

THE FREETHINKER

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VIEWES AND OPINIONS

That Christian Tradition

"THE Rationalist Annual" (Watts and Company; 1s. 6d.) is well up to its usual excellence, although it is wanting a little in bulk, and that, in these days of paper shortage, we expect. The articles by Dr. Murray, Rear-Admiral Beadnell, Professor Haldane and other well-known writers cannot but be good reading, and should be the more enjoyable because one may find material for criticism without being seriously disturbed. After all, one gets tired, or ought to get tired, reading only things with which one is in full agreement. How often does one hear, "I do not read So-and-So, or I would not read So-and-So; I do not agree with him"? But that is the very man, or the very book, that one ought to read. At least, it should test positions and so make the holder of them the stronger if they come through the furnace uninjured. "Yes" men are really very unpleasing companions, or at least one cannot meet them with the keen pleasure that one engages in conversation with an acute critic or a well informed opponent. I do not know what is the food value of all the condiments, and I do not care. I use them for one reason alone. They bite, and in the biting make the meal more pleasurable than it would be without them. Insipid foods, insipid writers are both damnable. Off-hand we would say that the reason why the devil does not like holy water is because there is no bite in it. If it had been mixed with whiskey it would have been in much greater demand. But in that case it might never have got past the priests. The suggestion is offered to our religious leaders for what it may be worth.

To get back to our muttons. The first article in the "Annual" is by Dr. Gilbert Murray. The title is "Religion in State Schools," and is concerned solely with the readjustment of religious teaching and the suggestion—made over and over again in these columns for many years—that if religion is taught in the schools it should be comprehensive—not exclusive to all save a chosen form or forms of Christianity. Pupils should be made familiar with the religions of the world, and also the origin of religious ideas as given by modern anthropology. But against this Dr. Murray raises criticism. His first objection is that while a study of comparative religion is interesting "to a certain type of advanced student, it is somewhat above the heads of children." But no one has ever advised that very young children should receive advanced lessons in anthropology—only that young children should be, in a simple manner, informed that there are many gods in the world, all of them being centres of religious practices. To say that children are too young to be so taught, but that they may be given the current mythology in terms of historic fact, is too ridiculous for serious argument. What children are taught now is that there is only one true religion in the

world, and that is Christianity. The result is that children leave school without the least *understanding* of even their own religion. If *religions* cannot be taught, then neither can *religion*.

Dr. Murray, it may be remembered, was recently selected by the B.B.C. to represent "Rationalism" in a series of broadcasts, and what he has to say now may have an added significance for the Christian world. What will the outside world make of this:—

"It is clear that religion taught . . . in Government schools must be in accord with the accepted traditions of the people. The religious and—what is much more—the ethical emotions of the English people are rooted in the Christian writings, especially in the Gospels, some of the Epistles and books like the 'Imitation' and the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' The situation must be accepted."

I do not wish to be unkind, but it almost seems as though Dr. Murray's association with the B.B.C. has blunted his alertness of mind. There is, by the way, a New Testament saying about the inability to touch pitch and not being defiled. That our schools must run in agreement with the Christian tradition is simply not true. That is the cry of the Churches, of the B.B.C., and was the cry of Tsarist Russia—until determined men and women swept aside the shibboleth of accepted tradition and produced a new Russia, by the existence of which Dr. Murray, myself and millions of others in this country have slept more peaceful at nights and gone through the days with greater confidence.

The statement that it is clear that the religion and the ethical emotions of the people must be rooted in "accepted traditions," etc., is wrong to the point of being ridiculous. The character of the English people may have been affected by one of the most selfish books ever written—"Pilgrim's Progress"—but certainly ethics is not rooted in that nor in the Epistles, the "Imitation," etc. To-day the bulk of the clergy would gladly forget, with Dr. Murray, the story of the Ark, etc.—specifically mentioned—but it should be the duty of all Freethinkers and reformers to see that these things are not forgotten, and that they are still believed in by multitudes of Christians. In considering the ethical value of Christianity we must not let them be brushed aside. It is in the line of the "Christian tradition" to fight for the truth of these and other stupid legends so long as it is possible, and when shame forces the more respectable Christians to reject them, to cant and whine about the value of the Christian tradition. And more than many others, Professor Murray should be alive to the fact that ethical emotions are not rooted in religion; they are products of the gregarious quality of mankind. Man's development has been distorted, not improved, by the intrusion of religious considerations. Freethinkers who understand both their own position and that of the Churches must see to it that this

way of giving a new lease of life to Christianity is not successful. The Christian Churches have never in the whole of their history discarded any of their barbarous or ridiculous beliefs and practices until a more wholesome humanity has forced the change.

More, the things that Dr. Murray sets aside are still taught to children in and out of the schools; and if the Government has its way, they will be taught more openly and with greater success than is the case at present. If Dr. Murray wishes to see the Christian tradition in action we suggest that he listens to the closing religious talk of the "Children's Half-Hour." He will find all the ridiculous things which he renounces being openly taught as real occurrences. They are lessons intended for children. They should prove that Christianity is not dead; it is only crippled. There is no need for non-Christians to develop apologies for it or to enlarge on its inevitability. Still less to throw a protecting arm across men who can lie to children as the B.B.C. speakers do. To lie to an adult is bad enough, although it is one of the commonest of things. But deliberately to lie to a child by taking advantage of its want of knowledge is an unforgivable offence.

The Devil's Advocate

Having presented the dilemma, Dr. Murray discloses what he considers a "way out." To us it has all the appearance of a wrong thing left in. Consider this:—

"The one simple and sincere way I suggest is to recognise (1) that all religious language is of necessity metaphorical. (2) The subject is one which Christian and Agnostic agree transcends human knowledge. . . . (3) I do not see why the children of England should not be encouraged to accept and love the Christian tradition of myths, metaphors and parables as an aid to the good life." (The numbers are mine; they save repetition.)

Now I do not believe for a moment that Dr. Murray is not sincere in what he says, but he has altogether mistaken the situation. All the same, his plea is on all fours with those Christian special pleaders who publish a mere shadow of Christianity in the hope that it will be taken by many as the original real thing.

Take number one. That simply is not true. Religious language, or the language of religion, is not born of metaphors. Primitive religion—and the most recent *religious* religion is only the old religion repainted—is factual in its conceptions and direct in its meaning. I need not dwell upon this to Dr. Murray, for he well knows that it is the teaching of all competent anthropologists. Besides, metaphors are born of plenitude of language, not where views are narrow and words scanty. If ever there was a realist it was primitive man. The treatment of religious ideas as metaphorical or symbolical belongs to a time when established religious ideas are losing ground and when unbelief is becoming common and powerful. I need not remind Dr. Murray that he will find many illustrations of this in his beloved Greek literature. But unless the findings of all modern anthropologists, from Tylor to Frazer, are all at sea, the foundation of religion in metaphorical language is quite wrong. Christians certainly cannot agree with such an apology.

Number two, I must deal with briefly because I am not certain that I grip its meaning, and am not sure that it means anything at all. I am puzzled to understand how anyone can believe, or partly believe, in something that transcends knowledge. Knowledge may be imperfect, a theory may be held tentatively—that is a common thing in science—but how does one get into touch with something that is beyond our conception? How do I recognise something of which I know nothing and can think nothing? The Athanasian Creed seems quite simple beside this problem.

Now for number three. Dr. Murray cannot see any objection to encouraging the children of England to love the "Christian" tradition of myths, metaphors, etc. Well, so far as we are concerned, there is none—if Dr. Murray will take out that single word "Christian." Myths and metaphors are *useful* to adults, but simple things of that order are almost indispensable to the normal development of children. Writers of first-class standing have pointed out that the play of animals and of children is a preparation for facing the sterner challenge of adult life; and just as the kitten chasing, or laying in wait for a moving piece of wool, so parables, mythical things and metaphorical terms may serve as the gymnastics of the human mind.

But Dr. Murray uses the word "Christian," and that, in existing circumstances, quite alters the situation. For while Dr. Murray accepts the story of the virgin birth of Jesus, of heaven and hell, of God and heaven, of prayer and its power to work miracles, and so forth as mere myths or parables, the Churches hold that they must be treated as realities, and the Government, under the cloak of improving education, is helping them to teach children as literal truths what are myths or parables to Dr. Murray. I fancy that if Dr. Murray saw a teacher exercising his pupils in the art of pocket-picking he would not be satisfied if the teacher explained that he was cultivating a directness and gentleness of touch in his pupils. The teacher would be told he must find other methods of training than exercises in robbery.

It is really time that those who are substantially Atheists should cease to throw, not crumbs but good-sized loaves to those who are working hard for a revival of the Christian superstition. You cannot purify essential Christianity, you must either work for its destruction or connive at its perpetuation. The war has taught us—or it ought to have taught us—that it is easier to destroy civilisation than to develop it, and long ago George Eliot wrote that while men sing the power of knowledge few consider the destructive power of ignorance. If Germany could have had its way, the European world would have gone back to the stage at which the Christian Church ruled. The Church may still have a chance of conquest if we are foolish enough to restore its teachings to power under the guise of traditions and metaphors. The metaphor may become a solid fact.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER ESSAYS." By G. W. FOOTE.
Price 2s. ; postage 2½d.

"THE BIBLE: WHAT IS IT WORTH?" By R. G. INGERSOLL.
Price 2d., postage 1d.

"THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH." By CHAPMAN COHEN.
Price 2s. 6d., postage 3d.

A SURVEY OF MODERN LITERATURE

WITH his "Towards the Twentieth Century" (Cambridge University Press, 1937), Dr. A. V. Routh, Professor of English Literature and Institutions in the University of Athens, has written a stimulating work. His pages are mainly devoted to eminent thinkers and men of letters of the past and present centuries and, if his survey is incomplete, the author has packed an imposing array of suggestive material into his 377 clearly expressed pages.

Dr. Routh terms his study a spiritual history, and the words "spirit" and "spiritual" constantly recur in his volume, much as they occur in the writings of all the literary and scientific notables under examination. As interpreted by our author, "spirit" embraces principles and ideals and, while not excluding religion, completely dissociates itself from any theological creed or dogma. "In this secular 19th century sense," he says, "'spirit' might rise to the lips of any humanist (an agnostic, a pagan, no less than a saint) and would connote an impulse towards intellectual or imaginative creativeness; not necessarily to the writing of poetry or the painting of pictures; but to the identification of one's best self with the best of things."

Mill's "Liberty," powerfully influential as it was, would, in Routh's opinion, have impressed a far wider public had the philosopher "invested his attitude with the life and picturesqueness of personality as Montaigne, Addison or De Quincey would have done." Truly enough, noble as Mill's essay is, it lacks emotional appeal, and chiefly for that deficiency many readers find its style somewhat unattractive. Still, the services of the two Mills to humanism were great, and the influence of the younger Mill is still with us. But when John Stuart died in 1873, Routh recalls that "a grateful nation was at first eager to erect some public monument to his memory." His detractors and captious critics, however—Gladstone, Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold and others—intruded, and the community was persuaded that its venerated thinker had been overrated. As Routh notes, Mill "knew enough and more than enough to be appalled, as were Tennyson and Ruskin, at the vulgarity, mammonism, maladministration and overgrowth of his own age. But he also understood that the modern thinker's duty was not so much to expose these abuses as to rectify them." Consequently, vested interests, clerical and lay, were disconcerted much as they are to-day.

Magnificent as their literary achievements were, Routh concludes that Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, Browning and Tennyson all failed in attaining their intended objective. But Darwin's stupendous success in revolutionising the thought of the world made his name immortal. Routh implies that T. H. Huxley, so highly qualified, might have done more for science had he not wasted his own and Gladstone's time in exposing the ridiculous New Testament tale of the Gadarene swine and other Biblical absurdities. But he overlooks the fact that evolutionary doctrines were anathema to the bulk of the clergy, and forgets the bitter and unscrupulous antagonism to science that the clericals and their adherents so persistently displayed.

Routh considers that Haeckel outshone Huxley as a natural philosopher. An early convert to evolution, Haeckel laboured incessantly to convince adverse scientists and a ligneous German public of the truth of Darwinism, and his various lectures and volumes carried conviction in many quarters. Yet, Routh opines that the much abused Die Welträtzel (The Riddle of the Universe) was the work that won the battle. "This work," he avers, "differs from those of the English school for three reasons. In the first place, Haeckel was writing for a nation much more under the influence of Rome and much more exposed not only to the aggressive and anti-rationalistic bulls and

encyclica which Pius IX. issued between 1854 and 1870; but to the diplomacy which his successor exercised with such skill that Falk and Bismarck's liberalism was thwarted and that Haeckel could protest against the 'snake-like coils of his Jesuitic diplomacy, as slippery as an eel.' In the next place, he was writing for a nation whose higher education was largely metaphysical. . . . Thirdly, as Haeckel was bent both on attacking the theology of Rome and the immaterialisation of Kant [in his second phase], he wrote more systematically than did Huxley and more humanistically than did Darwin."

Haeckel's materialistic manifesto was an astounding success; 140,000 copies of the German editions were printed before 1918, while the "Riddle" was translated into 24 foreign languages. The book proved a bombshell; hundreds of answers to its assertions appeared, and its author was the recipient of over 5,000 letters, mainly of inquiry and appreciation, from all parts of the globe. Then, with his "Lebenswunder" (The Wonders of Life), the Darwin of Germany advanced further proofs of the soundness of the "Riddle," in 1904. Routh's estimate of George Eliot is fair, that of Meredith not that of a Meredithian, while that of Hardy is critical but distinctly appreciative.

In dealing with the alleged conversion of Romanes, Routh seems entirely oblivious of the fact that the scientist was smitten with hemiplegia. Nor does he consider the powerful influence of a deeply religious wife, who ultimately entered the Roman fold, and who surrounded her afflicted husband with ecclesiastics bent on his conversion. Acquiescence is not to be wondered at in a paralysed man who had previously intimated in a letter to T. H. Huxley that he was a mere wreck.

Herbert Spencer is under a temporary eclipse, and it is gratifying to note that the chapter devoted to him is an excellent one. Spencer's "profoundly active imagination," he says, led him to forsake a practical life for the elaboration of a philosophy which embraced all the phenomena revealed by the researches of Laplace, Lyell, Lamarck and Adam Smith. A legacy from an uncle enabled him to publish the first edition of his "Principles of Psychology" in 1855, but this, and his other earlier writings, had a limited sale, although among his subscribers were Huxley, Tyndall, Darwin, Buckle, Froude, George Eliot, Moncton Milnes, Hooker and other literary and scientific personalities. But as Routh notes: "By the end of 1868 the tide had definitely turned. His publications were now earning an income which steadily increased, and translations of four of his books were in commission. In 1869 "First Principles" and "The Principles of Biology" were prescribed at Oxford as text books, and questions were set out of them for examinations. . . . In 1873 Arnold could write of the philosophical liberals 'who believe neither in angel or spirit but in Mr. Herbert Spencer.'"

In the same year Spencer's brilliant "Study of Sociology" was published and it proved a best seller, many editions being printed. Despite two nervous breakdowns occasioned by intense mental application in earlier life and the poor health afterwards endured, the philosopher completed his titanic task with the tenth volume of his synthetic undertaking. In addition to these works he composed three volumes of "Essays," "Social Statics and Man versus the State" and several slender volumes, including his famous work on "Education." This treatise, consisting of three essays, was reissued as a volume in 1860. A confirmed bachelor, Spencer was ever affectionate with children, and the benevolent manner in which he presents the case for kindly and considerate treatment of children, both in school and at home, was widely welcomed. It was translated into thirteen languages and, as Dr. Routh observes, "Education" "still deserves to be in the hands of every father and mother."

Spencer was a pronounced hedonist and acclaimed happiness as life's great desideratum. Truly, we all aim at happiness in

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ACID DROPS

CARMARTHEN Council has graciously given permission for cinemas to be open on Sundays, but only after "divine service." The Lord cannot stand opposition. On the other hand, Swansea will have nothing to do with this violation of the Sabbath. The council recognises that great as may be the power of God, he cannot make headway against the cinemas.

The question of the abolition of the Sunday law was raised in the Commons by Mr. Sorensen, but, again, only so far as the troops were concerned. Earl Winterton asked if the Government would give the House a lead. The reply was that in 1941 the House rejected the suggestion that the Sunday law should be abolished. So much for the House of Commons. Earl Winterton asked for a lead because many members "had an undue fear of the Sabbatarians." And that was a fine example of the value of the majority of the members. What kind of reform are we to get from a body of men who are to be frightened into upholding a bad law by the L.D.O.S.? We have said many times that a man who is fit for anything better should remain *outside* the House of Commons. It is not there that reforms are made. Parliament only registers them. Real reformers do not ask for a lead—they give one.

Apropos of what we have said concerning this stupid but troublesome Sunday business. It is worth noting that the Lord's Day Observance Society appears to have very ample funds for campaign purposes. It does not hesitate to spend large sums of money for prepaid telegrams to be sent to Members of Parliament, who are too frightened to offer opposition to this most stupid of all Christian stupidities. We fancy that a few wealthy bigots stand behind the society. We have no desire to prevent by force the propaganda, but it is not likely to lift us in the admiration of other peoples.

In defence of the Lord's Day Observance ramp, a Mr. D. L. Wellman writes rebuking those who will not spare one day a week for God. We do not think that is putting the situation fairly. The day that men are asked to give to God is the only full day of rest they have. But ever since God gave up controlling the movements of the planets, sending storms, helping the crops to grow, and other things, all God has to do is to sit still watching things go and listen to people praising him for his works—that they are always improving. And God might well be satisfied with praise on other days in the week. He should move with the times. To insist on Sunday for prayers and Church-going shows want of consideration.

Or why not have a praying wheel? Long years ago the sensible Chinese—the religious ones—decided that if one prayer to God was good—for God—why not increase the number. And if a number of prayers are good, why not invent something better than the verbal strain involved? So they invented a praying wheel. To turn this ten times was equal to ten prayers, and so forth. And ever since a praying wheel has been in operation. It is cheap, it saves labour, it says all that a man wishes to say. And some of the Chinese have challenged Christians to show that their wheel cannot do as much as verbal prayers.

If we believed the experiences published by clergymen we should believe one that is narrated by a parish priest in one of the religious journals. A young army captain paid him a visit, and looking round his books said: "Look here, Padre, I never had much time for religion, but I think I have missed something. I have a little girl, and don't want her to lose the same. Is there anything in this Christianity business?" The captain must have had some sort of education, and it is difficult to believe that this officer knew nothing about Christianity. It sounds too much like a B.B.C. yarn, and might be swallowed by the Brains Trust, where no one is allowed to say anything against Christianity. (The non-Christians who show up there carefully observe that rule.) We would give something for the name of that officer who knows nothing about Christianity—despite the many Church parades he has taken part in.

As we have often said, we have no great repugnance to a liar, but the lie must be well told and must have a certain element of reality about it. Perhaps the officer was just pulling the priest's sanctified leg.

In the House of Commons the other day a question was asked whether the Government would see to it that Fascism will not rise in any country. The Conservative Member for Bilston, Mr. Hannah, asked: "Ought not that question be addressed to the Almighty?" We take it that the answer—if there had been one—would have been that addresses had been made to the Almighty and he had made a sorry mess of it. In the hope of holding back Russia he, and a large number of his followers in this country, had given both Italy and Germany every possible encouragement to go ahead. And they did, to the world's disaster.

It should be remembered that we had in this country a whole week of non-stop prayer. It was kept going night and day. There never had been such a torrent of prayer. The recording angels worked overtime, and we believe there was a shortage of writing paper in heaven. The result of all this was—Munich. No, the more completely God is left out the better we shall be.

"What is the position of a Catholic who divorces his Catholic wife and marries another Catholic in a register office?" The question is asked in a Catholic newspaper, and part of the answer is: "The register office marriage is invalid (as it would be in any case for a Catholic), i.e., it is no marriage at all." As the only legal form of marriage in this country is the marriage by the Registrar, the reply to the reader's question is both an impudent lie and a legal falsehood. Even the authority of "God's Own Church" cannot override the authority of the law of the land, much as it would like to. Nevertheless, this habit of the Roman Church of attempting to set aside civil law in favour of the law of the Roman Church speaks badly for the social value of "atmosphere" we hear so much about.

District Justice Goff, of Dundalk, Eire, in reply to protests against an order he made for the birching of a boy, declared: "I would order the birch again if needs be, to stem this tide of juvenile crime, and to make boys realise their duty to God and to society." Well that is the historic way in which Godly people have, when in authority, attempted to make people realise their duties, and District Justice Goff seems to run true to type. But we wonder if Mr. Goff has thought about birching God now and again to make him realise his duties to the boys and to society? Accepting an Omnipotent God as a reality (which Mr. Goff apparently does), the logical position arising from the premise is that God is the first cause (sorry, First Cause) of the trouble, and therefore he is to blame.

In a given situation there is nothing so laughable as solemnity. For example. The Rev. Canon of Gainsborough has issued a notice that only those desirable may receive the Sacrament on Boxing Day, and will receive tickets. This is not because there are more people wishing to receive the Sacrament than the building will accommodate, but those who have been keeping Christmas too well may not have recovered enough to receive the body of Jesus. And yet we should have thought that a "thick head" was an asset of value in inducing belief in this surviving vestige of cannibalism.

We have read somewhere a story of a woman who came regularly to the Communion service, but never brought her husband. But one day the husband arrived with his wife. Congratulating him, the preacher drew back with the remark: "The man is drunk, why did you bring him in this state?" "Well," replied the wife, "he wouldn't come when he was sober."

Professor Riddell, of Trinity College, Glasgow, says that he does not think the Churches to-day are as confident as they were after the last war. Well, well! It was Lincoln who is credited with the saying: "You may fool some people part of the time, you may fool some all the time. But you can't fool all the people all the time." The clergy have had a good time and a long time. But all the people, etc., etc.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

WAR DAMAGE FUND.—H. Bury, 15s.

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Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

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SUGAR PLUMS

OUR first duty this week is a very pleasant one. It is to thank those who have sent their congratulations for the year, to say nothing of the compliments paid to those who, week after week, turn out a paper which will compare well with any other journal in the country. It would also be very ungracious not to acknowledge the assistance we get from the uncounted army of helpers in all parts of the country with press items dealing with matters that come within the interests of our readers. They are far better than any press cutting agency in the country. We have weekly experience of both and can, therefore, speak with authority.

It will also please our friends to learn—we don't care a damn how the clergy feel about it—that the circulation of "The Freethinker" has increased, and we believe it will go on in that way for some time to come. We would also add—modesty prevents our saying more—that it deserves all the praise it gets. Barring the American "Truthseeker," it is the oldest Freethought journal in the world, its readers are at least three times the number or the copies purchased, and each issue gives its readers a greater amount of useful information than a dozen meetings of that colossal piece of humbug, the B.B.C. Brains Trust. So we conclude with wishing all who read these lines as happy a New Year as is possible, and may each copy of the paper travel from hand to hand until it falls into shreds.

One piece of information we give with regret. All available volumes of "The Freethinker" for 1943 were ordered months ago. This will save readers asking for them, and will perhaps prevent our business manager having to experience the agony of returning money sent.

We think the following is worthy of notice. It is taken from an editorial in the "Schoolmaster." After citing from a declaration of the "National Society"—Church of England—the following: "The Society undertakes to seize such opportunities as may be possible to give church teaching in council schools . . . reiterates that it is an essential part of its declared policy to maintain, improve and extend the Church's primary and secondary schools." That, of course, supports what we have always said, namely, that the Churches have little real interest in education; their principal aim is to see that children grow up believers in the Christian superstition.

But on the above delivery the "Schoolmaster" has the following comment:—

"This attitude of 'keep all we have and grab all we can' makes those despair who are genuinely attempting to find a solution to the religious difficulty so that educational advance shall be neither delayed nor impaired. In their report on Educational Reconstruction the National Union of Teachers made constructive suggestions with this aim in view. They made recommendations which, if adopted, would ensure that religious instruction will be included in the curriculum of every school; that corporate worship will be encouraged and, where building conditions permit, will be a part of the timetable arrangements every day, and religious instruction will be given efficiently. With these conditions in mind the

Executive stated: 'Withdrawals from religious instruction so to be given cannot but be detrimental to the success of the training and destructive of the sense of unity which religious training should be designed to create. Teachers cannot reasonably be expected to co-operate in an effort to perfect the giving of religious instruction merely to have children withdrawn from the lessons.' But the sense of unity will be broken just so surely if within the Council School children are to be divided, some to receive Church teaching and others to have religious instruction in accordance with an agreed syllabus which presumably will be formulated by a body which will include representatives of the Church. The declaration of the Church's intention to seize every opportunity to give Church teaching in Council Schools and thus to abrogate the Cowper-Temple Clause, issued at this critical time, has already aroused resentment. This clause has operated with success in the schools concerned for seventy years, and any proposal to alter the position cannot be approved by a Union which has always advocated and supported the exclusion of denominational teaching in Council Schools. As every teacher knows, the religious difficulty is not found in the schools. Why are so many enthusiasts for religious instruction so anxious to introduce it?"

All we can say is to repeat what we have so often said: if teachers will only stand up against this palpable attempt on the part of the government to re-establish the parsonry in the schools, and so lower the tone and ability of the teaching staffs, they must act at once and with decision.

Of the new Education Bill of the government, the "Observer" says: "One old enemy, religious discord, has been met in the Bill and put largely to flight." Agreed, but then so could Hitler as an enemy have been put to flight if he had given him all he wanted. Religious leaders would be very hard to please if they were not satisfied to a considerable extent when they are being given practical control where religion is concerned, and teachers who do not play the part of a parson's pimp threatened with a forfeiture of promotion, even of appointment. For we may be certain that all the clergy, from Archbishops downwards, will see to it none but sound Christians are appointed so far as the clergy have the deciding voice.

The Bill—so far as this reinstatement of the Churches is concerned—is a war-time scandal. The House of Commons has at the moment no representative quality at all, save to carry the war to an effective end. Attendance at the House is scanty, and a large proportion of those present hold jobs under the government, and may lose their posts with a change of government. It is to be noticed that many of the promised reforms will be put into effect as opportunity offers—which may mean, probably does mean, that they will be put over as soon as possible, but when that suitable time arrives no one can say. There is not the slightest doubt that if the government had offered this proposal concerning the clergy and the schools before the electorate it would have been rejected. It is one of the meanest of political tricks.

The only religious sect that is not satisfied with the Bill is the Roman Catholic one. They want not only their schools to be saturated with their own form of religion, but they demand that only Roman Catholics shall be teachers, these teachers must be approved by Roman Catholic priests, and the whole cost of their buildings must be paid by the State. And this in the name of freedom and democracy. Finally, we must note that the religious programme will operate directly the Bill becomes law. The other things that are promised—better buildings, larger staffs, longer school life, etc.—will depend upon availability of teachers, money, etc.

There is one thing more to be said. Those who do not believe in religion, those who have no faith in the State regulating religion, those who believe in freedom of thought for teachers as the only way of securing the best of teachers, those who believe in religious matters the State should be completely neutral, all should withdraw their children from religious teaching in the State schools. This will undo much of the back-stair arrangements made by the Minister of Education and leading Churchmen. All education is not good. Hitlerism was built partly on the education received by the younger generation of Germans.

ELIJAH AND THE RADIO

"THE Story of Elijah," as recently spoken over the radio, was one that anyone could be freely forgiven for believing, providing they were mad and unaware of their own pitiable plight.

It was so naturally told that it sounded as a knell is tolled, providing that the bell is badly hung, incorrectly swung and hopelessly cracked.

It was so genuinely hypocritical that it must have appealed to all who are genuine hypocrites.

It was lower than the level of the lowest Norse myth or legend. Thor's journeyings around Jotunheim are far more interesting and amusing. Loki is a much more mischievous god than Jehovah, whose sheer venom o'ercrows Loki's meanness as does phlebitis a pimple.

It is not in doubt that such rough stuff as "The Story of Elijah" will be parcelled out to our people's children as "Religious education" if the Churches procure permission of Parliament to police the schools with their pedant parsons, for such piffle will be paraded as "undenominational religious instruction."

When such absurd tales as "The Story of Elijah" can be put over the radio, with all the impudent suggestion possible that "it is true," to what stage of downright claim to truth will a super-powerful clergy reach when they are hidden in the caves of school from the sight of parents, and protected by the walls of school from critics and the enlightened?

To what stage of subordination and sheer mental slavery will the schoolteachers be forced to descend in order to protect and preserve their own bread and butter?

To what stage of degradation and denaturalisation will the minds of the children be driven by the drivel of such as is "The Story of Elijah" when the schools are again in the hands of the ignorant clergy?

Is mankind to yet again go through the "Dark Ages"? Are the children yet again to be made the sport of merciless religion with its ever-warring factions and sects? Is there to be no peace ever in this world? Are the children to be for ever doped with dreams, and stuffed with superstitions?

If it is true that Jesus said, "I came not to send peace but a sword," it seems about the only prophecy that stands a chance to be shown as truth in equal ratio with the clerical influence brought to bear upon it, for most of the other prophecies that bear the imprint of the theologians have been demonstrated as false.

And so will it be again with our schools. They will be war-breeders from the moment the clergy have a constitutional foothold in them.

How can this be avoided, when "The Story of Elijah" is told in all its bloody variations "as gospel"? Elijah, Elisha, David, Saul, and all the others of the bloodthirsty little tribe or Israelites will be raked up and presented as heroes. Their wondrous doings will be heard from the cradle to the grave, whilst the very name of the men who invented matches or mercerising will remain unhonoured and unsung.

Can one believe—is it necessary to believe—that Elijah brought down fire from heaven in order to boil up water and a bullock? It is written that the people brought up this water to drench the bullock and fill the trench. The original "Tale of a Tub." It is enough to make one's blood "boil" without the aid of a fire from heaven if this tale is considered as fit and proper mental pap for our intellectual babes, let alone our infants in school.

The rough stuff of Elijah's ride to heaven—or wherever he was supposed to go—is told with all the impudent verve and scholarly ignorance of a primitive mind which could not write properly and got very tired of what it was writing about. The tale is told in the manner of a huge giant, clumsily hacking at

some small, dainty, shrinking little violets with a steam-navvy out of gear, hoping thereby to gather a posy to enchant a fairy queen.

Put this sadly-told tale into the hands of a Shakespeare, or an Ilya Ehrenburg, and it would be either a thing of beauty or of sheer horror, as suited the writer's mood; yet, as it is presented, it sounds what it is—a primitive piece of primitive music played by a primitive mind upon a primitive instrument—the whole sounding out of tune and untrue.

Elijah is taken off in a chariot of fire. Did he burn himself? His mantle dropped from his shoulders; would it have caught fire had he kept it on? The rest of his garments were doubtless some form of asbestos. How was it known that this single chariot and the horsemen thereof were "the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof?" And to this day it is uncertain whether Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind, or in a chariot, or in a chariot that was in a whirlwind.

Then Elijah's successor grabbed the mantle and slapped some water to see if it would divide it. It did. Quite a useful garment it would be for our sappers. Yet its loss created no stir. Where it went is neither hinted nor told; at least, no trace of it exists, unless some Church has it hidden up to be viewed at a "bob a nob" along with other relics.

Was this journey of Elijah's really necessary to the liberty of mind of our children? Does this prophet, who slew 450 rival priests in cold blood, and burned up with some more of his "fire from heaven" two lots of 51 soldiers—102 in all—make us feel more like saying, "I will have mercy, not sacrifice"? Does it show that Elijah's God was more merciful and less sacrificial than God Baal?

If Jehovah hated Baal to the extent of allowing Elijah to slay 450 rival ignoramuses, why did not Jehovah slay Baal direct and have done with it? Why did Jehovah allow Baal to even be born?

I will tell you why. Because it is a tale told by utterly ignorant men. Because both Baal and Jehovah are myths and did not know each other. Because it is not true.

If these are not, briefly, the correct answers, perhaps some learned theologian will provide a more reasonable answer. It will not do to say that they are but allegory, or "tales that are told," for they are given as "Bible truths" for thousands of years, and will again be stated as implied truths to our children, and as actual truths to our children's children just as quickly as the Churches can edge their way into the schools under cloaks like Elijah's. The school and the Church have NO thing in common. Science and religion ARE antagonistic principles for ever, despite "Elijah and the Radio." B. B. B.

PROFESSOR JOHN TYNDALL

JOHN TYNDALL, F.R.S. (1820-93) certainly deserves a place in the Freethought Pantheon, and considering the large circulation of his scientific Freethought works,* he has already received recognition. It is, indeed, unlikely that many of the older Freethinkers are unacquainted with the famous Belfast Address before the British Association, but this article will have served a very useful purpose if it brings members into contact with one of the finest Freethought lectures ever delivered.

This address was given on August 19, 1874, and was, in fact, an appeal for Freethought by viewing its history, its struggles and its successes, and the ground covered was immense. Logically and clearly Tyndall showed how Christianity had been the great obstacle to progress and the opponent of science, and he acknowledged the debt we owe to Moorish Spain for

* R.P.A. Cheap Reprint No. 10 (Watts and Company) is a selection of Tyndall's "Lectures and Essays."

perpetuating the Freethinking attitude of Ancient Greece and thereby making possible the Renaissance. Then, having given his exposition of scientific theory, Tyndall sent out his challenge and his hopes:—

"We fought and won our battle even in the Middle Ages: should we doubt the issue of another conflict with our broken foe? The impregnable position of science may be described in a few words. We claim, and we shall wrest from theology, the entire domain of cosmological theory." He emphasised, too, in a splendid conclusion, that, though there were many other things he might have said with more time, "there would have been no material deviation from the views set forth."

It is not surprising that the Address caused a terrific sensation, and the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland denounced it in a manifesto, but this only served to bring a quiet but effective counter-attack on the Church in the "Apology for the Belfast Address," which Tyndall published in the same year. Yet, as is not infrequently the case, this outspoken scientist and hater of all injustice was—as his friend Lord Avebury, tells us—"most lovable and gentle." It is not surprising that a strong friendship sprang up between Tyndall and T. H. Huxley, and the two men were the most famous scientific lecturers of their time. He was also the friend of Hooker, Herbert Spencer, Michael Faraday and many other distinguished men.

Tyndall possessed a pleasing literary style which he used to good effect, but the thinker and the seeker for knowledge are ever present, as in his descriptions of the natural phenomena of the Alps. There was no doubt in his mind that science was the only means of increasing man's understanding of, and control over nature, and he continually sought to inform the public of scientific methods and the successes they were achieving. Science, he said once, "keeps down the weed of superstition, not by logic, but by slowly rendering the mental soil unfit for its cultivation," and again: "The aim and effort of science is to explain the unknown in terms of the known."

On several occasions Professor Tyndall investigated the claims of spiritualism,† but, needless to say, he was not impressed. He pointed out that the victims of spiritualism "like to believe, and they do not like to be undeceived," and that "Science is perfectly powerless in the presence of this frame of mind." Later he wrote: "I have been more than once among the spirits, at their own invitation. They do not improve on acquaintance," and his last remark on spiritualism was: "Surely no baser delusion ever obtained dominance over the weak mind of man."

Nevertheless, though Tyndall held the highest hopes for the future of science, he expressly urged that it should not be made into an idol. The views of Lucretius and Bruno, of Darwin and Spencer, may be wrong, he said, "But the point is that, whether right or wrong, we claim the right to discuss them." These words followed the impassioned appeal for Free-thought, near the close of the Belfast Address:—

"A hint of Hamlet's, however, teaches us how the troubles of common life may be ended, and it is perfectly possible for you and me to purchase intellectual peace at the price of intellectual death. The world is not without refuges of this description; nor is it wanting in persons who seek their shelter, and try to persuade others to do the same. The unstable and the weak have yielded and will yield to this persuasion, and they to whom repose is sweeter than the truth. But I would exhort you to refuse the offered shelter, and to scorn the base repose—to accept, if the choice be forced upon you, commotion before stagnation, the breezy leap of the torrent before the fetid stillness of the swamp."

With this appeal, it is fitting to close our tribute to an eminent scientist and a Freethinker.

C. McCALL.

† See "Science and the 'Spirits'" (1864).

HEAVEN

For promised heavens I do not care,
Your crowns and never-ending choirs;
For sexless beings I've no use:
They are not what my heart desires.

Your spirit angels you may keep,
I have an angel of my own;
One I can put my arm around,
Of fragrant flesh and human bone.

And you can have your jasper walls,
Your streets of gold and suchlike things.
Give me the daisied meadows, and
The greenwood where the blackbird sings.

W. E. H.

OBITUARY

GWENYTH WYNNE JAMES

It is with deep regret that we record the death of Gwenyth Wynne James at the early age of 23. A convinced Atheist and Socialist, her home was a living refutation of the stupid orthodox assertion that the finer side of human nature and character becomes blunted with unbelief in a god. Affection, loyalty and honour were strong features in her character, and a short, happy married life of five years has added to the severity of the blow to be faced by her husband. The remains were cremated at Hendon Park Crematorium, London, on Friday, December 17, when a Secular Service was conducted before assembled relatives by the General Secretary of the N.S.S.

R. H. R.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead):
Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m. Rt. Hon. LORD SNELL, C.H., C.B.E., P.C.: "The New Year: Is it the Dawn?"

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Public Lecture Halls, Northgate, Blackburn).—Sunday, 3 p.m. Mr. W. A. ATKINSON: "The Religious Issue To-day."

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanic's Institute, Bradford).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Mrs. C. E. M. REYNOLDS, M.A.: "Propaganda."

"WE ARE SIXTEEN"

By F. J. CORINA

A Sex Education book that is different because it deals with realities instead of religiosities. Written for young people from 14 years onwards. Fulfils the parents' task of providing instruction in "the facts of life" while telling the story of a boy and girl in search of sex knowledge. 144 pp., six illustrations. Cloth bound, 5s., post free, from Clegg and Son Limited, Publishers, Bradford, Yorks., and Pioneer Press, 2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4.

N.S.S. SECRETARIES will find "Questions and Answers" a stimulating Everyman's Brains Trust. Sample Copy on application to Editor, 35, Doughty Street, London, W.C.1, post free Sevenpence.

"THE ETERNAL FRYING PAN"

MOST Christians delight in using the term "Eternal." Even if they do not know the meaning of the word, they have a penchant for its continued use; they betray a diabolical delight in the expression and never miss an opportunity of using it with sanctimonious glee. I am, therefore, aware that anything I write must be condemned by the superstitious religionists who parade their mediocrity with flamboyant emphasis; therefore there is no need to apologise for my subtle phraseology in this satire, "The Eternal Frying-Pan."

"Materialism" grates upon the ears of the majority of the British people; "Agnosticism" might be tolerated, but "Materialism" is utterly inadmissible.

Despite this, the original home of modern materialism is Britain.

The real progenitor of Materialism is Bacon. To him natural philosophy is the only true philosophy, and physics based upon the experiences of the senses is the supreme part of philosophy. According to him, the senses are infallible and the source of all knowledge!

Theology, of course, disputes this. The explanation is simple: Theology must dispute it, because theology cannot reason; cannot afford to reason. The laws of science date back to the dim ages of the past. How far back we do not know, but there can be little doubt that some of the earliest scientific discoveries were intimately associated with the very simplest natural phenomena, and must have been made as early as the Palæolithic or old Stone Age.

In those days men wandered across the bleak, inhospitable wastes of Central Asia and Southern Europe; sparsely clad, building huts out of the trunks of fallen trees, or seeking shelter from the elements in the depths of caves, in the same manner as we of Christian civilisation dig below the ground for shelter from Christian bombs.

The elements determined the direction of their route, for we find them going towards the south in winter into the lands of warm sunshine, returning once again as winter gave place to summer and the ice melted, to the grasslands and herds of the north.

To them all natural things were divine! Their natural reasoning faculty had not been poisoned by theology! The evolution from this simple life on is understood, and I need not give details. It was only after the grotesque story sponsored by theologians began to be propagated that we had the destruction of reason and natural philosophy for many of the peoples of the earth: and with the advent of this mysticism of theology man has continued to degenerate from one Christian war to another Christian war, and now we find ourselves with the absurdity of one nation praying for victory over another equally credulous nation.

Mankind is being destroyed while they *prey*! Obviously those who sponsor national days of prayer and those who willy-nilly indulge in that particular superstition believe in the "Eternal Frying-Pan."

Just as civilisation is a record of man's struggle against environment, so is the progress of science a record of his achievements over Nature. Theology attempts to put the halo of mysticism over the simple explanation, and with viciousness postulates the absurdity, and with vehemence proclaims that if you do not swallow whale, Jonah and all, you are condemned to the "Eternal Frying-Pan"!

In conclusion, there is one consolation for the non-Christians: "Eternal" means it always existed; therefore, it could not have been "created"!

ALEX. S. KNOX.

WAR AND THE FUTURE

ADVOCATES of an International Police Force received further encouragement by a recent editorial in this paper. The idea, which merits earnest consideration, provokes some pertinent comments and questions.

The "national" police force is the embodiment of law and order and, as such, forms the protective barrier which Power has erected against the possible onslaughts of Poverty. Nature, having made nothing equal, leaves man to accentuate the inequalities. No one thinks that the police were created to protect the poor. Since the poor have nothing worth purloining, it is only fair that the police should consist of officers drawn from the ranks of the possessing classes on the principle of "what we have we hold." The police form the bastion of the law, the rampart of order, and defence to the fortress of wealth. The system demands it, and the law enforces it. Crime, therefore, receives far greater publicity than virtue; indeed, the latter is rarely noticed. The average man is law-abiding, but when provoked to rebel because of unemployment and hunger, he demonstrates against the injustice of inequality. Power, privilege and wealth mobilise their resources and invoke the aid of the police (and military, if necessary), with results detrimental to the demonstrator.

When the evil of gross inequality is reduced to approximate parity, the motive for most crimes will disappear. Until then, crime will persist, despite the policeman.

Dare we hope, then, that an International Police Force would eliminate the international criminal? Are not the motives the same in both instances?

Who would train and equip the International Police Force, and from where would it operate? Would each nation, for rapidity of action, have an International Police Force within its borders? And would nationals operate against their own countries? If not, the inhabiting International Police Force would consist of foreigners only, involving a constraining influence. Again, it is doubtful whether the dominant Powers would consent to parity in numbers vis-a-vis small States. Perhaps readers have ideas on the subject.

S. GORDON HOGG.

SALVATION BY FAITH

Persecution is founded upon the fatal doctrine of salvation by faith. This doctrine makes the heretic more noxious than a serpent. A serpent poisons the body, a heretic poisons the soul. If it be true that his teaching may draw souls to hell, human welfare demands his extermination.—G. W. FOOTE, "The Book of God."

SURVEY OF MODERN LITERATURE

(Concluded from page 3)

some form or other, and even those Puritans who are never happy unless they are miserable seem to derive satisfaction from their stunted existence. Unfortunately, his chronic ailments precluded the philosopher's obtaining much happiness himself. "Yet," states Routh, "fortune was his firm friend. At every financial crisis some deceased relative or friend or group of friends brought him money, and thanks to these ever-recurring windfalls, he achieved the only happiness vouchsafed to mortals—self-fulfilment. This invalid, 'his brain crippled at 35,' and almost without private means, lived to compose half a library and to lay down the law on God, man and the universe."

Several other critical studies in Routh's remarkable volume may be commended to the studious reader, but of these there remains no space to speak.

T. F. PALMER.