

### "999—Emergency!" <sup>H/6</sup>

By Arthur W. Spencer-Bragg. (Social Science Series, No. 4.) Pp. 64. (London: Social Science Association, 1946.) 2s. 6d.

THIS fourth pamphlet in the Social Science Series is a great advance in style, printing and content over the third pamphlet ("Post-mortem on Fascism", by Morris Richards), and in spite of a tendency to quote excessively from journalism, and himself to display some of its poorer characteristics, Mr. Spencer-Bragg has produced a more readable pamphlet than his title might suggest. He presents fairly enough some of the dangers of an uneducated or partly educated democracy in the world to-day, and his examination of the different conceptions of democracy which divide the world to-day and of the question whether a single world system in which economic democracy and political democracy co-exist is possible is reasonable. He sees such a system as the only condition upon which civilization can survive, and he appears to rest his hopes on a comparatively small number of scientifically minded persons being able to obtain mass support and approval, if not full understanding, of their outlook and policy. But while Mr. Spencer-Bragg emphasizes the need for scientific understanding of human society and for the scientific study of such problems, he shows himself strangely insensitive to values, and above all to the need for a moral and spiritual basis for world order. The materialistic outlook is rather too prominent for the author's diagnosis to be entirely convincing, and one's distrust is increased by his partiality for ideology which, somewhat prematurely as it seems to one reader, he exalts to the level of a science. R. B.

### Rationalism in Education and Life <sup>H/6</sup>

Papers read at the First Annual Conference of the Rationalist Press Association, held at Wadham College, Oxford, August 1945. Pp. v+149. (London: Watts and Co., Ltd., 1946.) 5s. net.

THE book under notice contains a full report of the papers read at the first annual conference of the Rationalist Press Association, held at Wadham College, Oxford, during August 1945, under the presidency of Sir John Hammerton. Besides dealing with more general problems, the programme was designed to elicit discussion of the rationalist policy for religious education in schools. It is to be noted that during the war years this subject was not neglected in the columns of *Nature*: witness, for example, a review of January 23, 1943, of Mr. A. G. Whyte's pamphlet maintaining that the omission from religious instruction of all non-Christian faiths would be hard to justify in those times. Again, in an editorial in *Nature* of November 14, 1942, it was pointed out that on the question of religious education men of science differ as much as other intelligent people, for, as Pascal said long ago, "the heart has its reasons, of which reason itself knows nothing".

The present volume gives a comprehensive survey of the problem of rationalism in education, of the theoretical basis of rationalism, and of rationalist philosophy. A movement associated with such names as those of Gilbert Murray, John Dewey, R. A. Gregory, Albert Einstein, Julian Huxley, to mention only a few, has a valuable part to play in purging contemporary thought and practice of the taint of superstition.

### Four Dialogues of Plato, including the 'Apology of Socrates' <sup>H/2</sup>

Translations and Notes by John Stuart Mill. Edited, with an Introductory Essay, by Ruth Borchardt. Pp. vi+194. (London: Watts and Co., Ltd., 1946.) 10s. 6d. net.

DR. RUTH BORCHARDT has performed a valuable service in rescuing from oblivion—as she puts it—these translations by John Stuart Mill of four Platonic dialogues, namely, the "Protagoras", the "Phaedrus", "The Georgias", and the "Apology of Socrates". They appeared originally in the *Monthly Repository* of 1834–35, and have been almost neglected ever since. In addition, we are given a reprint of the essay "On Genius", written over the signature "Antiquus", in which 'J. S. M.' probed the depths of knowledge, as he saw it, with unrivalled skill of phrase.

The present brief notice firmly resists the temptation (and presumption) to review Mill: enough, therefore, to say of this essay that perhaps its chief claim to distinction lies in the high place accorded to conceptive genius. Dr. Borchardt herself contributes a pleasing introduction entitled "John Stuart Mill and the Ancients". From it, students may catch a glimpse of that great nineteenth century mind, weighed down by contemporary problems, nevertheless sustained and fortified by the remote past; continuity and tradition each playing its part in a true education.

All very excellent; yet why must the editor disfigure her book by a choice of word in the dedication so utterly inappropriate and graceless?

F. IAN G. RAWLINS

### Preliminary Check List of the Flowering Plants and Ferns of Griqualand West (Southern Africa) <sup>H/6</sup>

By M. Wilman. Pp. vi+382. (Cambridge: Deighton Bell and Co., Ltd. Kimberley: Alexander McGregor Memorial Museum, 1946.) 45s. net.

IT appears from the preface that "this volume is a substitute, but only a temporary one we hope, for the more ambitious work . . . in course of preparation at the outbreak of war". The author was apparently impressed by the need for a text-book dealing with the plants of Griqualand West, and this preliminary check list appears to be the outcome of this impression.

The volume contains, in addition to the list of plants with localities, a glossary of the terms used, a list of the common names with their botanical equivalents and a "Farm Map of Griqualand West", which covers all the localities where collections were made.

It is to be hoped that in the more ambitious work contemplated opportunity will be taken to correct certain nomenclatural errors which stand in need of amendment. While consulting the list it is difficult to resist the impression that insufficient care was taken in checking the manuscript, probably due to war-time difficulties. Produced as a result of field work extending over thirty years, often handicapped by bad local conditions, the author, in spite of these slips, is to be congratulated in the production of an interesting and useful volume, which will form a valuable basis for future work.

It is probable that the sale of a work of this type, which should be available to all field botanists, will be restricted on account of its high price.