

**ROME CORRESPONDENCE OF THE TABLET**

Sunday, September 25, 1904.

**FREETHINKERS IN COUNCIL.**

The Congress of Freethinkers has been a wonderful success in many ways. It opened on Tuesday and closed on Friday, and there was not a dull moment in it from the start to the finish. France sent over a thousand delegates, and Spain three hundred, while Belgium and Germany were also strong. England was woefully deficient, her only "representative," apparently, being a man called Heaford, whereas the United States could boast of two such luminaries as Wilson and Conway. The Congress was to have been mainly composed of men of science, but the notorious Haeckel of Jena was the only person in the gathering whose name is at all connected with science. Instead there were hordes of Socialist deputies from France, Germany and Belgium, while the rank and file of the gathering was composed of Freemasons, Republicans, Socialists and Anarchists. Nothing particular happened at the inaugural session on Tuesday morning. Immediately after it the Congressists formed into a procession for Porta Pia to celebrate the overthrow of the Popes. They were escorted by the band "Umberto I.," and they whiled away the march by singing revolutionary hymns, and filling the air with ribald, blasphemous and anarchistic shouts. At one point a group of socialists came to blows with a number of republicans, but the shrieking on both sides was soon drowned by the Umberto band playing the socialist "Song of the Workers." When they arrived at the Breach the Belgian socialist deputy, Fournemont, President of the Congress, delivered a wildly applauded harangue, in which he predicted the speedy arrival of the social republic which would destroy all existing governments. It was a most bewildering spectacle—Fournemont thundering sedition and revolution on the platform, thousands of socialists and anarchists swaying round him like energumens, a double file of Italian gendarmes gazing stolidly before them, and the Populus Romanus in an outer circle looking phlegmatically on at the whole show.

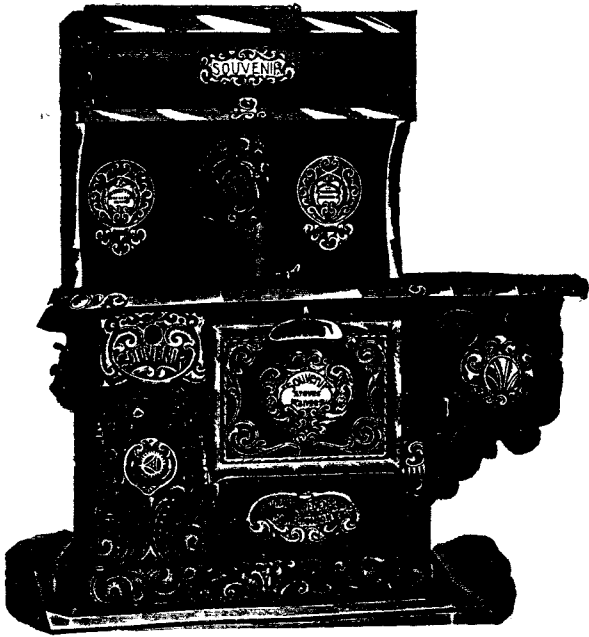
**CALL EACH OTHER NAMES.**

But the real fun began at the afternoon session. A Freethinker named Denis opened the proceedings by trying to make a speech. Nobody heard what he said owing to the noise. He was followed by the inevitable Fournemont, who announced that Haeckel proposed that the Congress should send a congratulatory telegram to Combes. Tremendous applause, in the midst of which ex-abbe Charbonnel threw his arms about like one possessed. But just at that moment there was a tornado of shouting from all parts of the hall; anarchists, socialists, and republicans by the score wanted to be allowed to speak. Conway apparently got the right of way for he was seen on the platform, moving his lips and arms. The papers say that he spoke in French. Perhaps he did, but he might just as well have orated in Sanscrit, since there were many dozens of other free orators talking at the same time. Finally, Fournemont abruptly rose, and declared the session closed. The announcement was received with a storm of imprecations from all parts of the hall. Fournemont and his companions on the platform beat a hasty retreat, followed by universal yellings and cries of "Ah! Gallowsbirds! Gallowsbirds!" in the melee which followed freemasons, and anarchists, and socialists, and republicans groaned each other heartily, and shook their fists in each other's faces. One man got on the platform and began to speak in French, six others mounted on as many chairs, and addressed the gathering in as many tongues. It was

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