

pianos, forwarded for exhibition by Mr. J. A. X. Riedle, the manager of the Dunedin Piano Warehouse, were much admired, and the "grand," particularly, was brought into frequent requisition. Besides these there were greenstone exhibits, jewellery, boots and shoes, bride's-cake making, machinery of different kinds, and various other exhibits too numerous to mention. An efficient orchestra (sometimes under the leadership of Mr. Parker, at other times under Mr. Kelly, and, at other times still, the ladies' orchestra) discoursed sweet music during the afternoons and evenings of the fair. From time to time, also, the entertainment would be varied by the singing of the choir, by the soft choruses and jocularities of an amateur minstrel troupe, or by solos and recitations. And if you wished to be rid of the gay and giddy throng, and be for a time at least free from the cares of the world, you could rest at ease at the tea and coffee stall, and, for the modest sum of 3d, calmly and benignly and indolently sip your coffee in a dreamy, far-off kind of way, made more romantic by the murmur of music and laughter and indistinct prattle of conversation, until your reverie is rudely broken and your romance shattered by the sordid exclamation of "Oh! Mr. So-and-so, do go in for this raffle; we only want three more, and it's only half-a-crown a member—and such a sweet, pretty bonnet!" Reluctantly, and with a dissenting smile, you feel called upon to disgorge another dime to the general stock, and with the faint hope of escaping similar appeals, you accompany your fair sister—without mercy—round the room in search of other half-crowns. But it is of no avail. During your journey you discover that you are famous. Everyone in the room—that is, everyone who desires a half-crown for a raffle—knows you by name, is a personal friend of yours, and pleads, oh, so earnestly, to be allowed to put your name down on her list for this or for that, that invariably you give in, and, like a man popular and famous should do, part the required sum. However, I must say that the fair rafflers were not too importunate, and during the whole time of the festival I never heard a single murmur of disapprobation, or anything, in fact, except evidences of the utmost good humour on the part of everyone. The raffling of the goods always appeared satisfactory, and the fact that a very large portion of the money raised was obtained from goods voluntarily bought at the stalls, shows that at least a large per centage of the articles were useful and not merely ornamental.

The Ladies' Association is to be congratulated at the success of their venture, and I think that the ladies, especially Mrs. Bright, deserve the sincere thanks of the Freethought Association for the very considerable sum of money they have been the means of placing at the disposal of the Association.

NELSON FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

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

Nelson, 2nd May, 1884.

SIR,—Since my last communication we have had readings, addresses, and lectures from several of our members on Sunday evenings. Our President has been from Nelson visiting his family at New Plymouth, but during his absence a Mr. Dixon, of Dunedin, happening to be in Nelson, on Sunday evening, he kindly gave us an address, I may say a most interesting and instructive lecture of an hour and a quarter, and the Association regret they had no opportunity to advertise it; also, that his business would not allow his making but a very short stay of a couple of days. In fact, such a one residing among us would be a most valuable acquisition to our Association.

We have also had Mr. Charles Bright, who has given two lectures, one, "Reply to question, What will you give us in its place?" and one, "Is the God of the Bible worthy of reverence?" Mr. C. Bright is so well known to your readers that I need say but little of them further than that his lectures were as usual very good, and were thoroughly appreciated by two large audiences, and, as the following will show, woke up the orthodox. On the following Sunday it was publicly announced in the papers that the Rev. Dr. Taylor, at Christ Church in this city, would preach on the two lectures of Mr. Bright, under the title "The God of the Bible, what will you give us in *his* place." As I did not hear the reverend doctor preach I can say nothing more than hearsay, which was that he made hash of it—not at all surprising considering he did not hear a word of either lecture. It was also publicly announced that the Rev. J. H. Lewis, of the Congregational Church here, would reply to Mr. Bright's second lecture, the reverend gentleman being present throughout the lecture. The members of the Association wished to hear it, and to give all the members an opportunity, the meeting at the Freethought Hall was postponed until 8.30 instead of 7 p.m. Myself and many others attended the Rev. J. H. Lewis's Church, which was well attended. The Rev. Mr. Lewis's discourse was much above an hour, and

I with many others cannot speak too highly of it, his boldness of speech and liberality fairly astonishing his hearers. The manner in which he said from his very heart he fully endorsed many of Mr. Bright's allusions (quoting the same) and the praise he gave him for his mild, temperate, and gentlemanly speaking, I am sure was gratifying to his congregation. He entreated all to search the Scriptures for themselves, and not to take his or any man's opinion let him be who or what he may, but with their own common sense and reason form their own belief and seek to discover the truths therein contained. As I hear his sermon is to be published, and think in time for your next issue, I will send it, that you may, if space will allow you, make some extracts. In conclusion, I can only say had I heard the sermon from a Freethought platform I should have considered I had listened to a very beautiful Freethought lecture. The reverend gentleman is going to give a series of lectures at his Church on Sunday evenings, and I feel confident he will have very full congregations.

I am thankful to say our Association is progressing satisfactorily.

I am, &c.,

EDWARD FLAYER,

Hon. Secretary Nelson F.A.

[We fail to discover anything in the lecture as reported to warrant the assertion of our correspondent, that it might have been delivered by a Freethinker. It seems a very common-place specimen of Christian apologetics; the excuses for Jehovah, however, rather tending to bring this member of the Syrian Pantheon into ridicule. Is it in this respect that our correspondent finds a vein of freethought in the lecture? Ed. F. R.]

CANTERBURY FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

Mr. Hall, the Secretary, sends the following items for publication:—

Christchurch, 15th May, 1884.

SIR,—The lectures at our Hall for the past month have been April 26th, "What civilization has done for Christianity," 21st "Ingersoll at home and on the platform," and 22nd, "Is the Bible God worthy of reverence?" by Mr. Charles Bright; 27th, "Blasphemy," by Mr. Matheson; May 4th, "Bible heroes (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), in the School, by Mr. Rae; 11th, "Religious ideas," by Mr. Parker.

The Christchurch City Council has a by-law that places of public entertainment shall take out a license, and I have called upon our Association to do so. Acting up a legal advice, we have declined, as, although the present Council could not interfere, yet their successors might try to do so on Sunday evening meetings. Surely the Christians can't have so much power or willingness of their God, or they would, if need be, send up a prayer stating their case and then leave it without trying to bring pressure on a City Council. We are glad that our lectures are not entertaining within the meaning of the by-law more than those in churches or the lectures of professors at Canterbury College. We object to pay either rates or licences, thinking it right that every church or chapel should pay, and be on the same footing with the Association. If we do not get justice in this matter, an application will be made to Parliament to compel all churches and chapels to take out licenses, in order that we shall be alike in the matter of Sunday services. We are members of a congregation, and our religion is truth and humanity. We don't want to interfere, and would oppose any interference, with the followers of any member of the Jewish race.

After hearing for months nothing but curses and growling about the ruined harvest, I was surprised to find all the Churches going in for thanksgiving services.

Bible stories ending so many jokes amongst Jews, Christians, and infidels, it seems a pity to rob the next generation of so much laughter by keeping the Bible out of schools.

The Salvation Army has prayed to its God for the conversion of Colonel Ingersoll. I wonder with what success.

Yours faithfully,

F. C. HALL,

Secretary C.F.A.

WANGANUI FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

We have been furnished with the following by the Secretary of this Association:—

Wanganui, May 20th, 1884.

SIR,—Beyond the ordinary routine of lectures, papers, and readings, nothing particular has transpired this month in connexion with our Association. On Sunday, May 4th, a member gave an address on Mr. Henry George's "Progress and Poverty." It was my misfortune to be absent on that occasion, as I am told the address was one of the best given amongst us. On Sunday last, May 18th, our President gave a most instructive and interesting lecture on the "Burial rites and ceremonies of savage and civilised races." The lecturer, in the course of his remarks, said it was supposed by many that cremation was a comparatively novel idea, but such was not the case, as the practice was common amongst the Greeks and Romans more than 2000 years ago. In conclusion, he pointed out the necessity of extensive funeral reforms among civilised races in the present day. A more interesting or instructive lecture could not well be given.

Our Association have confirmed the resolutions passed by the New Zealand Freethought Federal Union, and with two exceptions unanimously agreed with them. In the cases of the resolutions alluded