

FREETHOUGHT IN MELBOURNE.

The following letter from Melbourne will be read with interest :—

Sir,—Freethought in Melbourne, I fear, is rather behind what it is in your land, judging by the records of THE REVIEW. We are, however, progressing rapidly, and may take many useful hints from your example. We in Melbourne are handicapped from not being sufficiently organised and compact, and New Zealand has shown its unity and progress by building a Freethought Hall. The hall that our lectures are delivered in was previously a theatre, and the Australasian Secular Association have leased it for a long term, giving it the name of the Hall of Science. We have a building fund, however, and hope soon to possess a hall of our own. The Secular Association is numerically the largest Freethought Society in the Southern Hemisphere, though little over eighteen months old. In addition to our oratory we hold voluntary concerts, or "Social Mornings" (as they are officially called) every Sunday, and they prove very successful, financially and otherwise. We have lately started an excellent Mutual Improvement Class in connection with the A. S. A., which has about 50 members, and promises well. Later still, a Sunday School has been instituted. The attendance at this has doubled during the three weeks of its existence, so that it is firmly established. It needs many improvements, however, and as you have been so successful over your schools, you may be able to give us some useful hints from your own experience.

Melbourne, as you are aware, has received a valuable acquisition to its Freethought ranks from the other side of the globe. Mr. Joseph Symes arrived here on February 10th on a twelvemonth's lecturing engagement with the A. S. A., and has opened his campaign at the Hall of Science. This gentleman's presence has put new life into the cause in Melbourne. His popularity in England is but his due, for he is alike gifted judged from a personal or a professional standard. Mr. Symes is not only "advanced" mentally, but also physically, for his height is 6 feet 2½ inches of solid atheism. He possesses an honest and intellectual countenance. His lecturing style is blunt and easy. He makes no display of rhetoric, but by means of a good command of language, ranging from philosophic argument to keen satire, he enchains the attention of his audience. His rich humor, brought out in a plain, homely manner, always hits the mark, and renders his lectures amusing as well as instructive. His range of subjects is a large one. When he is not gnawing at the theological bone, he is unfolding the newest discoveries in science, or the beauties of literature and philosophy. In addition to his Sunday-evening lectures he delivers a scientific one one night in each week. He also intends to lecture in suburban and provincial districts on other nights of the week, so that he shows an energy and determination that should prove highly beneficial to Melbourne Secularism.

I am sorry to hear of the resignation of Mr. Braithwaite. Still it is but a natural result, for matter and spirit will no more mix than will oil and water. The pious 'Southern Cross,' ever ready to do a mean action, devoted a leading article to the matter, and, by means of a careful selection of quotations, made the case appear very different to what it really is. The tenor of the article was evidently intended to cause the reader to think that the gentleman resigning was some atheistic champion who had found after years of god-denial that his system was injurious to humanity, and that the gods must be kept as a terror to evil-doers. The truth is, of course, that Mr. Braithwaite has always believed in God and spirits, and naturally enough found that he could not travel comfortably in the same harness as atheists. The only surprising feature of the affair, in my opinion, is that he had not long before found his resignation necessary. I regret that such is the case, for I dislike to see belief in any way hindering fraternity; but Nature will have her way. —I am, &c.,

Melbourne, March 17, 1884.

W. C. A.

We hear that Ivo has been winning golden opinions at Oamaru, continuing to rapidly make to himself a high and permanent place on the Freethought platform.

What we call miracles and wonders of art are not so to him who created them; for they were created by the natural movements of his own great soul. Statues, paintings, churches, poems, are but shadows of himself. —LONGFELLOW.

The London correspondent of the 'Manchester Guardian' says:—*Apropos* to the late impassioned controversy over Shakespeare's relics, it may be worth while to note that evidence has now come to light which proves that the grave has not only been already opened, but that the remains were seen and examined by a gentleman at Stratford not many years since deceased. Beyond question the skull was at that late period still in a perfect state, and the statement of Mr. Halliwell Phillips on this subject will require serious modification, not to say reversal. It may further be noted that a curse similar to that inscribed on the tomb has been found on various other tombs, and that it appears to have been a common form of deprecating removal to a charnel house.

FRIENDSHIP, SCIENCE, ART.

A triple health to Friendship, Science, Art,
From heads and hands that own a common heart,
Each in its turn the others' willing slave—
Each in its season strong to heal and save.
Friendship's blind service, in the hour of need,
Wipes the pale face and lets the victim bleed;
Science must stop to reason and explain;
Art claps its fingers on the streaming vein.

But Art's brief memory fails the hand at last;
Then Science lifts the flambeau of the past,
When both their equal importance deplore,
When Learning sighs and skill can do no more—
The tear of Friendship pours its heavenly balm,
And soothes the pang no anodyne may calm.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

NAMES OF FREETHINKERS IN THE CALENDAR FOR APRIL.

4. Friday—J. Lalonde, died, 1807.
5. Saturday—Hobbes, born, 1588.
7. Monday—Almer Kneeland, born, 1744.
10. Thursday—Austin Holyoake, died, 1874.
13. Sunday—G. J. Holyoake, born, 1817.
16. Wednesday—Shakespeare, born, 1563.
17. Thursday—L. Berquin, burned, 1530.
18. Friday—G. H. Lewes, born, 1817.
19. Saturday—Charles Robert Darwin, died, 1882.
21. Monday—Abeard, died, 1142.
22. Tuesday—Kant, born, 1724.
23. Wednesday—Shakespeare, died, 1616.
26. Saturday—David Hume, born, 1711.
27. Sunday—Gibbon, born, 1737; Ralph Waldo Emerson, died, 1882.

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Pending further arrangements, F. C. Hall Esq., the Secretary of the Christchurch Freethought Association, has kindly undertaken to take charge of and distribute THE FREETHOUGHT REVIEW in Christchurch.

Those willing to undertake the agency for places not named are requested to communicate at once with the publisher.

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