

in this series is one by M. G. Milhaud, Professor of Philosophy in the University of Montpellier, entitled *Les philosophes-géomètres de la Grèce*. M. Milhaud, whose studies in logic and the history of science have gained for him a favorable reputation, considers here the relations between Greek philosophy and mathematics, from Thales to Plato, and defines the general bent which mathematical studies impress upon philosophical thought. The work is divided into two parts, the first of which is devoted to the predecessors of Plato, and the second, which takes up the bulk of the work, to Plato himself. For students of the philosophy of science the work will be attractive reading.

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In his *Formes littéraires de la pensée Grecque*, M. H. Ouvré, Professor of Literature in the University of Bordeaux, has attempted the herculean task of explaining the character and import of one of the most significant periods of literary history by an analysis of its psychological, æsthetic, and social causes. He has written, not a history of Greek literature, but a philosophic treatise showing both the real and the logical concatenation of the various forms in which the literary thought of the Greeks has expressed itself. He discusses the subject under ten headings beginning with an investigation of the origins of Greek thought, and pursuing his researches through narrative and lyric poetry, prose, philosophy, the drama, history, written discourse, etc. He finds in literature the crowning work of man and believes that the achievement *par excellence*, even of our own epoch, is not science and science alone, but by the side of science and perhaps above science, poetry. His book is an erudite work, and persons who enjoy this species of investigation will find it of interest. (Paris: F. Alcan. Pages, vxi, 573. Price, 10 francs.)

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Something similar in aim is the work of M. Georges Renard, entitled *La méthode scientifique de l'histoire littéraire*, the fruit of twenty-five years of study and instruction in the University of Lausanne. The author seeks here to determine precisely what the history of literature means, and also what portion of it can be subjected to scientific method. He believes it possible to rise from particular to general truths in this domain by a consideration of the myriad relations which connect literature with its environment, as well as to formulate the law which governs variations of taste. His illustrations are drawn mainly from the evolution of French literature, but afford suggestive material for the study of literary history generally. (Paris: F. Alcan. Pages, 500. Price, 10 francs.) u.

THE INGERSOLL, LECTURESHIP ON IMMORTALITY.

The Ingersoll Lectureship on the Immortality of Man was established at Harvard University in 1893 by a bequest of the late Caroline Haskell Ingersoll. Every year, some person, clergyman or layman, irrespective of denomination or profession, is appointed to give the expression of his personal views regarding this deepest spiritual craving of humanity. Prof. William James, the brilliant Harvard psychologist, was made lecturer for 1898, and his lecture now lies before us as a book bearing the title *Human Immortality: Two Supposed Objections to the Doctrine*. (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. Pages, 70. Price, cloth, \$1.00.)

Professor James has treated the problem in his usual apt and delightful man-

ner; he is always graphic and trenchant; and the delicate tinge of emotional mysticism which colors his philosophy lends to his expositions a charm which few can resist. The two objections Professor James considers are: (1) The inference from physiology that since thought is a function of the brain, when the brain perishes so also must the thought perish; and (2) The inference from biology and history that since countless numbers of indifferent individuals have perished in times gone by, Heaven must be not only disagreeably overcrowded but insufferably tiresome. Professor James disposes of the first objection by analysing the concept of function and showing that the physiological doctrine may be interpreted as referring to *transmissive* function, and not necessarily to *productive* function. Thought is not a function of the brain as steam is of the tea-kettle, but as the color-fan of the spectrum is of the refracting prism. Our brains are the prisms, as it were, through which the thought of eternity is transmitted; each has different degrees of transmissibility, each different degrees of effectiveness; when one stops "that special stream of consciousness which it subserved vanishes entirely from this natural world. But the sphere of being that supplied the consciousness will still be intact; and in that more real world with which, even whilst here, it was continuous, the consciousness may, in ways unknown to us, continue still."

It is difficult to see how this prismatic and transcendental eschatology can be reconciled in any way with the doctrine of individual immortality. The only logical conclusion from it would seem to be this, that immortality is an attribute of the great universal ocean of consciousness only, and not of the transient and perishable individual streams that flow from it; in a word, that the individual is immortal only in so far as he is not an individual,—a conclusion which, if not accepted itself as an ultimate solution, simply leaves the question where it was originally taken up. The transmission-theory of Professor James, furthermore, "puts itself in touch" with the phenomena now being investigated by the Psychical Research Society, and this in itself is no mean recommendation to the author.

As to the second objection, the crowdedness of Heaven, Professor James advances the theory of the infinite compassion and love of the Supreme Spirit, or God, and affirms the gospel of the paramount significance of the individual life "God," he says, "has so inexhaustible a capacity for love that his call and need is for a literally endless accumulation of created lives. He can never faint or grow weary, as we should, under the increasing supply. His scale is infinite in all things. His sympathy can never know satiety or glut." And again: "The tiresomeness of an over-peopled Heaven is a purely subjective and illusory notion, a sign of human incapacity, a remnant of the old narrow-hearted aristocratic creed." The individuals of the past, the present, and the future who appear so obnoxious to us in their mediocrity and sameness and as unfit for perpetuation, throb with a life and significance quite equal to our own and beyond our sphere to judge. "Was your taste consulted in the peopling of this globe? How, then, should it be consulted as to the peopling of the vast City of God? Let us put our hand over our mouth, like Job, and be thankful that in our personal littleness we ourselves are here at all. The Deity that suffers us, we may be sure, can suffer many another queer and wondrous and only half-delightful thing."

Such is the character of Professor James's refutations of the current objections to the doctrine of immortality. They are broad and elastic, and admit of varied interpretation; and these features—not their definiteness—will recommend them to all persons who seek support for the immortality that they individually have most at heart.