

Ivo has been lecturing in Napier, and has been tempted to follow some of his opponents into the correspondence columns of the local press, where he has had it all his own way. The club of Hercules is Ivo's weapon.

Mr. William Cooper, on behalf of the Auckland Rationalistic Association, has been doing battle with one of those "funny" gentlemen who claim the privilege of slandering all and sundry under the cap and bells. The slanderer in question calls himself "Zaniel," and contributes a quantity of dull matter weekly to the 'Auckland Star.' The merit of Mr. Cooper's defence and attack is in the fact that he administers the lash so effectually as to make his anonymous opponent drop his "fun," become terribly in earnest, and assume the attitude of one in mental agony.

Progress.

The President of the Woodville Association, in a private note, speaks in warm terms of the prospects of the Association. The antagonism of the sects has been roused, but he thinks they are powerless for harm. The membership stood at thirty on the 5th of March.

The Oamaru 'Mail' says: The proposal to found a Freethought Association in Oamaru, which was set on foot on the occasion of Mr Farnie's lecture, is taking definite form. The committee have so far progressed with their work that it has been decided to invite Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bright to visit Oamaru at an early date and deliver a lecture in the Public Hall. [Since then Mr. Bright has delivered his address.]

WOODVILLE FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

The Secretary has furnished us with the following report for the month of March:—

Woodville, March 22nd, 1884.

SIR,—Since last writing you we have had regular meetings on Sundays, and although the attendance has not been very large it has been pretty earnest. We chose 2.30 p.m. as the hour on Sundays for our meetings, in order to give the orthodox clergy or laity a chance of hearing us "infidels" and of discussion, without interfering with their own services; but it has all been in vain, as, in spite of rumours of certain great men coming to demolish us, they have refrained at the last moment, and those that have come and listened to the papers that have been read, when the President has invited discussion, have remained quiet, on the principle, I suppose, that "the least said is the soonest mended." Only one has had the courage to address us at all, and he, after hearing the characters of some of the best men, according to the Bible, criticised, very fearlessly and earnestly told us that what he had heard only strengthened his belief in the Bible and a personal devil. Now, Mr. Editor, I had hopes of that man, provided he attended our meetings regularly; but he came not since.

We have ordered a piano, and hope now to have some pleasant social meetings, and when any of the orthodox are stirred to address us, will give them an open platform and discuss the subject with them afterwards, but they certainly do not appear anxious to commence.

The following papers, &c., have been read:—March 2nd, address by our President, entitled, "The past, present, and future." March 9th, reading by Mr G. Hutchins, "What it is blasphemy to deny;" address by Mr. Harrison, "Does the Bible teach religion from a truthful point of view?" March 16th, reading by the Secretary, entitled, "False Claims."

"Blue Pencil" keeps us in mind, and has forwarded a goodly number of papers, books, and pamphlets during the month; also, Mr. W. Goldsmith, of Waipawa; to both of whom we beg to tender our sincerest thanks.

Yours truly,

CHAS. A. BEVAN,

Hon. Secretary W.F.A.

CANTERBURY FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

The Secretary sends us the following particulars of this Association:—

Canterbury, March 19th, 1884.

SIR,—Since the last report Mr Wm. Pratt has left for a trip to Europe. Just before he left several sections of our community spontaneously showed their appreciation of him as a citizen by presents and good wishes.

On Sunday, the 17th February, our second anniversary picnic was held, and passed off very satisfactorily, both as regards enjoyment and finances.

The following subjects have been treated upon during the month:—On 24th February, "Mythology—Christmas legends and Christmas facts." On 2nd March, Colonel Ingersoll's "Clergy and Common Sense." On 9th March, last chapter from Henry George's "Progress and Poverty." On 16th March, Mr George's lecture in London on "Property in land."

To give the orthodox party something better to do at next general election time than disturbing the present Education Act, I recommend that an agitation be got up for taxing all places of worship. This is not meant against the Congregationalists, who I am pleased to say are with us on this question.

Occasionally a member who has been to Church comes to the Hall afterwards and gives a *résumé* of the sermon. This keeps us posted up in local Christian arguments.

I am often asked what I have to give in the place of Christianity. My reply is: Supposing your nose was very red and badly inflamed from snuff-taking, and I recommended you to give up the bad practice, although your father and grandfather snuffed. I would recommend nothing in the place thereof, because, like Christianity, nothing is wanted.

Yours, &c.,

F. C. HALL,

Secretary Canterbury F.A.

NELSON FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

This report was received just too late for insertion in our previous issue:—

Nelson, 25th February, 1884.

SIR,—Since my last Mr. O. E. Hugo has kindly given us an excellent lecture on Evolution, of an hour and a half's duration. It was exceedingly well delivered, and listened to with great attention. Since this we have had lectures by our President—one on "Religious belief," and one on "True Priests, Prophets, and Saviours"—both exceedingly good. We have also had several good readings by various members.

I am very pleased to say that at the election of the Education Committee our President, Thos. Gilbert, Esq., was elected, securing votes to the number of 136, being fourth on the list of seven elected. We have three Freethinkers on the Committee, and should have had a fourth had not the voters felt too confident of his return. He had previously been in office, and from his ability and attention was considered sure of being re-elected.

The orthodox party during the month have broken a lance with me through the Press, which has not acted quite so fairly as it might. However, it has kept the cause before the public, which is a consideration. Like most attempts at persecution, it has had a beneficial result rather than the contrary.

The Salvation Army is in full swing here. The attendance, as in other places, is comprised principally of children—youths and girls from twelve to sixteen years of age—with a few demented wretched creatures. The latter I sincerely hope will be benefited by their attendance. I may mention that their meetings are crowded nightly and four times on Sundays.

I need scarcely tell you the pleasure we all felt at the return of Mr. C. Bradlaugh a fourth time, and the disgust at the action of other so-called Liberals in the House of Commons. On Sunday, 24th instant, one of our members, Mr. Leach, gave a reading, "A Christian view of the Bradlaugh case," and the President delivered "sketches of his life." The following resolution was passed:—"That this Association expresses its strong disapproval of the continued exclusion of the four times elected junior member of Northampton from the exercise of his Parliamentary duties; and sincerely hopes that something will be done whereby the free right of constituencies in choice of their representatives may no longer be contemptuously ignored by an arbitrary and bigoted majority in the House of Commons."

I am, &c.,

EDWARD PLAYER,

Hon. Secretary Nelson F.A.

Mr. Player, Secretary of the Nelson Freethought Association, has also favoured us with the following items for the month just ended:—

March, 24th.

SIR,—Since my last communication I have nothing particularly new to write, in consequence of our President being absent from Nelson and my having to leave town for nearly a fortnight. Last evening we were highly entertained by the kindness of Mr. O. E. Hugo giving us a lecture on "Observations on the Salvation Army." The lecture was a very able one. Mr. Hugo threw much dry humour into his discourse, and the lecture throughout was most amusing, and listened to with much pleasure and attention.

During my absence from Nelson I visited Blenheim, and interviewed many Freethinkers on the subject of forming an Association there, which I feel sure will be done at no very distant date. I also interviewed Captain MacNeil, President of the Picton Association, who tells me that although it does not progress so rapidly as they could wish, it is very firmly established. I consider in so small a place as Picton, great credit is due to the officers and members.

I regret my last communication was too late. I had overlooked that February was a short month.

I am, &c.,

EDW. PLAYER,

Hon. Secretary Nelson F.A.