover, an adorer of nature; and at the age of ninety bowed by the weight of nearly a century, covered with the insignia of honor, loved by a nation, respected by a world, with kings for his servants, he laid his weary head upon the bosom of the universal Mother, and with her arms around him sank into that mysterious slumber known as death.

More than a century ago, Catholicism, wrapped in robes red with the innocent blood of millions, holding in her frantic clutch crowns and sceptres, honors and gold, the keys of heaven and hell, trampling beneath her feet the liberties of nations, in the proud moment of almost universal dominion, felt within her heartless breast the deadly dagger of Voltaire. From that blow, the Church never can recover. Livid with hatred, she launched her impotent anathema at the great destroyer; and ignorant Protestants have echoed the curse of Rome. Voltaire was the intellectual autocrat of his time. From his throne at the foot of the Alps, he pointed the finger of scorn at every hypocrite in Europe. He was the pioneer of his century. He was the assassin of superstition. Through the shadows of faith and fable, through the darkness of myth and miracle, through the midnight of Christianity, through the blackness of bigotry, past cathedral and dungeon, past rock and stake, past altar and throne, he carried with chivalric hands, the sacred torch of reason.

## VOLTAIRE, PAINE, AND JESUS.

For generations the clergy and their dupes have bespattered the names of Voltaire and Thomas Paine with pious mud; repeating times out of number, and with marvellousunction, the false and childish stories of their death-bed scenes. They have not yet ceased this pious and holy work; nor will they until the people themselves become too wide awake to swallow the trash.

But the blindness of the clergy is only equalled by their fraud and malice. Have they forgotten the story of Jesus. He lived a life that shocked his best friends; he hurled his curses at the most respectable people of his country and time; he trod upon the religious susceptibilities of the people; and they repaid him for it. They said he had a devil—possibly that was true. He saw one in the wilderness, if you remember, who carried him to the temple, and flew with him to a high mountain. Evidently he had a devil. The devils, too, if you remember, spoke in his favour! saying, "We know thee, thou Jesus, son of the living God?" You see, they had met before; they understood each other; they were in league. Then the Jews arrested the blasphemer, and sent him to the cross. He hoped to be delivered. But in his dying agony, he saw the error of his ways, and exclaimed, "My God! my God why hast thou forsaken me!" Have the Christians never reflected upon the terrible warning presented by the life and awful death of Jesus, "the god forsaken man?" It is time they should.

The Quakers in Victoria have lately presented a petition to the Governor against the defence scheme there being inaugurated. They say that any warlike preparations are, in their opinion, unworthy of the character of a Christian nation.

## COLONEL INGERSOLL'S OPINION OF THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION

Robert G. Ingersoll was seen at the Hoffman House by a 'Mail and Express' reporter, fresh from the Chicago convention, where he had been to witness the proceedings which resulted in the nomination of the "Plumed Knight."

"What do you think of the result of the convention?" he was asked.

"I think that Blaine was nominated," he replied, "not by the politicians, but by the rank and file of the party. He is the choice of, I think, nine tenths of the Republicans of the Western states, and I do not believe there is a Republican district in the United States in which a majority of the Republicans are not and were not for Blaine. If any mistake has been made it has been a mistake of the party. The result was not brought about by trading or trafficking. Blaine was nominated because the Republicans are for him. The fact is, it was impossible to beat him at Chicago."

"Is there much opposition to him now?"

"I think there is not as much as there was in the case of Garfield after his nomination."

"How do you compare him with Garfield in respect to fitness for the office?"

"I think he will make a better president. I think he has more executive ability. Blaine is regarded as a real American, as the representative of the progressive spirit of the country. He has a great hold on the young men."

"What kind of administration will he give us?"

"There is a general feeling that he would add to our national reputation and to our national importance; that he would protect our citizens abroad; that he would enlarge our trade and lay the foundation for a great and growing commerce."

"Some of his opponents claim that he is not a safe man, and point out his South American policy as an evidence. What do you think on that point?"

"Stupidity never has much confidence in brilliant men. The man who has quick perception and acts is apt to stun the ordinary man, and the ordinary man gets his revenge by calling him unsafe. I never could see any objection to Blaine's South American policy. It is certainly of greater importance that we should be friendly with all the republics on this continent, and I don't see how any harm could grow out of a closer alliance with those countries. It is certainly not for the interest of this country to have all the other republics hate us and do all their trading with other countries. If I understand Blaine's policy at all, it was one of friendship—that is to say, he desired to be on good terms with our neighbours. When that policy is understood I think it will be popular."

"What of the connection of his name with the so-called Landreau claim?"

"Blaine has explained that. He never was in favour of that claim. There was this vital objection to the claim, and Blaine understood that perfectly: a citizen of another country had a contract with Peru. Peru violated the contract with the citizen of another country, and assigned his violated contract to the citizen of the United States. Under such circumstances the United States was not and could not be bound to protect the claim. This country does not propose to protect one of its citizens to whom has been assigned the grievances of the citizens of another country. In other words, national protection is not assignable. Blaine knew of that vital defect, and called attention to it, and that ended the case."

"What can be said in reference to the Mulligan case?"

"That has all been explained by Blaine in Congress. You will remember his explanation, commencing with the statement that he proposed to take fifty millions of people into his confidence. There is nothing left of the Mulligan matter."

"Do you consider his record perfect and unassailable?"

"I do not. Any man's record may be assailed, no matter how good, but I don't believe that Blaine can be successfully assailed. In other words, nothing can be substantiated against him. Garfield, too, was attacked, and probably there never was a greater storm of vituperation, and yet I doubt very much if Garfield lost a vote. There was certainly more said against Garfield than against Blaine. Besides, all this has been discounted long ago."

"Do you think the Democrats will be able to nominate any man at all who will be able to defeat him?"

"I think not. A great many men now imagine that they will go against Blaine. They are now making the choice in their minds between Blaine and some other Republican

whom they want nominated. In a little while they will be forced to choose between Blaine and a Democrat, that is to say between Republicanism and Democracy—that is to say, between Free Trade and Protection—that is to say, between an English and an American policy. When it comes to that most of them will vote for Blaine. I think most of the Republican papers that have pronounced against Blaine will find that they have made a mistake and will be candid enough to correct it."

"Do you include the New York 'Times' in that category?"

"Yes. I think the 'Times' prefers a Republican administration to a Democratic one."

"You consider, then, that the Republican party is by no means dead?"

"I think it will win this time. There is a good deal of vigor in the Republican party yet, and those who have been fighting that ticket for many years, after all, no matter how much they may object to our candidate, will hesitate a good while before they will assist to put the Democrats into power. I never want to see the Democratic party in charge of the government until the Democrats have become civilized to such a degree that the rights of all citizens of the United States will be respected and protected. I never want to see that party in power until it is willing that every citizen entitled to a vote shall vote, and until it is honest enough to count the votes deposited by all citizens. This I think is the feeling of all Republicans."

"You consider the prospects for success in November, then, quite bright?"

"I think the outlook is better than it was four years ago. Blaine, of course, will make a very vigorous canvass. He will have his forces well in hand and everything will be done that can be, and the canvass will be thorough, aggressive, and enthusiastic. I don't mean by that obnoxiously aggressive or maliciously aggressive. It will be carried on in the best spirit."

"How does Logan's nomination suit you?"

"I think he is exceedingly strong with the soldier element of the party. He is a good soldier, won great distinction and stands deservedly high with the volunteers; and he is a good organizer himself, and his record, so far as I know, is perfectly good. I have never heard of any charge of dishonesty against him, or that his official position has been used to gain personal ends. I think there is no man in the Senate with a cleaner record in that regard. In the event of a vacancy in the presidential chair he would make a safe man. All his impulses are patriotic and he is a man of ability. He is a man of strong common sense and great force of character. The country would be perfectly safe in his hands."

"Have you any doubts of the success of the Republicans in the coming campaign?"

"Of course. Nothing is certain, but my judgment is that we will succeed. It will require work and plenty of it. I don't think it wise to underrate the strength of the opposition. The parties are very evenly divided, and we must remember another thing—that the South is solid, or substantially so. This gives the Democrats a great advantage. Some enthusiastic Republicans expect to carry West Virginia, and others are enthusiastic enough to suppose that we can carry two or three Southern states. I make no such calculations. I think we can succeed without carrying a Southern state."

"Can Blaine carry New York state?"

"Garfield carried it. No one can tell how it is going to go now. There are many new voters, new questions, and new influences on both sides. I believe Blaine will carry the strength of the party. If he loses some Republicans he will gain votes that might not have been Republican with any other candidate, so that on the whole we have very good reason to hope that we will carry New York against anybody the Democrats may nominate. As the canvass proceeds many men now opposed to the ticket will come over to our side. I can hardly see how any one who took part in the convention can oppose the ticket. If Edmunds had been nominated certainly George William Curtis would have expected every delegate to have supported him, and why should he go into a convention and take part in the election of the candidate if he didn't expect to abide by the result? Why should anybody? Had I been a delegate I would have supported the nominee, no matter if he had been my bitterest personal opponent. If any delegate to the convention did not expect to abide by the result in case a certain man was nominated, he should have notified the convention."

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