

WANGANUI FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

We have received from Mr. Buckrell, the Secretary, an account of the doings of the Association for the month just past:—

Wanganui, April 26th, 1884.

SIR,—I have great pleasure in reporting the first social gathering in connexion with our Association, which took place in the shape of a tea meeting and concert on the 23rd April, in commemoration of Shakspeare's birthday. The tables were provided by ladies of the Association, who spared neither trouble nor expense to make their part of the entertainment successful, and their efforts were rewarded by the attendance of a very large gathering. The "good things" were thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. Appreciation seemed stamped upon the countenances of old and young. The concert was just as successful as the tea meeting, and too much praise cannot be bestowed upon those ladies and gentlemen, members and non-members, who so kindly and ably gave their services.

I have received a report of the proceedings of the Council of the New Zealand Freethought Federal Union. Amongst the resolutions passed by the Council to be submitted to the various Associations in New Zealand, I notice one protesting against the passing of certain clauses in the proposed criminal code for New Zealand, which purports to create what are termed crimes against religion. Of all present questions that concerns Freethought in this colony I hold this is the greatest, for it aims at the freedom of a portion of the deep-thinking and most intellectual of its people. It is essential that all the Associations should at once look this great difficulty in the face, and use every fair and legitimate means to avert what can only be looked upon as a great danger.

I am pleased to see an Association formed in Waverley, which promises to be a large and influential organisation. I know several of the leading spirits by reputation, and can congratulate the Waverley Freethought Association upon possessing such able men.

I take this opportunity of calling upon all those living in country districts who are interested in Freethought to attach themselves to the nearest Association, in order to strengthen those that already exist. I shall be most happy to supply, on application, any information that may be required as to the mode of initiation, &c., used by the Wanganui Association.

I remain, yours faithfully,

J. J. BUCKRELL,

Secretary Wanganui Freethought Association.

Science Notes.

THE TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF HUMAN BODIES.—M. Aimée Girard having lately proposed at the Académie des Sciences the destruction of the bodies of animals dying of virulent diseases by means of sulphuric acid (as their interment does not always secure from the danger they may cause), M. Régnard resolved to try the effect of this substance on the human subject. His experiments with the bodies of new-born infants and fetuses have been completely successful, and would no doubt be equally so if tried on the adult. To the body of an infant he adds about double its weight of the sulphuric acid of commerce, and after 24 or 30 hours of maceration, not a vestige of the body remained—the decomposition having taken place silently and without any smell. Neither the microscope nor the test-tube can detect the slightest trace of the body, beyond the presence of some fat, phosphoric acid and nitrogen.

Dr. Angus Smith's recent researches have led to the discovery, that in all natural waters sugar ferments, and hydrogen gas is given off. The proportion of hydrogen given off varies with the organic impurity of the water, from the mountain stream, to the worst sewage; so that the proportion of hydrogen evolved, appears likely to prove a quantitative test of the activity or virulence of the microbes present in the water.

The Boston and Albany Railroad is building a compound goods locomotive, with two large and two small cylinders, thus initiating an entirely new departure in the construction of railway engines.

G. J. Romanes recently delivered a lecture on "Instinct" to the members of the Birmingham and Midland Institute, in which, after defining the difference between acts properly called instinctive, and those due to reflex, muscular, or nervous motions, and also those intelligently directed, he dwelt upon the two causes to which instinct is to be attributed—namely, lapse of intelligence in actions originating intelligently and becoming by repetition automatic; and natural selection, these two causes acting frequently in combination.

He also dwelt on the plasticity of instinct, and instanced the case of the dog—the spirit of fierceness and self-reliance of the wild dog has been changed by domestication to docility and faithfulness, and a sense of dependence upon his master; and in addition new instincts have been developed, such as pointing, retrieving, sheep tending, and guarding property, all of which are strongly inherited.

Herr Poetsch has invented a method of sinking shafts in watery running ground, by first freezing the water, and then working the frozen mass out by hand. The wet ground is frozen by placing pipes in bore holes; and then passing through them a solution of the Chlorides of Magnesium, and Calcuim, which reduces the temperature to about 35° C.

The "Gesundheit" discussing the resistance of disease germs to disinfectants, remarks that it is extremely probable, that the disease germ of small-pox is present in the form of bacilli in the fluid, which is the principal bearer of the infection—the lymph removed from the pustules. The degree of vitality of the bacilli, varies in the different kinds of lymph; the lymph from cow-pox losing its capability for infection much more readily than the so called human lymph.

During the gales in England of the 26th and 27th of January, unprecedented wind pressures were experienced at the Forth Bridge Works. According to Mr. B. Baker, M.J.C.E., the strongest gusts gave a momentary pressure of 35½ lbs. per square foot on the large board 300 square feet; and of not less than 65 lbs. per square foot on the small board containing 1½ square feet.

THE RELIGION OF THE FUTURE.

Hudson Tutill, in 'The Index,' writes:—The religion of the future will accept and embody the truths of all systems. In doing so, it will not inquire its source, for truth bears the impress of no man's ownership or personality. To it, Jesus in his manger, Mohammed on his camel in the desert, or wisest monarch on his throne, are the same. This religion will be the science of life here and hereafter; and, as man is bound to the universe as an integral part, his understanding of the laws of the world will be its basis. It will teach the infinite possibilities of man, and his duty to cultivate these to the utmost.

The man who professes the religion of the future will accept nature as his Bible, and regard all books as valuable only for the truth they express. He will have no fear of offending God, but will fear to become out of harmony with the laws of his own constitution. His theology will be anthropology, the study of himself; the only devil will be ignorance; his faith will become ripened knowledge, and he will repose implicit confidence in the laws of the world.

Infallible authority of books or castes, reverence for antiquity, miracles, faiths, dogmas, saints, martyrs, popes, priests, fear of angry gods, all the trappings that have been received as divine, holy, sacred, will perish before the keen flame of knowledge, and no more blight the expanding spirit for ever. The old religions with their hollow shams shall perish; but morality, the growth of intelligence, freed from gross and perverting idolatry, will achieve a nobility of character unknown before.

While all preceding religions have developed a priesthood, superstitions, bigotry, persecutions, arrogance of infallibility, and fostered ignorance, selfishness, and servile fear of a terrible, relentless God and his vicegerents, this will yield nobility of life, highest ideals of perfection, calm reliance in the presence of omnipotent forces, all-embracing charity and philanthropy, an earnest and successful endeavour to actualize the ideal perfect life to which man aspires, and which his organisation makes possible.

The Salvation Army of Denver, Col., paid its respects to Col. "Bob" Ingersoll in a body, and exhorted him to repent ere it is too late. The Colonel listened to them philosophically, puffing away at his cigar and making the smoke curl as he blew it into the air. After they had finished, he told them that he would consider what they had told him, but couldn't promise to accept their views.