

MISCELLANEOUS.

A NOTE ON "HUME'S SUPPRESSED ESSAYS," WITH A SLIGHT CORRECTION.

I am very sure the publication of Hume's two essays, on "The Immortality of the Soul," and on "Suicide," in the December, 1917, number of *The Open Court*, was of wide interest. Undoubtedly the essay on "Suicide" is not to be had in the book-market, as stated by Dr. Carus in his editorial introduction. The information is entirely new in regard to this composition, so far as I know, with my limited reading. The publication of these two articles is very commendable and helpful. And so far as general readers have been concerned there can be no doubt that both essays had been effectually suppressed.

But the editor has overlooked the fact that one of the essays, "The *Mortality of the Soul*," had been brought out by the English Rationalists in 1890. I am sure it has simply been overlooked by Dr. Carus because I purchased my copy through *The Open Court* book-department, I should think four or five years ago. My copy, and of the particular title just given, further reads: "By David Hume. Reprinted from the Original Edition of 1789, with An Introduction by G. W. Foote. Price twopence. London: Progressive Publishing Company, 28 Stonecutter Street, E.C., 1890."

The text of the English republication is substantially the same as *The Open Court* copy. The only differences are that "'tis" has been rendered into "it is," and some other changes to make a more modern punctuation and more paragraphs. The italics are identical.

I am also confident those who have read the essays republished in December, with the splendid introductory by Dr. Carus, will be further interested in the considerations by Mr. Foote in his introduction to the English republication, especially in regard to the differences in the title of the essay on the "Soul." That part of it applicable to this note I will quote:

"...In the ordinary editions of Hume's *Essays* the following reprint is not to be found. This essay was published for the first time after his death, at Edinburgh, in 1789, by C. Hunter, Parliament Square. It was the second of two posthumous essays, the first being a remarkable essay on *Suicide*. A copy of the original edition has been faithfully followed in this reprint. Not a word has been changed, but such forms as "'tis" have been brought into accord with the sedate fashion of to-day, and the frequent dashes in the midst of long passages have been treated as the marks of fresh paragraphs.

"Professor Huxley, whose thoroughness is apparent to all who follow him, gives the title to this essay *On the Immortality of the Soul*, but the word used on the original title-page is *Mortality*, which indicates the author's argument. This is a mere inadvertence, however, for Huxley is well acquainted with the essay, and gives long extracts from it in his splendid little volume on Hume. (Hume, *English Men of Letters* Series.) He calls it a 'remarkable essay,' and 'a model of clear and vigorous statement.' It long remained but little known, but 'possibly for that reason its influence has been manifested in unexpected

quarters, and its main arguments have been adduced by archiepiscopal and episcopal authority in evidence of the value of revelation. Dr. Whatley, sometime archbishop of Dublin, paraphrases Hume, though he forgets to cite him; and Bishop Courtenay's elaborate work, dedicated to the Archbishop, is a development of that prelate's version of Hume's essay."

"...We must conclude this Preface with a word of warning to the reader. Let him not be misled by the opening and closing paragraphs of Hume's essay into supposing that the great sceptic deferred to the authority of Revelation. They are only his ironical bows to orthodoxy. He indulges in the same gestures in his *Essay on Miracles*. This has brought upon him, as it brought upon Gibbon, a charge of disingenuousness. But both of these masters of irony were perfectly aware that every sensible man understood them. If they wore a mask, it was transparent, and did not conceal their features; and those who upheld the Blasphemy Laws for the persecution of Freethinkers, had no right to complain when conformity was yielded with an expressive grimace."

If the foregoing may add an interest to the service by Dr. Carus in reprinting the essays, I shall be well repaid for this note.

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BOOK REVIEWS.

LECTURES ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF MATHEMATICS. By *James Byrnie Shaw*. Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1918. 193 pages. Price, cloth, \$1.50 net.

The modern philosopher and thinking layman is in a difficult position when he undertakes to get some notion of what the modern mathematician is talking about. He finds out with little trouble that mathematics long ago ceased to be the science of number and quantity solely, and has grown into a sturdy giant whose power is evidently expanding year by year. But if he picks up even an elementary book on mathematics he finds much of it unintelligible not only on account of the notation and the terminology, which have become highly technical, but also because the mathematician does not hesitate to talk about space with four dimensions, points at infinity, curves that occupy an area and other equally incomprehensible things. He may be inclined indeed to take one of two widely prevalent views: the one assuming that when the mathematician is talking in terms that have no meaning for every-day conscious sensible experience, he is really using the words merely symbolically—that, for instance, when he says four-dimensional space he really means combinations of four variables; the other assuming that the mathematician lives most of the time in a dream world with no way at all of ascertaining whether the propositions he asserts about his dream world are true or even consistent, as for instance, that a Lobachevskian space is a fiction, like a hippogriff, and though its geometry may seem to be valid in itself, yet nevertheless the consistency is hypothetical, with a strong suspicion that some day it will break down.

The present book undertakes to give an intelligible account of the main ideas of mathematics in such form that the average college graduate can get a fair notion of what it is about and what kind of things it is dealing with. For