

Progress.

A friend writes from Woodville, Hawke's Bay: It has been decided to take steps for the formation of a Freethought Association here, and a meeting for that purpose has been called for Friday, the 25th instant. As there are many Freethinkers here, the movement will doubtless prove a success.

We have been asked to suggest the best way of going about the establishment of a Freethought Association. We shall give one method, and invite our friends to give a better. Where there are say six known Freethinkers, let them have a private meeting convened by word of mouth, when matters could be talked over, and arrangements made for calling by advertisement a meeting of all who desired to join the Association. At this meeting a provisional committee should be appointed to draw up rules and submit them at a future meeting. The permanent committee could be appointed when the membership rose to a certain number. That is all. The rest will follow as a matter of course.

CHRISTCHURCH FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

The President and Corresponding Secretary forwards us a brief epitome of the last month's proceedings of the above Association:—

Christchurch, January 17th, 1884.

SIR,—On Sunday, the 23rd December, Mr T. C. Farnie, M.A., from Dunedin, kindly gave us a very interesting address upon the "Life and Labors of Martin Luther." There was a large attendance, although the weather was unfavorable. The same morning there was a distribution of a number of pretty prize books and toys to the children attending the Lyceum, 61 being present.

On Sunday, the 6th January, a Mr S. Parker, one of our members, gave an original address upon "Jesus of Nazareth." The subject was well handled, and elicited considerable applause at its conclusion. This gentleman has frequently given original papers upon various subjects, showing marked care and ability in their preparation.

Our Hall has been recently decorated with heralbic shields and banners, bearing the names of Galileo, Spinoza, Bruno, Voltaire, Paine, Lyell, Darwin, Deuton, Huxley, Ingersoll, Herbert Spencer, and Tyndall, and the effect is considered very good and appropriate. It is also intended to add the names of some of the eminent women who have distinguished themselves in literature and Freethought.

Our financial position at the close of 1882 rendered it necessary to devise means for increasing our income, and as it was considered inadvisable to raise the subscription of members, it has been decided to try the plan adopted by the Dunedin Association, viz., to reduce members' subscription to 5s per annum, payable in one sum at the beginning of the year, thus lessening the work of the Secretary, and to charge all adult males 6d admission to the Sunday evening meetings. Hitherto non-members only have been charged admission fees, females being free under the past and present arrangement.

"Ivo" has arrived in Christchurch, and purposes lecturing in our Hall next Sunday, and also on Wednesday, the 23rd inst., pending further arrangements.

We have decided to hold our annual picnic on Sunday, the 10th February.

In my last report there was an unfortunate omission of the first part of a paragraph, which made the part printed very weak and inconsequential. It referred to my having named five children in the Hall, and went on to say that "this with four secular funerals," etc., etc., gave sufficient reason for the remarks which followed.

I send herewith the names and addresses of ten more annual subscribers to your excellently conducted REVIEW, which I hope soon to increase to fifty.

Yours truly,

WILLIAM PRATT,

President and Corresponding Secretary C.F.A.

[We regret the omission, which was accidental. Ed.]

AUCKLAND RATIONALISTIC ASSOCIATION.

Mr. W. H. Webbe (the Hon. Secretary) has kindly furnished us with the following particulars regarding the above Association:—

Auckland, January 18th, 1884.

SIR,—Last Sunday evening, the 13th instant, we held our "first public meeting." It was a greater success than was anticipated. The "Star" report being a very fair one I enclose same, and should be glad if you could find space for its insertion:—"The inaugural meeting of the Auckland Rationalistic Association was successfully held on Sunday evening in the Lorne street Hall, which was crowded to the doors; indeed, so great was the throng that extra forms had to be placed along the passages. Mr. A. Campbell, the President, occupied the chair, and delivered the inaugural address. In the course of his remarks he said that their Association traced its origin to Roman Catholicism, inasmuch as it belonged to one of the latest

developments of that eruption of manly and courageous free-thinking which brought about and consummated the Protestant Reformation. The local causes of the extension of Freethought in New Zealand were situated at Dunedin, where through the energy and outspoken bravery of Mr. Robert Stout and a few other gentlemen, a powerful Association had been formed, through whose agency similar Associations had been established in Christchurch, Wellington, and Wanganui. Here the work of organisation had been actively initiated by Mr. W. H. Webbe, a gentleman, who had but recently arrived from England, where he was a member of the National Secular Society. The utmost success had attended his exertions, and, although only a month had elapsed since the first circular was issued, that crowded meeting gave promise of a prosperous career. Their arrangements were not yet quite settled. Committees had been appointed to undertake the formation of a literary and debating class for young men to meet on Sunday mornings, and of a Sunday school for children to be held in the afternoon, while the evening meetings would, for the present, consist of readings, debates, literary papers, and lectures and musical selections. Professor Caillan and Mr. W. H. Webbe were engaged in the formation of a strong orchestra and choir, and they confidently expected to carry the undertaking to a triumphant success. He thought they could not do better than endow their Association with the secular advantages which all the Churches afforded their members, and this could best be done by mutual help and good organisation. Their objects were to inculcate the study of nature and of science, rather than of theology, and to practise and thus preach by their example, as well as by precept, the lessons of true morality. It should be one of their primary duties to pay 20s in the £, to discharge faithfully their duties as men and citizens, and to extend to others the freedom they claimed for themselves. He hoped they would be able to assist in filling up the so-called "bottomless pit" with the devils, ogres, and superstitious fancies of theology, and in planting over it the tree of knowledge. After a laudatory reference to the liberal tone and spirit of the press of the city, the Chairman concluded by reading the rules and regulations of the Association, which were also those, as he explained, of the National Secular Association of London.—Mr. W. H. Webbe advocated aggressive Freethought, accused the Churches of a woful lack of that charity and tolerance which they professed, and then entered upon a trenchant criticism of the Bible.—Mr. Geo. Clements, after commending to general attention THE FREETHOUGHT REVIEW, and reading an extract from it, went on to point out that the so-called "wide spreading of infidelity" which the clergy were so continually bewailing was nothing more or less than the diffusion of intelligence.—Mr. William Cooper counselled moderation and forbearance, deprecated any intolerance of tone or spirit towards the orthodox or their pastors, besides striking a parallel between the foundation of Christianity and the formation of that Association in the fact that both were inaugurated by thirteen men. In their case, however, he thought they could claim the distinction that they had not a Judas amongst them.—Alternating with the speeches various musical selections and recitations were rendered, viz., a pianoforte duet from "The Poet and Peasant" by Miss K. Campbell and Mr. W. H. Webbe; as a pianoforte solo, fantasia on airs from "La Traviata"; reading, "The Bad Boy Tries to Convert the Infidel Boy," Mr. Gerald Dillon; as a duet for piano and violin, Boccherini's pretty little Minuet, the Misses Caillan; recitation, "Shamus O'Brien," Mr. J. J. Kennedy. The musical selections were good, Mr. Dillon's reading was highly amusing, and Mr. Kennedy's was a first-class elocutionary treat, demonstrating the gentleman's histrionic power.—Mr. Cooper, in a eulogistic speech, moved a vote of thanks to Messrs Kennedy and Dillon, and it was passed with acclamation."—"Star."

We have engaged the Lorne Street Hall for two months, and in all probability the time will be extended to twelve months. We already number over one hundred members.

The Christians have been sleeping, our Association has awakened them. Last night they convened a meeting to organise a Society to hunt up evidences to bolster up their worn-out creed.

In my February letter I will report you account of month's work.

Yours faithfully,

W. H. WEBBE,

Hon. Secretary *pro tem.*

We congratulate our Auckland friends on the auspicious commencement of their Association.

A GENERAL COUNCIL OF FREETHOUGHT.

Dunedin Freethought Association,
Lyceum, 10th January, 1884.

SIR,—A paragraph in THE FREETHOUGHT REVIEW for January has directed the attention of this Association to the desirability of federating the various Freethought Associations throughout New Zealand. In pursuance of the suggestion therein contained, the committee of the D.F.A. at its last meeting passed the following resolutions:—

1. That the various Freethought Associations of New Zealand be invited to send delegates to a Conference, to be held in Dunedin at the Lyceum Hall, beginning on Monday, the 10th March, with a view to forming a General Council of Freethought for New Zealand.
2. That Robert Stout, Esq., President of the D.F.A., and T. Cheyne Farnie, Esq., M.A., be appointed delegates to represent the D.F.A. at such meeting.
3. That Mr Farnie be empowered to communicate with the other New Zealand Freethought Associations with a view to bring about such meeting of delegates.

The necessity of co-operation in organising and strengthening the Freethought party in this colony is so apparent that I feel sure that your Association will readily recognise the advantages likely to accrue from the union we propose. The recent prosecutions of Freethinkers in England make it only too obvious that the active