

scholar to a belief in "no hereafter," but that nearly the entire audience were brought to the same opinion. Surely that must have been the Pentecost of our cause. The spread of Freethought opinions was next recognized in a resolution moved by the Rev Joshua Denovan, who startled the audience by announcing that "Infidelity was in a state of white heat activity," and that in Mr. Piddington's large book store he learned that there was no demand for "Evidences of Christianity;" but rather for essays and reviews in favor of scepticism. Probably some of my friends may imagine that the Christian ministry are about to abandon the role of the Ostrich, when pursued by hunters, and to meet Freethinkers face to face; but they are mistaken. The "Ostrich" has only removed its head long enough from the protection of the sand to give the mouth's appeal for more "money" clearance of utterance.

CHARITY in its nobler application, appears to form no part of the Rev. Joshua Denovan's code of virtues, for at the meeting above referred to, after citing numerous incidents to prove that Romanism had a demoralizing effect upon its believers, he capped the climax by making the bold, unprincipled assertion that it reduced France to such a degraded position that her men lacked manliness, and her women lacked virtue. Surely it is time that national prejudices should be relegated to the sink of oblivion; but there is a strong probability that religious ignorance and bigotry, and not national animosity, may be the source of the slander. It is but fair that manliness should be defined. If it is defined in the sense of bravery, courage and boldness, the wars of France, and especially the recent heroic defence made by her Provisional Government, give an ample and full contradiction to the slander; but is there not a nobler interpretation of manliness? Does not true manliness find its main-spring in humanity? In "Views Afoot," Bayard Taylor says that among "the dwellers on the hills of Provence, and beside the swift Rhone, we almost invariably found kind, honest hearts, and an aspiration for something better. * * * We found few so hardened as to be insensible to a kind look or a friendly word, and nothing made us forget we were among strangers as the many tokens of sympathy which met us when least looked for." Surely this is a proof of humanity; and where there is humanity there is found the highest and noblest type of manliness. I cannot discover language too forcible to express my abhorrence of the *unmanly* manner in which the women of a whole nation are coolly characterized as wanting the brightest jewel in woman's crown. Virtue, in the sense of chastity, I, in common with Freethinkers, believe to be, and to have been, in every country and in every age, among the highest evolution of humanity, and even amongst the lowest human-animal, the common property of woman, and that cases of unchastity bear the same numerical relation to chastity which cases of disease, in a healthy community, bear to health. If Roman Catholicism has made the women of France wantons, why then should the women of the South of Ireland have a world wide reputation for chastity? Why should Protestant Scotland, and Methodist Cornwall, present to the world the largest percentage of illegitimate births? Personally opposed as I am to all forms of priestly government, I prefer to assail, on purely intellectual grounds, the church of Rome, rather than by the foul tongue of abuse.

The same reverend gentleman, in the very same speech, cavilled in the usual manner against Liberal Thinkers calling themselves Freethinkers; and he made the usual claim that Christian ministers encouraged freedom of thought. Now, that very assertion makes it self-evident that he, as a Christian minister, accepts the application of the word in a much narrower sense than Freethinkers do. In advocating what is called Freethought, we contend that all human beings should pursue knowledge unconfined by the limits of pre-conceived opinions, and that every encouragement should be given to young persons to think for themselves, and to accept truths or principles on account of their intrinsic value, rather than to dull the keen edge of criticism,

speculation and investigation by endeavouring to think in accord with the teachings of their fathers. In what theological seminary is Freethought taught in that sense? There is scarcely a theological seminary in Christendom in which students are not compelled to subscribe to a confession of faith before they enter. Where then is the freedom of thought? Freethinkers are consistent, for without exception they contend that the education of children should be purely secular, and that religion should be for the adult, or the young person of mature faculties, either to receive or to reject.

ILLEGITIMACY.

The copy of petition below, was sent by a friend in Salem. It was presented to the Massachusetts Legislature in 1876, and is about to be presented again this winter:

"To the Senate and House of Representatives: We, the undersigned members of the community respectfully petition your honorable bodies to abolish "Illegitimacy" from our midst, and thus enable every woman who stands in the connection or relationship of a wife, in any respect towards any man, to sustain her position respectably, by acknowledging publicly such relation, and recording her name as a married woman, endowed with all the rights and privileges pertaining thereto, so that the law of nature, which in all cases executes its judgment towards women, shall not be intercepted in its judgment towards men by all legal immunities from its results. Every man knows that no child can be illegally imposed upon woman, thereby creating "father women" and illegitimate children. In this uplifting of ourselves we ask you to legally sustain us, removing every obstacle, and extending every protection."

The above petition is a just and wholesome demand. A man who is in the cause of bringing a child into the world without making such provision for it and its mother's comfort as is made by the superior and many of the less intelligent animals, sinks below these animals in all that should characterize a man. It is he, and not the child that is a bastard. We never can have a high social morality until we protect innocent children, and brand as infamous, the authors of their generation and abandonment. To force a child into the world under conditions which subject it to insult, poverty, and a life of social inequality with others, is a foul act of treason, and is in many cases, worse than murder. The victim of the murderer may be cut off from life, perhaps of suffering; but the other has life thrust upon it, to be pelted during its continuance by every mean, narrow, and despotic spirit whom the law may have stamped legal, but on whose brow every true and pure heart would write in plain black letters, the word *devil*. To be sired by a mean wretch is misfortune enough. But for the law to subject the innocent child to a condition less honorable than that held by its father, is a concentration of cruelty. I know no words by which to express my abhorrence of the law and its upholders. —*Positive Thinker*.

We endorse without reserve the above comments. They are all brave true words.—*Ed. Journal*.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE BASIS OF UNION FOR LIBERALS?

By GEO. E. BAXTER.

The subject of Union is a practical and important one for the consideration of Liberals. Liberals are social beings like other men and women. When liberals cease to associate and sympathize with those who entertain different theological opinions from themselves, it is not because they are indifferent to the pleasures and advantages of sympathy and union; but it is from lack of that common purpose and warm sympathies so necessary to form a true union of heart and purpose. Liberals do not fail to take interest and join hands with anyone, in the many common interests of society, that are independent of class and creed. No