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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

They Couldn't Care Less!

ALREADY upon a number of occasions we have had an opportunity to refer to the recent encyclopaedic statistical survey of Messrs. Rowntree and Lavers entitled, *English Life and Leisure*. In the course of this monumental survey, the veteran Quaker sociologist, Mr. Seebohm Rowntree, in association with a younger colleague, Commander Lavers, completes a lifetime devoted to sociological research, which began in 1901 at the turn of the century, with Mr. Rowntree's first study in contemporary English sociology.

Discounting the many controversial opinions treated by Messrs. Rowntree and Lavers in their magnum opus, it is indisputable that here we have an important book which covers an immense field with a wealth of impressively-presented detail, much of it obtained by first-hand personal investigation by inquirers who have obviously been highly trained in their particular field of research. Beyond doubt, we have here an important book, probably the most important as it is certainly the most elaborate statistical investigation into current social life and contemporary habits and beliefs that has appeared in this country since the end of the Second World War. As we have indicated before in this column, its significance, in particular, for the student of the present-day reactions of the English people to religion in general and to the Christian Churches in particular, is immense and devastating. They must make depressing reading for the clergy and, in particular, for would-be religious revivalists!

Nor, we must frankly admit, are certain conclusions that appear to emerge from the facts so laboriously compiled for this survey, altogether welcome to secularist critics of religion.

"All that glistens is not gold." As is clearly disclosed in the case-histories set forth here, people can discard traditional beliefs for reasons that are unworthy as well as commendable. However, we must repeat: the statistics and conclusions presented in the volume before us, are of decisive importance to all sociologists who reason empirically—that is, scientifically—and not in a purely abstract and doctrinaire fashion. We rather fancy that anyone who presumes to discuss the contemporary habits and beliefs of the English people in the mid-twentieth century, without having first consulted the armoury of factual matter collected by our authors, is going to find him or herself rather "out of it" in sociological discussion, probably for a long time to come.

In the course of the four hundred odd pages which make up this book, the learned authors divide their subject-matter into sections which treat, respectively, of various fields of belief and practice. Though many readers will find the 220 case-histories, all interviewed at first hand by trained investigators, set forth in detail in this volume, the most important, as it is certainly the most intriguing section of this most valuable and important survey, here we must reluctantly turn a blind eye upon many fascina-

ting fields of inquiry and confine ourselves rigorously to the cognate fields of religion, theology, and ethics.

With regard to the current standing—or falling!—of religion, we have already quoted before in this column the main figures and conclusions set forth by Messrs. Rowntree and Lavers. They are undeniably important and startling. Between 1901 and 1947—when the figures in this volume were actually compiled—the average of church attendance at *any* recognised place of worship has fallen from 31 per cent. in 1901, when Mr. Rowntree compiled his first survey, to rather less than 13 per cent. half a century later.

Furthermore, the Church of England has lost ground in relation to nonconformity, whilst both have lost ground relatively to the Roman Catholic Church. Absolutely, however, *all* the Christian Churches in this country have without exception, lost ground in England—our survey does not deal with other parts of the British Isles—in relation to the increase in population throughout the last half-century. If the figures here presented are even approximately correct, we are confronted with a dwindling—though artificially favoured—Christian minority in a predominantly non-Christian land.

Even our authors, who would probably describe themselves as "non-denominational" Protestant Christians, admit that they can see no hope of the Protestant Churches recovering their lost influence in this country. The only partial exception to this dirge of decline is afforded by the Roman Catholic Church which, as remarked above, is gaining ground relatively at the expense of its Protestant competitors, whilst losing it relative to the country as a whole.

It would appear to emerge from our authors' conclusions that, granted the next half-century continues to evolve upon the same lines as the last, the investigators of the year A.D. 2000 will note an almost entirely "pagan" land, with protestantism all but extinct, but with an aggressive "totalitarian"—this adjective is that of the authors themselves—Roman Catholic minority fighting hard and unscrupulously against its ultimate extinction. (Some facts about the current evolution and prospects of spiritualism might, we think, have been usefully added in this survey.) That the Christian press has given Messrs. Rowntree and Lavers a somewhat frigid reception is, we think, comprehensible in view of the figures and trends recorded by them!

Above, we have described England as now "pagan" upon the basis currently provided by the facts and figures quoted above. Indeed, long before these figures were compiled, the English Catholic press habitually described contemporary England as "pagan." Upon the evidence supplied by our authors, however, the epithet "pagan" hardly appears accurate. For pagans, after all, had *some* positive beliefs. Whereas the attitude of the great bulk of the "cases" interviewed by Messrs. Rowntree's and Laver's investigators is a purely negative one; their attitude towards both organised religion and positive theological belief is a purely indifferent or sceptical one: "I couldn't

care less" sums up to a nicety the predominant current attitude here recorded. Though a partial exception is to be found in the bitter, almost personal hatred of the clergy recorded in so many of these interviews which, if accurately recorded, indicate a remarkable volume of aggressive anti-clericalism in contemporary England.

Another startling fact which emerges from these pages is that Christian morality, equally with Christian theology, has completely broken down, particularly in the sexual sphere, over large areas in this land. It is clearly imperative for secularism to think out its attitude to this current collapse: how far does rejection of specific Christian theology imply the concurrent rejection of a current morality largely, at least, derived from a now fast-disintegrating system of positive belief?

No secularist should regard his or her education as complete without reading this great social document. That Christianity is on the way out seems to be a reasonable deduction from its pages. Perhaps it would be equally reasonable also to infer that the task of secularism in the next century will be not so much that of giving the *coup de grâce* to a dying Christianity, as of teaching to a generation of bewildered drift a scientific and positive alternative approach to the great permanent problems of human life and destiny.

F. A. RIDLEY.

ACTON AND CATHOLICISM

I READ with deep interest in the August 19 issue of this paper the article by my old friend (I am sure I may call him that, though owing to my grave and prolonged illness we have not met for a long time), Mr. T. F. Palmer, on the Victorian writer, Mrs. Humphrey Ward. The paragraphs which struck me most were the final ones—on the "liberal Catholic," Lord Acton. May I write some comments? I would do so as a former contributor to your columns but who has returned to Catholicism. My aim, however, is not controversial but explanatory. The case of Lord Acton does raise some interesting problems. In his statement of ideals, Mr. Ridley, on becoming editor on this paper, said "it is not dominated by any creed nor enslaved to any rigid 'party line'." That being so, it would seem appropriate to discuss all problems freely and with a sole aim to get at the real facts and the correct explanations.

Mr. Palmer said: "Acton remains a psychological puzzle, and his attitude and convictions, despite all the abundant evidence to the contrary, provide some support at least to the Jesuit Father Thurston's assertion that Acton was not really a Catholic at all."

I do not know where Fr. Thurston made that statement, but Mr. Palmer's references are generally (to say the least!) accurate, so I accept this one. The truth is, Lord Acton, the great Victorian historian (like Baron von Hügel and others), did provide many puzzles to the severely conservatively orthodox. As Mr. Palmer said, he was devoted to freedom, and made many drastic criticisms of its persecutions perpetrated by the Church in the past. He also criticised the Papacy and was familiar with German advanced Biblical criticism. Yet, said Mr. Palmer, Acton "never wavered in his belief in the divine inspiration and mission of the Church, and clung to the last to Catholic doctrine." So, concluded Mr. Palmer, he remains "one of the marvels of modern intellectual life."

My comments on all this would be as follows:—

(1) It is essential to bear in mind the intellectual, political, religious and social ferment of the Victorian

period. All over Europe, and in this country, old beliefs were being fiercely challenged. The Roman Church stood, as always, for orthodox belief—but be it ever remembered that in Catholic theology there is a fundamental distinction between "articles of faith" and beliefs which, however ancient, are not such. Articles of faith are binding as being believed to have been divinely revealed. Other beliefs—though many may be very sacred and near to articles of faith—are not thus binding. In part of Acton's time, for example, even Papal Infallibility was not an article of faith, and many Catholics doubted it at least to some extent, while many others thought the time unsuitable for it to be defined (as it was, however, in 1870) as an article of faith. Acton seems to have been at least one of those "inopportunist," and to have criticised vigorously the historical bases of the doctrine. Up to 1870 that was quite permissible, provided it were done in calm and truthseeking ways. This distinction explains a good deal of Acton's "anti-Ultramontanism." It also probably explains, to a great extent, his attitude to Biblical criticism. The Roman Church maintained (as it still does) the truth of the Bible: but it does not decide all questions of interpretation or criticism. A wide field remains open for critical investigation (an elaborate English "Biblical Commentary" by Catholic scholars is in the Press). Few Catholic theologians would adopt a theory of "Genesis" similar to the old "literal fundamentalist."

(2) As to "freedom." Acton was a keen apostle of the ideals of advanced "liberalism" in politics. Subsequent events have brought many of them into doubt. For example, Bradlaugh, Foote, and other Victorian anti-religious advocates, were enthusiastic for personal and political liberty; yet, as Arnold Lunn said in his book, "Now I See" (1934; p. 238): "It is significant that freedom of speech and action has never been more ruthlessly suppressed than in the one great European country which has officially adopted Atheism as the religion of the State." The Popes of Acton's period saw the possibilities of such developments by ill-understood "liberty," and uttered, in Encyclical letters and other ways, warnings against that danger. Little heed was paid to them. Is it strange that Acton, with others, followed the spirit of his age? After all, many of the problems involved were not closely connected with "articles of faith." For example, no Catholic need defend the excesses of extreme Inquisition action—especially as much of them was the action (especially in Spain) of the secular power (the State). In short, a wide field of debate was open.

No doubt Acton—like von Hügel and others—went "too far," but none of them denied the essential articles of faith. That distinction needs to be remembered always in considering Catholic problems.

J. W. POYNTER.

A REJOINDER

MR. DU CANN was evidently much upset by my remarks on his article "St. Bernard Shaw," in which he made Shaw the subject of a rhapsodical extravagance of eulogy in keeping with its title.

My criticism did not go beyond what the facts justified and common sense dictated. If Mr. Du Cann cannot restrain an emotional impulse to write nonsense, he must expect to provoke an occasional protest.

His second article, "The Importance of Shaw's Religion," in which he attempts to vindicate himself in a fitting sequel to the first, and shows he has learnt nothing

from correction. The only difference between them is that to his praise of Shaw he adds a large measure of abuse of myself, interspersed with misstatements and bad arguments.

Referring to his fulsome laudation of Shaw, I remarked that he "exalts him to a state of consummate excellence." He quotes my remark, and adds (somewhat unnecessarily) "this ridiculous English is not mine." True, all he can lay claim to is the absurdity it denotes. He seems to be uneasily conscious of his own extravagance, for he attempts to palliate it by investing it with a little sentiment. "I did, it is true," he tells us, "throw a small violet on a dead man's grave," by which flowery metaphor he describes the avalanche of eulogistic slipslop he lets loose on Shaw.

He says that I judge Shaw's religion "through the medium of his few brief remarks." I should be sorry to have had no better grounds for my judgment. In rebutting his statements I expressed an opinion of Shaw's views on religion which, not being able to answer, he ignores. If I do not agree with Mr. Du Cann's estimate of Shaw, it does not follow that I am seeking to belittle him, I can allow his merits without becoming ecstatic over them. His further remarks on Shaw's religion are a continuation (a little more elaborately silly perhaps) of his former extravagance on the subject. Here are a few examples: "The importance of Shaw's religion," he tells us, "is just this. It was, provisionally, good enough to serve Shaw in his lifetime." What is there exceptional in that? Most believers think their religion is good enough to serve them, not only during their lifetime, but afterwards too. But why "provisionally"? Had Shaw another religion for another lifetime? . . . "Here was a talker and a writer with a first-class brain (as the late Lord Birkenhead used to be fond of saying)." I never heard that the late Lord Birkenhead ever said, or was likely to say, such a thing of Shaw; and if he did not, the words are neither so weighty nor wise as to merit repetition. ". . . with a deadly serious and absolutely honest and sincere outlook on religion." Again I must ask: How does Shaw differ in these respects from any fanatical Bangtext or street-corner Boanerges? The praise has nothing particularly distinctive in it. ". . . an habitual thinker, capable of *originating new thought*." This is a specimen of Du Cannian English which I have italicised for the convenience of the critical reader. ". . . Shaw's religion is his own; he communicates it, not to make converts to it, but in order that we may (as we must) make, as he did, our religions (or irreligions) fit our individual selves." This is a choice bit of involved nonsense. Did anyone ever "communicate" his religion to others in order to make them believe more strongly in their own? What did Shaw write his Prefaces and Plays for but to propagate his own ideas and demolish other people's? ". . . No wonder Shaw's religion is an enigma to Mr. Yates. The wonder is that he has the hardihood to accuse the clearest of writers of not being crystal clear on the subject." Yet, according to Mr. Du Cann's own statement, I share my failure to understand it not only with Shaw's biographer, Miss Patche, but with "many Churchmen and Atheists alike"—and let me add, with Mr. Du Cann himself, as far as he has given us any evidence to the contrary.

He has a weakness for distinguished names which often leads him to quote them at a venture. "No illuminating critic of Shaw's religion—a Monsignor Ronald Knox for example—would say Shaw's heresies were not clear." It

would be interesting to know Monsignor Knox's opinion of Shaw's heretical lucidity; it might prove somewhat disconcerting to Mr. Du Cann.

"I called Shaw a saint," he goes on, "not to praise him, but with deliberate judgment to use the Flaubertian *mot juste* about him." Did Flaubert call Shaw a saint? It not, why Flaubertian *mot juste*? But enough of such twaddle. In protesting against his use of the term "Freethinker," I was not trying "to bring the King's English to heel," or "defying the dictionaries," or "pursing Pharasaic lips at the sacred name of Freethinker being prostituted from the holiness of complete Atheism," or doing any of the other absurd things which his propensity to misrepresent has led him to impute to me. I was simply contending that, in the interests of clearness of thought and precision of statement, the term should be applied only in accordance with its original signification, viz., one who denies the doctrines of Christianity. Such has been its use from the Deistical writers of the 17th and 18th centuries to the present time, and I maintain that no one can, with propriety, claim the name on the score of his opinions on any subject other than religion. Almost every question that has exercised the human intellect—philosophy, ethics, sociology, politics, art, science, etc.—has given rise to opposite views. What authority have we that may determine which of them entitles the holder to the name of Freethinker? If those who differ on the *same* subject have an equal claim to the name it must have a different meaning for each; and in such a welter of conflicting opinions who may claim the name on the strength of his own?

If the Freethinker is one who rejects authority in favour of independent judgment, what assurance is there that his particular judgment is not the reflection of individual idiosyncrasy, and as such, subject more or less to the bias of prejudice, self-interest, conceit or stupidity? Under such conditions what *thinking* can be called *free*?

Used in its original sense the word Freethinking has a clearly defined meaning which insures uniformity and consistency in applying it. Used in the Du Cannian sense of "every phase of human thought and activity," it becomes hopelessly ambiguous and requires as many definitions as there are differences of opinion.

In further support of his "argument," and to pad out his pretence of wide reading, he makes a parade of great names—"The world," he says, "including such writers as Dean Swift, Gray, Thackeray, Lord Morley, etc., is with me." My answer to this bit of bluff is a challenge to Mr. Du Cann to cite any passage in the works of these writers where the name Freethinker is used otherwise than in its specific anti-religious sense.

"There exists," he continues, "a narrow-minded type of Atheist, incapable of original mental activity of any kind beyond a blank, bleak and bare denial of all orthodox religion." What does he mean by a blank, bleak and bare denial of orthodox religion? Does he expect the Atheist to qualify his denial with exceptions and reservations in favour of orthodoxy? He dignifies with the name of "mental activity" the shallow doubts and flimsy objections of the dilettante dabbler, or the valetudinary scepticism of the half-way hobbler, both of whom make a virtue of their vacillation, and like Mr. Du Cann, boast that they can admire Buddhism, Christianity and Agnosticism indifferently. This affectation of broad-mindedness is only a cover for their inability to follow any train of thought to a logical conclusion.

A. YATES.

ACID DROPS

A clerical paper, produced by the diocese of Rochester (Church of England), entitled *Your Church*, complains bitterly about the current wages paid by the Church to its curates. The average weekly wage paid to curates is £5 a week, an increase of only 30 per cent. since 1931. It is now the same as that of a farm hand, which has risen by 208 per cent., and "is less than that of a dustman, who now earns an average of £5 9s. 6d., or 145 per cent. more than he did in 1931." Very sad, no doubt, but, after all, both farm hands and dustmen do actually produce something really useful. Even the dustman clears dust away, instead of merely throwing fresh dust in the eyes of the people—like the curate!

Elsewhere in the Rochester publication we learn the startling fact that, since 1931, "the population of the diocese has grown from 664,000 to one million. The number of clergy serving it has risen by only 9 to 290." This may be due to lack of spiritual "vocations" to serve the Lord. However, we rather fancy that "full employment" at more remunerative rates elsewhere is the main reason for the present shortage of clergy. Even the clergy must eat, and pay hard cash for the "daily bread" with which the Lord provides them—at current market rates.

It appears that there are church-attenders who do not attend Divine service in order to keep the Lord's commandments, but rather with the object of transgressing them. For we recently read about a church outside which notices were prominently displayed urging ladies to keep a sharp look-out on their handbags. We don't think that our Lord would have approved of this at all. For did He not bid his followers to hand over their coats as well when asked for their cloaks? Not to mention His enunciation of the general principle: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Mr. George Isaacs, Minister of Pensions, has a new angle on miracles. "I have read about miracles in the Bible—I have seen them performed," declared the Right Hon. gentleman. It appeared that he had seen wounded soldiers "moving their legs by throwing their shoulder muscles forward." Mr. Isaacs is playing with words. What he is actually describing is a new, more scientific co-ordination of the human body which we owe to modern surgery, not the casting out of a devil or some congruous "miracle." A miracle is "an Act of God," and there is no such thing as a "scientific miracle." "God" begins where science ends—and that is nowhere!

Christianity has had many hard things said about it by unkind critics. However, our Scottish contemporary, the *Glasgow Evening Times* has thought up a new one which will, we fancy, come as something of a surprise to both Christians and their critics. In the issue of August 9, 1951, a correspondent, "W.G.," informs a startled world that "in France the so-called Christian education produced the supreme atheist, Voltaire." It will, we imagine, come as something of a shock to the numerous admirers of the sage of Ferney that he was really a product of "Christian education." And, incidentally, Voltaire was not an atheist!

Writing in the current number of the *Hibbert Journal*, the Very Reverend W. K. Matthews, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, declares that "it is possible to discover a

common element in all religions." There is, indeed! The cash nexus: the Deanery of St. Paul's is, we believe, worth about £3,000 a year. Three thousand solid arguments for Christianity. Or for Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, or whichever it happens to be!

"Science," declares the *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, "has made us healthier, but not wiser; science has given us vitamins, but not peace of mind and serenity of spirit." Whereas, we suppose, religion has given us the Inquisition, hell-fire and "The Bread of Life"—which contains no vitamins!

Sir Henry Self, president of the (Anglican) "modern Churchman's Union" deplures, but is forced to admit an "all-time low" in the present spiritual state of the nation. This he ascribes to defective church organisation, inadequate salaries for the clergy, etc. Gross materialism! However, we could suggest a more "spiritual" explanation. Christianity is not true, and more and more people are coming to realise this fact.

A commendable example of Christian self-sacrifice appeared in *The Financial Times* from a correspondent. To improve church income he suggested that each member of the Church at all times should give one tenth of his resources and income to the Church, he then adds that he does not do so himself. Lovely; we commend his excellent example to all Christians.

At the recent meeting of the British Association, Viscount Samuel declared that nowadays few people based their philosophy on Materialism apart from the Russians, and they were 100 years behind the times. But surely Viscount Samuel is aware that there is a vast difference between Dialectical Materialism which is what Russia teaches, and Scientific Materialism which most of the great Materialists in the past advocated? He believes that scientists nowadays care "for spiritual values and for the things of the soul." Well, there are still Christians and Jews who can be called scientists, but we doubt whether any others believe in the "soul." What is it?

Among other speakers at the British Association was Professor Sir Alexander Gray, and he introduced himself by saying (according to *The Scotsman*) that he knew nothing about science. After thus making his position clear, he went into a long discourse on religion, religious education, the necessity for teaching the Bible to the young—"it was of the utmost importance to the whole of our life that we should not lose the Bible"—and "a reasonable restatement of Christianity." Let us give Sir Alexander a cheer. He was telling the truth when he said he knew nothing about science.

In the United States, the "old battle" over what is called "released time," that is, whether parents can absent their children from school to receive special religious instruction, has been won for the parents. They have the right to withdraw their children, one of the judges in the New York Court of Appeal claiming that "total separation of Church and State has never existed in America and none was ever planned by the Founders." Actually it is a victory for the Catholics who now have this right—and who, it may be added in passing, are doing their utmost to capture the American Constitution as well—if they can.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

Mr. A. E. BURTON writes: "I am a comparatively new reader to *The Freethinker* and am constantly amazed at the great wealth of detail and knowledge that are contained in the articles."

May we claim the indulgence of readers and contributors alike—we cannot publish everything sent in *immediately*. We have many good articles awaiting publication and they will appear in due course.

Will correspondents kindly note to address all communications in connection with "*The Freethinker*" to: "*The Editor*," and not to any particular person. Of course, private communications can be sent to any contributor.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, giving as long notice as possible.

Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

SUGAR PLUMS

Nowadays, constant reminders in the Press imprint upon our memory the significance of the centenary of the Great Exhibition—1851-1951. Readers of *The Freethinker* are now asked to recall a half-centenary—1901-51. For throughout, we believe, the whole of this last period our contributor, Mr. T. F. Palmer, has been contributing regularly to this journal. To-day, though well over the "three score years and ten" which are alleged to be the allotted span of human existence, Mr. Palmer still continues his fortnightly contributions with unfailing regularity, and his encyclopædic range, lucid style, and enormous knowledge show no sign of abatement, despite a recent serious accident. Our readers will, we are sure, join with us in hoping that this grand veteran of the Freethought Movement will continue to enlighten us and will attain, if not the years of Methuselah, at least those of, say, Bernard Shaw.

Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe has asked us to say that any of his old "cronies" in the N.S.S. who would like a copy of his little book of poems, *Rhyme or Reason*, can have one by sending a P.C. to him at "Ormside," 13, Madeira Road, Clevedon, Somerset.

The Blackburn Branch, N.S.S., had arranged to finish its open-air meetings on August 26, but so much good work has been done that the untiring and enthusiastic Branch Secretary, Mr. J. Sharples, will carry on every Sunday, weather permitting, in the Blackburn Market at 3 and 7 p.m. Mr. Sharples deserves all the support local Freethinkers can give him, and what is more they should see that he gets it.

The Bradford Branch, N.S.S., are arranging what promises to be an interesting syllabus of indoor lectures with a keen eye to variety. Two clergymen have been invited and have agreed to give an address, and dietics have been included by a lecture from a vegetarian. Local readers should contact the Branch Secretary, Mr. W. Baldie, 2, Kingsley Crescent, Baildon, Shipley, Yorks, for a copy of the syllabus when it is ready for distribution. Mr. H. Day, the Branch Chairman, will continue to speak in the Car Park each Sunday evening until the winter session opens on October 7.

"THE FREETHINKER" FUND

MORE than one contributor to *The Freethinker* Fund has mentioned that the wording of the appeal gives little guidance as to its urgency.

If others have formed that opinion, we hasten to correct it. The need is really pressing as it concerns the very existence of the paper. Actually that has been the concern and responsibility of readers and sympathisers since *The Freethinker* was founded in 1881, and that is the reason *The Freethinker* still exists. It never has made a profit and there is no immediate prospect of that happening, and the annual loss has been met by readers.

Why the appeal is necessary now can be seen from a very simple illustration. No reader of *The Freethinker* working for his living could exist to-day on his or her pre-war wages. But that is the very situation *The Freethinker* has to face. The dividends from investments, which met the pre-war loss on the paper, are at a fixed rate at the pre-war value of the £. The valuation of the £ to-day is about 10s. compared with before the war. That means the income from investments is reduced by 50 per cent., and with a 50 per cent. reduction in income, the enormous all round increases in prices involved in the production of the paper have to be met week by week. The position should be quite clear now. We are not begging. *The Freethinker* is appearing each week, but we wish to make it quite clear that there is a definite financial threat to its existence. No director of the G. W. Foote Co., Ltd, which controls *The Freethinker*, draws anything in the way of fees or expenses. All their work as directors is voluntary and does not involve the cost of a single penny in producing the paper.

As Chairman of the Board my fee and expenses are nil. I contribute most of the Sugar Plums and a few Acid Drops each week without payment, like all our contributors. The staff at 41, Gray's Inn Road, readily consented to a reduction in wages by way of help. That is a grand testimony to the spirit prevailing at the office and should inspire those who have not yet sent in their contributions to the Fund to do so without delay. We invite readers to give us permission to apply on each 1st of January for an agreed upon donation; or to send donations at any time wished, in which case we need no permission; to give *The Freethinker* an interest in the making of wills; to order one or two more extra copies each week and pass the spares on to likely new readers. If you leave your daily paper in the train, first place the spare copy or copies inside. The actual situation has now been placed before readers and the response is in their hands.

R. H. ROSETTI,

Chairman, G. W. Foote Company, Limited.

A ROMANCE OF TWO WORLDS

(Concluded from page 315)

We cannot *prove* that moral and ethical behaviour of a purely personal (as opposed to a social) type, is good and right and proper. Yet except for that small minority which has got beyond spiritual considerations—that small minority, in other words, which is spiritually blind, these things are admired by all." Is comment necessary? Here we have in all its nakedness the claim that the rule of the mob is supreme *vox populi* carried *ad absurdum*, and the claim made that morals can exist apart from any social implication, in a word, that the emotions, and not reason, are to rule in our social life. And much more is inherent in this. Sin is postulated as distinct from crime, but all history shows that the religious mind draws no such

distinction, *when in power*, and one wonders if Mr. Rowland would have been such an ardent supporter of the reality of the emotional and of the popular voice had he lived in the Rome of the time of Bruno's martyrdom, or even in the Catholic provinces of Canada to-day, to give but two instances. The fact is that Mr. Rowland does really live in a subjective world of his own in which the realities of the objective world have no part, a world in which treaties were kept and politicians' words were their bond, up to the time of World War I, when the evil commenced. This is Mr. Rowland's world, but it is a world unknown to historians, a world "that never was on land or sea," and this separation from reality is the keynote of his whole article, which ignores entirely the fact that the world is not static but dynamic, that tastes (or in Mr. Rowland's words, values) change with the changing material and social life and structure, both in art and theology as in all else, and the æsthetic gods of yesterday are in no better case than the religious ones.

How otherwise can we conceive of anyone who really *lives* in this material world writing "you may feel that the case for the existence of God is not fully made out, but you cannot, so far as I can see, deny that those who disbelieve in God are less likely to look charitably towards their fellow men than those who have a belief in God's fatherhood." One cannot help asking: Does living in that other world (of values) so blind one to the realities of this one as to make one unconscious of the existence, for instance, of the southern states of U.S.A., or of South Africa, both of which are, whether regarded socially or politically, steeped in the belief in God? And it is surely needless to quote history to illustrate this point, every epoch of which gives proof of the fulfilment of the prophecy attributed to Christ: "Think not I came to bring peace on earth." (Matt. 10, 34; Luke 12, 51). I may point out how noticeable it is that, although Christians bring up every possible text as evidence of prophecy, yet they never quote this very clear prophecy, the one that has been so abundantly fulfilled.

Finally, let me say that the attacks on Freethinkers for their recognition of Herbert Spencer are surely beside the mark. What does it amount to? Spencer had faults and eccentricities as a thinker. This is admitted; but he made a solid contribution to intellectual progress, that is the thing that matters. Firstly, he supported the idea that acquired traits are inherited and are vital to evolution. The point is still unsettled. Secondly, he claimed that the gods developed from the attention paid to the dead. It may be objected that other factors are not noticed, and this one over-stressed, but even so, he did pioneer work which stands to-day; and thirdly, his main philosophical contribution, that evolution consists in the fact that by the differentiation of parts, functions are performed more efficiently than is the case when everything is done imperfectly by the simple organism.

This in brief is Spencer's contribution, and while it is an exaggeration to describe Freethinkers merely as Spencerians, we do remember with gratitude the very considerable contribution he made to human knowledge, at great sacrifice to himself, in an age when the battle raged fiercely, and reaction was *in power* to retard thought and inquiry, and while not blindly following, we do build on the one great thing in his teaching, that the world moves, and that the mind of man is not an organ played on by supernatural forces, but is part of the forces around us, and at the same time the arbiter of all.

JAMES H. MATSON.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE PAPACY. By F. A. Ridley.
Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.

SHALL WE EXTEND ?

THERE is no real difference between rationalism and thinking. This point is important; so important that many rationalists are prone to overlook it altogether.

Rationalism (I have spelt it with a capital "R" this time, though, at the beginning of the sentence this is hard to perceive) does nothing but call for clear honest and unbiased thinking; and for the application of this kind of thinking to every possible human problem. Thinking that is not clear, honest and unbiased is not thinking at all, if the word is to have any literal meaning, though it must be admitted that dishonesty, confusion and bias are not easily avoided; indeed, it is possible that we all suffer from some or all of them, at times, and to a greater or less extent. But the man who thinks as honestly as he is able, who follows fearlessly where his thoughts lead, may call himself a rationalist—and, it is pleasant to add, usually does in time.

It is not a coincidence that most muddled and tendentious thinking is associated with religion. Religion is man's defence against the unknown, against the mysterious and unpredictable calamities of life, the buffetings of blind chance, against those misfortunes which, cynically enough, he calls "acts of God." Clear thinking is difficult when facing the unknown and dishonest thinking a great temptation, for man rarely scorns dishonesty if the need demands it.

Thus, because rationalism has always been the enemy of religion, Religion has always been the enemy of Rationalism. The question thus arises, is one enemy enough? With that enemy far from defeated, should Rationalism enter fresh lists? (I assume that it is Rationalism, the Movement, that is to extend its field; if rationalism, the mode of thought, is intended, there is little point in the question).

The avenues usually suggested for a fresh passage of arms are in the realm of politics, health and art. Whether these, with religion, make up the whole of man's mental life is a moot point—perhaps they may be made to do so if interpreted widely. If health embodies the whole of a man's personal well-being (in which case it must be allowed to include his religion), politics, with economics, his corporate well-being, and art his amusements.

There is no sphere more truly in need of a rational incursion than that of health. Man's bodily well-being has never been in the keeping of unscrupulous commercial interests more than it is to-day. And mentally, at least, it has never been worse (it is difficult to decide whether the physical health of our ancestors, minus quack-medicines, was better than our own plus penicillin, though, personally, I am prepared to make an inspired guess).

In politics, too, Rationalism could fill a rôle. The objection here is that politics, unlike religion, is supposed to be basically rational. A man selects his politics (normally, and in nine hundred and ninety nine cases out of a hundred) in the light of what he reasonably considers to be his own best interests. He then interprets them to himself (and others) in as unselfish a light as his nature and training make him require. And although the political partisan needs as much faith and nearly as much patience as has his religious counterpart, at least, he is concerned with a profit and loss that is all of this world. The utmost a politician promises after death, is to take care of funeral expenses and whilst many of them are mysterious they are at least not mystical.

The difficulty with a Rationalist excursion into politics is more a matter of means than of principle. The journey, it will be agreed, is necessary, but what of the route? For although we who are politically minded can see only one rational way, we are prepared to find, when we set out that

our fellow travellers are setting off in at least four different directions. It is difficult to run even the most pleasant excursion in quadruplicate. And to select any one goal will mean saying "Goodbye" to at least three quarters of the assembled company.

Whatever grounds there may be for a Rationalist policy on health and politics, the case is very different when we turn to amusement, with which, since we refuse to accept highbrows at their own extravagant valuation, we include art and cultural matters generally. For reason and amusement have nothing in common. Perhaps I should interpolate an admission that philosophy, in the broadest sense, is, in some cases, a purely intellectual amusement, but in this respect it is unique and need not interfere with the case I am making. My own form of amusement is to watch people playing football at twelve pounds a week with a cash bonus for winning. It is so irrational that I would never dare to analyse it on rational lines. And I must say that most people's amusements strike me as even more irrational.

To consider art as amusement is not to prejudice the issue. For there is no single department of human activity that has less in common with the reasoning faculties than art.

The appeal of any form of art is purely emotional. That which does not appeal to the emotions is not art. And reason and emotion have nothing in common. The only thing to do with an art object (or with an emotion for that matter) is to enjoy it.

It is the attempt to explain our enjoyment (or other emotional response) that brings in our intellectual faculties. To communicate our sensation we have to change our emotional shillings into intellectual coppers. This is a difficult task—one, indeed, that we never successfully master. It is very doubtful whether Rationalism can help us in the attempt.

I. de L.

CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE

I heard the voice, droning of Devils and Death
(Wage for the wicked who sin);
And I thought, as it paused—but only for breath—
"Oh, yes! This is where I came in!"

I heard him pour praise on the Prophets of old,
(Who cast other gods in the bin);
Who "brake into pieces" the Idols of Gold—
And I knew that was where I'd come in.

As drearily drones the dramatised drivel
(Drowning the drop of a pin);
With gestures that keep torpid heads on a swivel—
I wake up at where I came in.

Tribal tales dressed up as Holiest History
(Devil and Demon and Djinn);
Moralised murder and mummified mystery—
I wonder when Truth will come in?

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

CORRESPONDENCE

ACID DROPS

SIR,—In his letter (August 5) Mr. C. R. English condemns the "Acid Drops" and "Sugar Plums" features in *The Freethinker* as lacking in "wit, imagination, sarcasm and irony," and the writer of them as a "humourless hack." But he seems to be unaware that there are two sides to the question, and that, in thus ensuring the writer's deficiency in these qualities, he may simply be revealing the absence of them in himself. To appreciate wit and humour in others we must possess them, in some degree, ourselves, and of this we have, in his case, no assurance whatever.

He suggests that space be found for more letters by "curtailing the tedious private debates of Messrs. Vernon Carter and Yates, and the fruitless Bacon-Shakespeare controversy."

But, though tedious to him, such "debates" may be interesting and amusing to others. As in his condemnation of the "humourless hack," it may be a question, not so much of other people's deficiencies as of his own. It would help to settle the point if Mr. English could be prevailed on to contribute something exemplifying his own powers of "wit, imagination, sarcasm and irony"—in other words, to give us a bit of scintillating "English." We should then be in a better position to judge how far he is qualified to criticise the productions of others. As it is, we are left to conclude that his letter is merely the expression of carping incompetence.—Yours, etc.,
A. YATES.

SIR,—I really must add my own dislike of "Acid Drops" to that of P. C. King's. There is nothing in *The Freethinker* I have to apologise for except that feature. I am sure that many potential sympathisers are turned away when they read the flat, puerile sarcasms that are sometimes agonizingly drawn through the mill.

I think *The Freethinker* would improve by becoming more "contemporary conscious," more articles of F. A. Hornibrook's stamp for instance and less of the Vernon Carter and H. H. Preece.—Yours, etc.,
T. SMITH.

"ACID DROPS AND SUGAR PLUMS"

SIR,—The controversy on above reminds me of an artist who wanted to know whether his picture was good or bad. He exhibited in a busy thoroughfare and asked the people to mark a "tick" if it is good, and to mark a "cross" if it is bad. A week later he found the picture covered with ticks and crosses.—Yours, etc.,
J. ALMOND.

BRAINS TRUST

SIR,—Referring to a paragraph in *The Freethinker* and one in the annual report of the N.S.S., I thought you would like to know that I drew the Bishop of London's attention to the former, in which he was reported as saying that it was difficult to get into contact with unbelievers, and pointed out the opportunity given by the proposed Brains Trust. There was no reply.

I thereupon wrote a second letter intimating that in the absence of a reply I should infer (1) that he was correctly reported as above; (2) that no clergyman could be found willing to appear on a platform and be questioned about their religious beliefs.

After a fortnight without any reply, it is evident none will be received, so the Bishop's bluff is called.—Yours, etc.

WM. KENT.

P.S.—A suggestion for consideration by the Executive. Why not try nonconformists? Approach Rev. L. D. Weatherhead, now back from Australia, or the Editors of *Christian World* and *British Weekly*.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

Blackburn (Market).—Every Sunday, 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.: J. SHARPLES.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park, Bradford).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.

J. CLAYTON'S Lecture Engagements: Great Harwood, Friday, September 7, 6 p.m.; Saturday, September 8, 6 p.m.; Preston (Town Hall Square), Sunday, 7 p.m., Lecture; Debate with the Rev. Mr. BOOTH, Wesleyan Mission, 8 p.m.; Padiham, Tuesday, September 11, 6-30 p.m.

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: J. W. BARKER.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Lunch-hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. WOODCOCK.

Also Lectures at Platt Fields, Sunday, 3 p.m.; Alexandra Park Gates, Wednesday, 8 p.m.; St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site, Sunday, 8 p.m.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: L. EBURY and W. G. FRASER. Sunday Evening, 7-30 p.m. (Highbury Corner): F. A. RIDLEY. W. G. FRASER. Friday Evening, September 7, 8 p.m. (South Hill Park): L. EBURY and W. G. FRASER.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, September 8, 7 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool)—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A. SAMMS.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: C. E. WOOD.

INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, September 9, 11 a.m., S. K. RATCLIFFE: "Can We Have Peace?"

QUOTH THE RAVEN

THE writer, a "very ornery cuss," with no pretensions at superior education or culture, or particular refinement, who was formerly a devout religious believer with ideas of taking up nonconformist ministry, but latterly a secularly-minded rationalist, who publicly advocates secularism, rationalism, freethought and materialism, has carefully and patiently listened to the recent series of religious apologetics by Canon Raven, broadcast under the title of "Science and the Christian Man" and presumes to feel that readers may be interested to read his conclusions thereon.

The worthy Canon is obviously a highly educated, well-informed and very knowledgeable cleric, with a pleasing voice and an attractive delivery. One can readily understand such a skilled apologist weaving a spell, or spinning a web, into which true believers and wishful thinkers will quickly and comfortably become hopelessly involved and immersed. To any listener of critical mind, however, who insists perfunctorily upon the dotting of "i"s and the crossing of "t"s, the Canon's "blurbs" have been clever, but entirely unconvincing; thoughtful, but drivelling.

This writer, avowedly atheistic, finds the Canon's apologetics equally as destructive of the Christian claims as any of the downright and forthright attacks by writers and speakers like Bradlaugh, Ingersoll and Paine, or Robertson, McCabe, and Cohen, or any of your present team. On those rare occasions when the Canon did become at all positive, he confirmed the modernistic attitude towards evolutionary doctrine; he supported the destructive criticism of Biblical cosmologers; he frankly and candidly admitted that at least most of the Biblical writers didn't know what they were writing about; that they invented fairly tales; that they recorded what they wanted to see, rather than what they saw; that they wrote with inspiration and imagination, rather than with experience and circumspection and that their emotional reactions were but faintly tinged with reason. This writer's mind was constantly being brought back to the very popular and trite remark which frequently figured in the discourses of parsons during those revivalist days of the early twentieth century, that "religion was emotion, tinged with reason."

It would appear from the Canon's broadcast utterances, that so far as he is an honest and truthful man, dealing with what he knows rather than with what he believes, or feels bound to profess he believes, he is a boon companion to the very worthy Bishop of Birmingham, but, for his own reasons, is not disposed to make public confession of such conviction.

The Canon shows, quite definitely, that one department of his conscious mind realises and has to admit that science deals, and can deal, only with objective phenomena, with things which can be investigated, observed, examined, weighed, measured, etc., and that Christianity, as but one of many forms of organised religion, deals with phenomena and events which are not subject to such objective examination. He frankly admits that he cannot say what God is or what IT does. One is forced to the conclusion that Canon Raven is fully convinced that the term "God" is applied to an idea, or concept, of a "something" outside of the natural order, which perforce can only be humanly conceived in the anthropomorphic order, as having all the human qualities, virtues and capacities greatly and gloriously magnified, in other words that God is a creation of the fertile human mind, a figment of the human imagination.

To this writer, at least, it becomes apparent that even in the Canon's vocabulary, the words God, devil, angel, spirit, soul, heaven, hell, etc., belong to precisely the same category as Odin, Wotan, fairy, mermaid, bogey, unicorn, Neptune, etc., and that the "things" so named have existed only in the realms of thought and imagination.

This writer is of opinion that even religious believers with the mental equipment necessary to listen to such broadcasts as the Canon put across—and there have been others of similar order—must have been profoundly disturbed. It would seem quite impossible, for example, to interpret the Canon's remarks about New Testament miracles as meaning anything else than that Scripture does not mean what it says, or, alternatively, that it does not say what it means.

"LUKE STRAIGHT."

REVIEW

PROF. V. GORDON CHILDE'S series of Josiah Mason Lectures, which are reprinted in the present volume,* were delivered at the University of Birmingham in 1947-48. They make stimulating reading; the author examines the theories of social evolution propounded by Herbert Spencer and Lewis H. Morgan, in the light of Marxism.

This is admittedly a preliminary and to some extent provisional survey and many of the results may seem negative. The theory of unilineal evolution is decisively rejected and the pattern of social evolution is seen as a rational and intelligible process, in which there is no need to assume any supernatural interposition.

The early chapters of the book are concerned with the more general aspects of societies and their classification in archæology, together with examples and a valuable chapter on "The Sociological Interpretation of Archæological Data." Then there are six chapters dealing with the stages and sequences of culture in various parts of the world. Finally, there is a chapter summarising conclusions reached, and an index.

The most contentious chapter is the one dealing with the social interpretation of archæology. It is probable that many older Freethinkers will disagree greatly with what is said here. Their difficulty will be to answer Prof. Childe convincingly, and to assemble as impressive an array of facts and arguments. Prof. Childe is a Marxist, and this fact will make many feel wary of accepting his views, while at the same time they find it difficult to answer his thesis convincingly.

It remains to recommend this book wholeheartedly. It is not, as things go to-day, dear at half a guinea. Attractively produced, it is a book that represents a solid contribution to this field of study by one of the foremost prehistorians alive to-day.

V. E. N.

* *Social Evolution*. By V. Gordon Childe. (Watts.) 184 pp. 10s. 6d.

PSYCHO-ANALYSIS — A MODERN DELUSION. By Frank Kenyon. Price 6s.; postage 3d.

ROME OR REASON? A Question for Today. By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 2d.

SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER ESSAYS. By G. W. Foote. Price, cloth 3s. 9d.; postage 3d.

SOCIALISM AND RELIGION. By F. A. Ridley. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.