

and the difficulties with which the outlying settlers in this district have to contend in the shape of bad roads, our Sunday night meetings have been well attended, and in fact the average has been higher than during any period since the inauguration of the Association. Good news, too, comes from our neighbouring bush township, Norsewood—a Scandinavian settlement—where it is proposed to start an Association, and our President has agreed to deliver the inaugural address when the preliminary arrangements have been completed.

On the last Sunday in June we held our quarterly public meeting in the schoolroom, when the President delivered an address "Is the Bible the word of God?" treating the book to which Christians pin their faith historically and critically, and especially showing the analogy of Christianity to the old mythologies. There was a fair attendance, and at the conclusion of the address an all-round discussion ensued, one orthodox gentleman stating that he could disprove every statement made. He was thereupon challenged to do so, and the challenge being accepted he was allowed two months to work up his subject and discuss it publicly. This is the gentleman who gave out that he was going to "smash up" the Association at its start, but after several promises never turned up to fulfil his engagements.

On Sunday, 5th July, a pleasing ceremony took place at the close of our meeting. Mr. Bevan, the former secretary, having handed in his resignation, and being about to proceed with his wife to Auckland, the committee resolved on paying a parting tribute to two of their most respected members. The tribute took the form of a presentation copy of "Josephus" to Mr. Bevan, and of "Gleanings from the Poets" to Mrs. Bevan. The President in making the presentation testified to the zeal displayed by both Mr. and Mrs. Bevan in promoting the objects of the Association. Mr. Bevan having devoted not only much time and attention to its work, but having given us the free use of his rooms in which to hold our meetings. In his reply Mr. Bevan intimated that though he was leaving he should still leave his building in the hands of the Association, free of charge, to be used solely for their meetings. This is sympathy of a practical kind for which all the members feel grateful, and we commend Mr. and Mrs. Bevan to our sister Association in Auckland. Mr. G. Hutchison has been elected secretary in place of Mr. Bevan. We have again to thank that genuine friend of Freethought "Blue Pencil" for further contributions to our literature.

PALMERSTON NORTH PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

An esteemed correspondent has kindly favored us with the following items concerning the formation of the above Society, to which we gladly give publicity:—

The Palmerston North Psychological Society commenced their Sunday evening meetings on the 13th inst. Mr. St. John Watson gave an impressive invocation whilst entranced, followed by an address from Mr. J. Dinsdale specially directed against the opponents of Modern Spiritualism. On the afternoon of the 20th inst. a Lyceum was opened to enable the children of spiritualists to enjoy the benefits of a moral and intellectual training unfettered by the dogmatic teachings of the day. Members responded well by sending their children, so that the inauguration proved quite a success. In the evening an address was given by Mr. T. R. Walton, the subject being "Immortality," which was continued by Mr. Watson in the trance, and concluded by an extempore poem entitled "Truth." These meetings are well attended, supplying a want long felt in Palmerston, where Spiritualism is steadily progressing. J. D.

WANGANUI FREETHOUGHT ASSOCIATION.

Mr. Buckrell, Secretary to the Wanganui Freethought Association, has handed us the following items:—

SIR,—The first annual meeting of the Wanganui Freethought Association took place on July 6th, when it was shown by the Secretary's Report and the Treasurer's statement that the Association was in a flourishing position in every respect. At the first half-yearly meeting held in January last the numerical strength of the Association was 87. During the past six months several have left the district, and have in consequence ceased to be members, but it is a very pleasing fact to relate that they have been replaced by new ones, thereby maintaining the strength of the Association. During the last fortnight six have been enrolled, and I hope very soon to be able to report that we number 100 strong. I take this opportunity of reminding members that their quarterly subscriptions are due on 1st July, and can be paid at any time to the Treasurer or Secretary.

J. J. BUCKRELL, Secretary.

MELBOURNE.

Our Melbourne friend, W. C. A., has favoured us with another interesting letter, as below:—

SIR,—In my last letter I prophesied that there would shortly be a battle with the Government. Up to the present, however, the Crown guns are still silent, and it appears most probable that we will be disappointed. Nothing has transpired in regard to the withdrawal of the permit for the Hall of Science lectures, although Mr. Symes has been continually lecturing there on Sunday evenings. The only result, if any, has been an increased attendance. It has been decided that on the first Sunday in each month a special

collection will be taken prior to the lecture in aid of the building fund, but to be devoted, if required, to our defence in case of legal war. The seizure, (or theft, as Mr. Symes terms it), of Mr. Keep's freethought works, has been succeeded by another. I must here correct a misstatement I made last month when I stated that all the freethought works in the shop were taken, that being an error, for only the "Freethinkers" were seized. The second robbery of the Customs officers was occasioned by the appearance of a new copy of the Comic Life of Christ in the window, in place of the missing one. The authorities at once pounced upon it, and also searched the premises of the A. S. A. adjoining the shop, carrying off with them some filed copies of the "Freethinker" belonging to the Association. In reply to a question in the Legislative Council, the Government stated that it was unlikely that a prosecution would ensue, but they intended to keep the shop under surveillance in future, and when anything blasphemous appeared, to promptly seize it.

Dr. Moorhouse, the bishop of Melbourne, has alluded to the Customs seizure in the course of a sermon, and thus characterised those who, to use his own words, revile the most perfect sacred figure of human history:—"I am told there are people who can revile and even caricature him. Well, then, I pronounce judgment on these men. If they have read their new testament and studied it—if they know what they are doing, I say—and I am clear in my judgment—those that revile the Lord Jesus must needs be of a diabolical disposition, and those poor wretched beings that can caricature him are lower morally than the beasts that perish. You may think that, perhaps, a harsh judgement, but I repeat, if the men know what they are doing—I cannot tell that—only God knows that—but if they know what they are doing, I am as certain that my judgment is true as if I saw the light of the eternal judgment roll in full blaze upon their souls." Mr. Symes lectured in reply to this, after inviting the Bishop by private letter to substantiate his charges on the platform of the Hall of Science. This challenge not being accepted, the following resolution was moved, at the conclusion of the lecture, by Mr. Kelly, seconded by Mr. Padley, and on being put to the vote, was carried unanimously:—"This meeting begs to assure Dr. Moorhouse that the Secularists are perfectly aware of what they are doing, and view with indignation his unjust attack upon them. It calls upon him to show in public debate wherein they are lower than the beasts and render themselves certain of damnation; and if he will not do so, it must look upon him as a coward and a slanderer."

Mr. Symes's system of inviting discussion after his lecture, has borne good fruit. On Sunday, 15th June, he delivered a lecture entitled:—"Christianity the worst foe of truth," after which the Rev. D. M. Berry, (Church of England), occupied the platform for half-an-hour in reply. Mr. Symes in the course of his concluding speech, challenged Mr. Berry to a public debate. The challenge was cordially accepted, and a four nights' discussion took place, commencing on June 24th. The first two evenings were occupied with the proposition: "Is it rational to believe that Jesus rose from the dead?" The following evenings the text was: "Is it rational to believe in God?" I cannot in my limited space give an account of the discussion, but suffice to say that both gentlemen conducted themselves in a fair and tolerant manner. A verbatim report is appearing in the "Liberator," commencing with the issue July 6th; each number containing the account of one evening's proceedings. The success of this debate has induced the Rev. Canon Potter to also enter the lists, and he has agreed to a one night's struggle with Mr. Symes on Theism.

The A.S.A. Sunday School is making progress. It has published a book containing a catechism, and a good collection of Ethical and Freethought songs. The school is subdivided into classes, each possessing a handsome banner, bearing the name of a Freethought champion; there is, for instance, the Robert Ingersoll class, the Thomas Paine class, the Joseph Symes class, etc.

The Mutual Improvement Class has held its first half-yearly meeting, and as may be seen from the Secretary's report, has done good work. The report states that 128 speeches have been delivered, 20 of which were by ladies; 22 essays have been written; in addition to these, there have been numerous songs, readings, recitations, etc. A good feature of our class is the system of electing a chairman from ourselves each evening. During the six months the chair has been occupied by seven different ladies, and twelve gentlemen. By this means many timid persons have been improved; the result being particularly noticeable in the way the ladies have been drawn from the obscurity that custom consigns them to.

W. C. A.

Melbourne, July 15th.

TRUTH.

No power on earth shall sever
My soul from Truth forever.
In what'er path she wander,
I'll follow my Commander.
All hail! all hail! beloved Truth!

What'er the foe before me,
What'er her flag flies o'er me,
I'll stand, and never falter:
No bribe my faith shall alter.
Lead on! lead on! thou mighty Truth!

And when the fight is over,
Look down upon thy lover:
He asks, for well done duty,
To see thy heavenly beauty.
Reveal thy face, celestial Truth!

—MISOT J. SAVAGE.