

chain from prototype to man, and the ontogenetic sequence from germination to death.

PHILADELPHIA, September, 1903.

PERSIFOR FRAZER.

## AGNOSTICISM.

IN REPLY TO MR. PERSIFOR FRAZER.

Mr. Persifor Frazer is an agnostic, and he takes the consequences of his doctrine of nescience. He claims that Haeckel's solution of the world-riddle breaks down because he tries to prove too much. Mr. Frazer says that the unbiased man can agree with neither the theologian nor the atheist; "he can refute neither, he simply does not know." According to these principles any theory concerning the world-riddle (the constitution of the world, the nature of man's soul, and its fate after death, etc.) is on the same footing whether it be the superstition of the savage, or the mythology of Greece, or the dogma of some civilised religion, or the private conviction of a naturalist, or even the assured conclusions of science. If that be so, we had better give up all investigation and acquiesce in our ignorance from which there is no hope of escape.

There are two kinds of agnosticism: one is the agnosticism of modesty; the other, absolute agnosticism. The former is a temporary suspension of judgment, the latter a belief in perpetual nescience. The former is not agnosticism proper, but is the natural attitude of a man who does not dogmatise on a subject which he has not yet investigated. The latter is a declaration of bankruptcy, and it acts as a blight on thought.

In our opinion, the problem of God, of soul, of ethics, or the destiny of man and his duties in life,—in short, all the problems of philosophy, are not insolvable problems, but admit of scientific investigation and solution. As to God, we believe that we should first of all ask the question, not, whether or not does God exist, but (1) What do we mean by God; (2) How did the God-idea historically originate? and (3) What are the underlying facts which suggested the God-idea? Having answered these questions from the standpoint of an impartial investigator, we shall be better fitted to attack the original question, whether or not God exists.

There is no need to enter here into a discussion of the subject. We have only reluctantly yielded to Mr. Frazer's request of giving publicity to his note on Haeckel and will repeat here what we have said again and again that among all conceptions agnosticism is the most unsatisfactory, the most unscientific, and the most unphilosophic.

Agnosticism is an important epoch in the history of philosophic thought, but it is so inconsistent and untenable that even now it is fast dying out and will have to be regarded by the historian merely as a phase of transition. P. C.

## BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTES.

LESSONS IN THE STUDY OF HABITS. For Use in the Grammar School, the Home, or the Sunday School. By *Walter L. Sheldon*. Chicago: W. M. Welch Company. Pages, 270.

The author is a lecturer of the Ethical Society at St. Louis, Mo., who has had a great deal of experience in the instruction of ethics. It is a very difficult subject, since the abstract teaching of ethics easily becomes wearisome to both the teacher and the scholars. The present volume has to do with the habits of life, and