

AUCKLAND.

We have much pleasure in publishing the following letter, to which we would direct the special attention of those interested in the Freethought movement:—

SIR,—At the request of several Freethinkers, I beg to announce that a private meeting will take place during Christmas week, with the intention of forming a Freethought Association for Auckland. Those ladies and gentlemen interested will kindly communicate with

Your obedient servant,

W. H. WEBBE,

Hobson Street, Auckland.

November 20th, 1883.

WANGANUI FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

The Secretary, Mr. J. J. Buckrell, has forwarded the following items concerning the work of the Wanganui Freethought Association during the past month:—

SIR,—During the month the meetings held by our Association have been more interesting, if possible, than formerly, the Lectures given under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association affording capital matter for discussion. The points raised at these lectures were ably dealt with by members of our Association at our meetings, and it is perhaps well for the prestige of their lecturers that discussion was not allowed. It is an interesting fact that public advocates of the claims of Christianity invariably substitute low personalities and slander for argument. The truth of this was strongly shown in the recent lectures, when the Rev. Williams blackened the character of Colonel Ingersoll, and Sir William Fox the characters of Mrs. Besant and Charles Bradlaugh. To my mind this mode of endeavouring to establish the truth of anything is very degrading, and is a direct insult to any intelligent mind.

The Rev. Father Le Menant de Chensais also gave a lecture which was far more liberal and tolerant than the previous ones. I believe the sight of the platform on that occasion would have gladdened the heart of Cardinal Manning—Christians of various denominations forgetting their past differences, and seeking the protecting arm, as it were, of the Catholic Church.

It has been suggested that a Lyceum for children be formed in connection with our Association. The suggestion, I think, is a good one, and I trust before writing to you again it will be an accomplished fact.

Mr. Willis has just executed a Member's Certificate card, which is beautifully got up, and reflects great credit upon the designer.

I remain yours &c.,

J. J. BUCKRELL.

Secretary W.F.A.

November 20, 1883.

CANTERBURY FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

Under date November 19, the Corresponding Secretary, Mr. W. Pratt, writes:—I have the honor to forward you the following report of the proceedings of the above Association since my last communication:—

On Sunday the 21st October, Mr. T. Parker gave an original address upon Health, which was both interesting and instructive, and it received well merited applause from a large and appreciative audience.

On the 28th instant, Mr. Thomas Williams, in conjunction with a local Artist, provided a good and most mirth-provoking entertainment. The holding capacity of our Hall was taxed to its utmost limits. A dioramic view of some well read scenes and events comically treated, was gradually unrolled to appropriate music, and explained by Mr. W., an apt student of the Artemus Ward school, and his quiet impromptu drolleries, free from vulgarity, kept the large audience in a state of convulsive laughter the entire evening.

On the 4th November, Mr. E. M. Clissold chose the "Bible in schools" question—which still surely agitates the clerical minds—for the subject of his address, which rivetted the attention of the audience for over an hour, and elicited frequent bursts of applause during its delivery.

November 11th and 18th.—On each of these evenings, suitable readings were given—discussions, Shakespearian recitals, music, and singing filling up the programme.

The average attendance of children at the Sunday Lyceum is 50. In addition to the marching, singing, reading, calisthenics, and teachers' addresses upon some suitable and interesting subject, good progress is being made in the theory of music (old notations) under the able direction of Mr. J. M. Thompson.

I also send herewith a copy of a letter (suppressing the name and occupation of the writer) as evidence of the spirit animating the consistent Freethinker, and also as supplying the certificate referred to by Colonel Ingersoll in the following words, "that every individual not perfectly free to act according to his honest convictions, is a certificate of the meanness, and intolerance of the community among which he resides."

DEAR SIR,—Having read in the Freethought Review No. 2, Nov. 1st, 1883, Constitution and Rules suitable for adoption by Freethought Associations, and doubting not but the Christchurch Association is based on similar principles, I have determined to ask

for enrolment in your Association By reason of my peculiar employment I perceive it would be imprudent for me to make any intrusive attack on the superstition of the majority, or even any public avowal of my own belief, nor does it appear to me to be at all necessary, but this much I think is demanded of every man—that he contribute as far as he is able towards the propagandism of the tenets and principles in which he himself believes. I may not take active part in Freethought beyond the limit of my own family of eight individuals, who are growing up, and shall be in positions free to profess and follow their principles when they become men and women, but I presume there is nothing to hinder my being enrolled with Freethinkers, and contributing by quarterly or other subscription towards the cost of Freethought propagandism. I shall be much obliged if the Secretary will be good enough to send me copy of constitution and by-laws, and communicate the necessary information for acquiring membership.

I remain, &c.,

Wm. Pratt Esq., President

Freethought Association, Christchurch.

Canterbury, Nov. 9th, 1883.

WORKING MEN'S CLUBS.

SIR,—The festive opening of a social Hall in connection with the Christchurch Working Men's Club, which took place on the 25th of last month (October), seems to present a favorable opportunity for reviewing the remarkable progress made by this Club since its inauguration (July 4th, 1880), particulars of which cannot fail to interest your readers, and may stimulate and encourage the formation of similar Clubs in other centres of industry. In response to my application, the courteous Secretary of the above Club has supplied me with the following information:—

The Christchurch Working Men's Club was established July 4th, 1880. There were then twenty-four members. It now numbers over 400, and has a fine quarter-acre section in the centre of the town, with a good substantial building for the Club proper, containing eleven rooms, as follows: Reading room, card room, chess room, library, committee room, social hall, secretary's office, bar, steward's sleeping apartments, &c. The library, though small, is one of the best selected ones in the colony, and embraces the Encyclopædia Britannica, Chambers' Encyclopædia, Dictionaries of Languages and of Mechanics, the latest works on Electricity, Chemistry, Carpentry and Joining, Engineering, Mechanics, Medicine, in fact all that is necessary for the artisan and mechanic. A new lecture hall has just been erected at a cost of £700. The size of the hall is 66ft by 33ft, having a stage 30ft wide and 12ft deep, fitted with scenery and a very handsome act-drop, painted by Mr. E. Briggs, the scenic artist, the subject being the Lake of Como. The ceiling of the hall is coved, having two sun-lights and three centre flues for ventilation. The hall is built of the best pressed bricks and plastered throughout; the walls are hollow, and consequently will always be dry. I see the members are to have a Concert and Ball on Thursday next, to celebrate the opening of the new hall. About 350 are expected to be present. The building is the best of its size in New Zealand, and reflects credit on the institution. The total worth of the Club at last balance was £1141 13s, and I think there is every possibility of this being one of the most prominent institutions in Christchurch.

The very marked and most hopeful feature of the present age is the general awakening to intellectual life and mental activity of the industrial classes, which finds expression in combined action, whether of a special or general character, by means of co-operative Societies, Trades Unions, and Clubs for promoting, social, political, and literary culture and advancement. And working men, by their earnestness and self-reliance, are demonstrating their capacity and determination in achieving their own emancipation from the effects of ignorance and thralldom that centuries of oppression and neglect have imposed, and which have been countenanced, encouraged, and perpetuated by a vicious and misleading system of ethics, teaching servility for manliness, and subserviency for independence. It is not strange that while in a general way extolling the virtue of self-reliance the most effectual means should have been taken, by a course of teaching and training especially calculated, by withdrawing men's minds from a consideration of more worldly affairs, and fixing their hopes and trusts upon some unseen hypothetical power, to materially limit, if not banish, its exercise, the result of which has been ignorance, intemperance, degradation, misery, oppression, and want to the great mass of the real wealth producers. And it is only in these latter days, from the spread of education and a cheap press, a large class have so far shaken themselves free from some of the old trammels as to perceive where their true interests lie, and by mutual help and combination have at length acquired the power and