

results were observed, and this continued though the treatment was repeated frequently. Mr Hogg seems to think that these tiny creatures died and actually rose again; but it is more probable that, like certain other organisms, their bodies contained ova, which were liberated by the death of the parent, and generated when the conditions were favorable.

SECESSION OF A VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE DUNEDIN FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

The following is the letter written by Mr. Joseph Braithwaite on the occasion of his retiring from the Dunedin Freethought Association. We also publish Mr. Stout's reply:—

To the Committee of the Dunedin Freethought Association—

Gentlemen,—Please accept my resignation as Vice-President of the Dunedin Freethought Association, which the members kindly elected me to for two years past. It being fair that those I have worked with for a number of years should know my reasons, I give them. I think the Association in a constructive religious sense a failure, the logical result where members' views are so diverse. The compromise on fundamental questions is so complete that practically nothing positive, however true, can be successfully taught. For instance, many members believe in a higher power than themselves—in an infinite, intelligent Spirit which may be fittingly termed the old name, God—and in a future state; but through the disbelief again of others, whose convictions deserve equal consideration, and for harmony's sake, they have to be almost completely ignored, or I should say avoided, especially in the Children's Lyceum. However right this may be as a matter of expediency, it can be carried too far. Truth can be rendered ineffective and inoperative by this process. I think it wrong to deprive children of any teaching whatever on questions that have been a factor for good in the main. Members are not to blame; the fault lies in the basis of the Association. I see clearly that no association can accomplish anything beneficial unless its members are animated by one common aim and aspiration. The world is only moved thus. What would the reformers of the past have accomplished had they been restrained by the views of others? Nothing. To those who believe they possess the truth and feel the necessity of imparting it to others, life is too short for compromise. But to accomplish this one must belong to an organisation in thorough sympathy with one's views. True, cruelty, persecution, and self-inflicted penances of the direst kind have been committed by those who believed in God and immortality, and in (the case of many Christians) opposition to the teachings of Jesus, but what of the good done? Surely this should count. Besides, this persecution was the result of their ignorantly thinking they were pleasing God thus. The intention underlying their actions was good, though the effects were such that every man in these days must condemn. To my mind this yearning to please a Higher Power, this desire—whether in a religious or scientific sense—to set ourselves in right relations with that power is a necessary and beneficent part of man's nature, or it would never have existed, and can when directed by intelligence, be productive of incalculable good. And it does not necessarily follow, as some think, that those who believe thus will therefore neglect the duties of this life. History teaches that the noblest specimens of humanity have held these beliefs; that they have been the motive power underlying their best actions. My opinion is the more one does his duty here the more he fits himself for the great hereafter. No other incentive can possibly equal this for uplifting the race. We want something to rouse the masses; this will do it—negation never. It might did the world consist of philosophers only. No doubt error has twined itself around the beliefs I have mentioned, but that is due to the imperfections of humanity. Besides, what we call truth and error and good and evil are only relatively so to our senses. It seems to me that in sifting the one from the other and making for that which is best, this evolves himself higher—experience is the step-ladder of progression.

I see no necessary antagonism between science and religion, but believe they will, in the rapidity with which everything moves on now-a-days, be reconciled ere long. Such confusion of thought is caused by many, both inside and outside the Church, interpreting the Bible in too liberal a sense, and gauging the idealisms of thousands of years ago by our more exact meaning of modern words. Another common error consists in picking out certain passages to suit one's idiosyncracies, making them do duty for the whole. Canon Farrar shows the folly of all this in his "Eternal Hope," and criticises adversely the ultra-orthodox conceptions of "eternal punishment" and "hell," but present instead much higher and more natural conceptions. I learn also that every religious system has after all played a salutary part relatively to the age and race it operated upon, and that from our advanced standpoint of to-day it is unwise to condemn them wholesale. Hence I look upon Christianity as superior to those that went before, and that even now it reaches the moral sense of the great majority in a way no other existing organisation does. Even the Salvation Army, with all its faults, is doing a good work. To my view the value of the Church consists in the steadfastness with which she has ever proclaimed a belief in God and immortality. Without these existence is a mockery and morals a farce. I do not doubt that when the Church finds that what I conceive to be the essentials of religion—as related to the present age—have lost their influence, like the belief in a "material hell fire"—almost has, that she will either let them go or modify them in accordance with the spirit of the age, and be all the stronger for it. She has done so in the past, and shows signs of doing so again. She always espouses a new fact

or a new version of the old truth where they can be made most effective for good—that is, when their truth or utility have been thoroughly demonstrated, and the bulk of mankind are *ready to receive them*, which is an important point. Had she the will she could not do this before without uprooting her whole system, and doing society more harm than good. Another thing, it is not the Church alone, as some think, that opposes the truth. Scientists have done so, and with less reason. They at least are expected to lay aside all preconceptions, and follow the truth wherever it leads them. That such has not been done I need only refer to Galileo, Harvey, and Jenner, whose discoveries were opposed by all their scientific contemporaries, to whom they appeared absurd and incredible. And we have striking examples even to our day. Says Alfred Russell Wallace, himself a scientific man, when Franklyn brought the subject of lightning conductors before the Royal Society he was laughed at as a dreamer, and his paper was not admitted to the "Philosophical Transactions." When Young put forth his proofs of the undulating theory of light, he was hooted at by the popular scientific writers of the day. The "Edinburgh Review" asked the public to put Thomas Gray into a straight-jacket for maintaining the practicability of railroads. Sir Humphrey Davy laughed at the idea of London ever being lighted with gas. When Stevenson proposed to use locomotives on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, learned men gave evidence that it was impossible they could go even twelve miles an hour. Another great scientific authority declared it to be equally impossible for ocean steamers ever to cross the Atlantic. The French Academy of Science ridiculed the great astronomer Arago, when he wanted even to discuss the subject of the electric telegraph. Medical men ridiculed the stethoscope when it was first discovered. Painless operations during the mesmeric coma were pronounced impossible, and therefore impostures. I could supply other illustrations, but these serve to show that it is not always the Church that opposes the truth. At the same time I do not disparage the claims of science, a cause for which I have the highest respect. The fact is the Church could not exist a day in any age unless her teaching was positive; it must be based upon what are generally admitted as facts for the time being. She must therefore be cautious before accepting what are termed new truths, many of which are not so. This renders her less liable to error than if she were less conservative; besides, her attitude makes the truth shine all the clearer in the end. Hence, if I may say so, the Church relative to the capacity—broadly speaking—of those existing in each century advocates what may be termed the truth, and has done a work which I doubt any other organisation could have done as well. I am fortified in this by Mr. O. Frothingham, one of America's most cultured Freethinkers, who has retired from the materialistic propaganda after years of active, conscientious work. Besides, Evolution, as I understand it, the sacred literature of all races and nations, recent research—especially in psychological science—seems to me to confirm the view I have imperfectly sketched. Moreover, the aspirations, thoughts, tastes, and desires of those who believe in an intelligent governing power in the Universe (which I will not attempt to define), who believe also in the exalting influences of sincere prayer "uttered or unexpressed," and in man's responsibility in free will, too, in the sense that the more one intelligently acquaints himself with the laws of Nature, which are also the laws of God, and conforms thereto, the freer, the wiser, the better he becomes, are so entirely dissimilar to the aspirations, etc., of those who believe none of those doctrines, that I think the two parties would work more effectively apart. I perceive also the wisdom of Huxley's contention that he would sooner familiarise his children with the tenets of the Bible, even though they imbibed some error, than bring them up in negation or deprive them of all knowledge of a book that certainly reflects, whatever its faults may be, the religious development of an important section of the human race, and that has played a most important part since among civilised nations covering a considerable portion of the world's history. I am not disposed to ignore the claims of tradition altogether—they have their value. Nor do I see the utility of rushing into extreme scepticism because one leaves the Church. Religion—that is, a belief in God, immortality, and the influences therewith—is natural to man whatever his intellect may say. That is so because it is based upon his higher necessities, which, like everything else in Nature, must have some corresponding reality. My opinion is you might as well try to drive back the waves from the sea-shore as to eradicate religion altogether. Creeds and religious systems may change—religion never. Tear down the churches to-day, to-morrow they would be up again. I am satisfied the Association will never make headway among the people until it can present them a motive power for good higher than the one they have got already, and to do this it must have a religious basis, or it will never reach their higher aspirations. I have adopted these views after years of (I hope) serious study and reflection and a degree of anxiety known only to my most intimate friends. Hence it will be seen that I cannot co-operate any longer with the Association, nor with the Children's Lyceum, which I specially regret. Nevertheless, I shall ever be found standing up for civil and religious liberty and the completest toleration one to another.

I am, gentlemen, yours faithfully,
JOSEPH BRAITHWAITE.

MR. STOUT'S REPLY.

My dear Braithwaite,—Last evening your letter to the committee of the Dunedin Freethought Association was read at our usual weekly meeting, and the committee unanimously adopted your resignation of the office of one of the Vice-Presidents with regret. Before I sat down to pen an answer I saw that you had published your letter in the morning papers. I do not quarrel with you for doing this. Indeed, there were two reasons why I was glad you had adopted this rather unusual course, and these are: First, its publication shows that our much-abused Freethought Association has obtained a substantial position in the community. Would the