

Ernest Renan describes the maxim "Do unto others," &c., as "rather worldly wisdom." Philosophically, it is egoism in the abstract, and ultraism in the concrete.

The Trafalgar Square demonstration to protest against the exclusion of Mr. Bradlaugh from the House of Commons on the 6th August was one of the grandest of the kind ever held, the crowd of sympathisers being estimated at from 30,000 to 40,000 men. A clergyman of the Church of England, the Rev. S. D. Headlam, was voted to the chair. Mr. Bradlaugh made a most eloquent and impassioned speech. The law is on his side, and the Liberal feeling of the country is coming over to his side also.

Progress.

Organisation is equally necessary for the wide extension of the Freethought movement, and for the protection of individual Freethinkers. The time is not far distant when the different Freethought Associations of this Colony will be linked together in a federal union, with its annual conference composed of delegates from all parts of New Zealand. Organisation means strength and power for attaining results: wherever therefore a few Freethinkers are congregated, there they should form themselves into an association, hold meetings, and establish relations with other associations. By this means they will soon become powerful to command respect for freedom of thought, while they will find on their side the enthusiasm that is stimulated by work and effort.

The Freethinkers of Napier, who are strong in numbers, are about to form themselves into an Association, and hope to begin under favorable auspices. We wish them good speed.

In Patea a few very earnest and devoted Freethinkers have mooted the question of organising. There are perhaps more Freethinkers in the Patea district than in any population of the same extent in New Zealand.

The Wanganui Freethought Association has been in existence only four months, and has made very rapid advances. It commenced with a membership of fifteen, and has gone on increasing until it has a roll of about eighty. The meetings have been well attended, and the interest not only sustained but increasing.

Persecution sometimes has its uses, though we cannot recommend it. There have been large accessions of members to the National Secular Society of which Mr. Bradlaugh is President, mainly in consequence of his unjust and illegal exclusion from the House of Commons.

FREETHOUGHT IN WANGANUI.

It is an interesting sign of the times that simultaneously in several parts of New Zealand Freethought societies have been organized. And in taking a brief retrospect of the Wanganui Freethought Association it is gratifying to find that it has made such satisfactory progress. During the few months of its existence there has been a steady increase of membership, a more settled appreciativeness on the part of the audiences, and we believe that the greater part of the work has been fairly accomplished. Freethought, however, in every essential particular, has been scrupulously kept in view—no creed has been formulated, no mental trammel has been placed upon anyone. And it must here be noted that the Association has been fortunate in possessing the services of a gentleman of ability and influence, who has ever stepped forward with first-class lectures and carried its meetings to a successful issue. Other members, too, have propounded the principles of Freethought with earnestness and intelligence, and the satisfactory result has been that we have had short lectures, essays and discussions upon a variety of subjects—science, philosophy, theology and history receiving alternate consideration. And the most pleasing feature in all this is that a free platform has been upheld. In every instance of an address or paper, criticism has been invited, and every opportunity given for free and fair discussion. We seek the truth and we afford the means to obtain it. And a review of the work of the Association would be incomplete, moreover, if we did not record the fact that the resident clergymen of the town have been courteously invited to address the large and attentive audiences that assemble every Sunday evening, upon any subject they might choose. It appears, however, that they are not at all anxious to

obliterate the dangerous errors of Freethinkers, and consequently the well-meant invitation has received no response. If a good shepherd hath lost one sheep, he will leave the ninety and nine and seek the lost one, and return with it safely to the fold. Unfortunately, they did not know everything down in Judea. Parscus cannot see the moral of the story now-a-days! It must also be acknowledged that the orchestra gives pleasure and variety to the proceedings; and we are very pleased to hear that an efficient choir is to be organized.

Whilst congratulating ourselves upon the satisfactory progress the Wanganui Freethought Association has made, however, we must not forget that a great deal remains to be accomplished. In a small community like ours, it undoubtedly requires no little courage to oppose those "twin sisters," bigotry and Phariseism, always so powerful. Let every Freethinker in our midst do his duty by becoming an active or passive member; and thereby strengthen and encourage those who are striving to rid the world of hypocrisy and superstition. The one desire is to firmly establish a temple where freedom and intelligence shall not be interdicted; an organisation where the guiding aim and principle shall be: "Let us all be free. Free to accept the truth as we perceive it; free to believe, free to reject. Nothing but the right to know and utter the truth." And so long as a few good friends adhere to this liberal line of action, so long, we believe, will the Association be able to maintain a respectable and acknowledged position. *Verb sup.*

Y.

CANTERBURY FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

We have much pleasure in publishing the following report of the annual meeting in connection with the above Association, kindly forwarded by the Corresponding Secretary of that body, who writes:—

ELECTION OF OFFICERS.

On Sunday, September 2nd, the annual election of officers took place as follows:—W. Pratt, President and Treasurer; J. Webber, Vice-President; F. C. Hall, Honorary Secretary; B. Button, Musical Director; J. M. Thompson, Choir Master; J. F. Morris, Librarian; and a Business Committee of twelve members.

THE LYCEUM

For children in connection with the Association, under the very able superintendence of the Misses Button and the Honorary Secretary, has had an average attendance of sixty during the past month, and has been made both instructive and attractive to the children.

ANNIVERSARY.

On Sunday, 16th September, the second anniversary was commemorated by a tea which, from the large attendance, taxed the resources of the caterers to the utmost, and passed off very successfully. After tea there was an exhibition of the Magic Lantern by one of the members, and from seven to nine o'clock short addresses were delivered by various members upon Freethought and Progress. The Hall was very effectively decorated with evergreens, flowers, and mottoes, in doing which some of our members had devoted a good deal of time and trouble.

HERESY.

Probably every shade of religious opinion has, in its turn, been condemned as heretical. As a rule, heresy is, to each man, just that which he thinks erroneous; and the heresy of one sect is the orthodoxy of another. A dismal, disgraceful, and disgusting history it has been. Any opinion which the so-called and self-called Catholic Church pronounced heretical, was regarded as worse than any vice, than any crime. It signified not how just, how pure, how benevolent a man might be: if he were tainted with heresy, the most ferocious scoundrel on the face of the earth, provided he were Orthodox, was more acceptable to God than he.

Happily the progress of civilisation has been such that now, in most countries, heretics are allowed to live. But still, men of almost all schools condemn each other's opinions as heretical; and still it is believed by many that, although man has ceased to punish heresy, God will punish it with a tremendous penalty; still, too, many an error, or alleged error, in religious opinion, is considered by not a few more serious than any immorality, and a drunkard of Evangelical views is supposed to have a better chance of salvation