

Register
13 MAR 1924

THE LATE MR. JAMES THOMPSON HACKETT, B.A.

By Kuraya.

In the passing of Mr. James Thompson Hackett, news of which has been privately cabled from England, Australia has lost a close student in the fields of metaphysics, philosophy, and poetry. Among his friends Mr. Hackett was well known to possess gifts of a high order, which pertained not alone to learning in its more scholastic sense, or to the intricacies of law, but also to that domain of the occult which offers such strong allurements to minds that derive no lasting contentment from purely material things. Born of Irish descent in Victoria in 1838, where he graduated in 1877, Mr. Hackett came to South Australia in the later year, and was engaged for some time on the staff of Whinham College. After a time he renounced the dominion's gown for the staff of the law, taking articles under Messrs. Bray and Heridan, and ultimately joining the first named, the late Hon. Sir John Cox Bray, the firm carrying on for many years under the style of Bray and Hackett. It is remarkable that his partner's fondness for politics—for he was Premier, and afterwards Speaker, besides finally becoming Agent-General—never inoculated Mr. Hackett. But his type of brain could hardly have found either in politics or law what his thirsting mind required. I recall that he once told me he considered his 40 years spent in law as worse than wasted. Literature's wide sweep and boundless interest called him as with a siren's voice, and gave him rich draughts from the pages of great masters in languages, both living and dead. Few men read more deeply and widely. Relinquishing legal practice, which, after the death of his first partner he had continued with Mr. H. W. Hunt, as Hackett and Hunt, he recently devoted much time to the preparation of a volume of extracts from some of the best works of all time, illuminating them with notes. The book was first placed upon the market in Adelaide, proceeds of sale being handed over to the Repatriation Fund. The venture attracted immediate attention. Clearly the compiler was a born scholiast.

Appreciated Literary Work.

A London publisher thought so highly of it that he undertook to publish an English edition, with further notes. This was followed by three succeeding editions, each revised and amplified. Mr. Hackett awaited the reception of the last by the critics with such foreboding as all essayists and critics feel when challenging accepted opinions, for some of his thoughts were daring and fresh. In his last letter to me he wrote, "What will happen with regard to the scientific and very revolutionary views I express I simply do not know." Regarding the book as a whole, however, it has received a favourable verdict from the bookmen, the great British journals publishing long notices of commendation. Even The Times enlarged its usual limits for the consideration of such books, and wrote highly and at great length of both its matter and its manner. A fourth edition was called for, and Mr. Hackett, accompanied by his wife, set out from Australia for London to attend to the business. This being completed in due course, they travelled for a time on the Continent, and after returning to London for a short stay, marked out an itinerary to include Morocco, Syracuse, and Egypt, in company with Professor A. H. Sayce and others.

A Philosophic Thinker.

Fate had decreed that he was never to see either England or his native land again, for he died on March 6 at Luxor. It seems not unfitting that the passing of one whose mind was imbued with appreciation of the wonders and beauties of antiquity should have taken place while he was in the country of the Pharaohs in search of closer knowledge at first hand. His last hours were spent near to that tomb whose contents are now causing the world amazement at details of art still remaining undimmed by the marauding hand of time. Up to the last he was held by the hope that man's life after bodily death would be capable of acceptable proof. Recently he wrote from London:—"Yes, I am satisfied that science now has reached another stage, and proved the existence of a soul—to which the body is only an instrument formed by itself, and not in any way essential to its operations. I may add that, although this theory was original so far as I was concerned, I find it shared here by leading thinkers. The fact is that we in Australia do not realize that the views we think are universal among scientists are often quite condemned by the best thinkers."

The "Common-place Book"—perhaps the best of its kind—before me, and as I glance at the familiar handwriting on the flyleaf marking the volume, "A memento of a very old friendship," it seems difficult to realize that he whose thoughts dwell so much upon the things behind the veil now knows the great secret, or knows not anything any longer.

Webster and Book Collector.

Many old Adelaideans will remember the speeches of Mr. Hackett at the Adelaide Literary Society, the organization which was such a powerful magnet to young men some 40 years ago, under the presidency of the late Rev. W. Roby Fletcher. Drastic and utterly merciless, Hackett would analyze the weak points of an address or essay in plain and fearless words that often drew forth equally forcible ones in reply; but as it was not debaters' "cricket" to show temper, both sides gave and took hard knocks with such self-control as only came by exercise. His presence always meant the promise of a keen discussion. From time to time for many years products of his pen appeared in the columns of The Register.

Besides his more cultured attainments, Mr. Hackett had the faculty of vision and forethought in money matters, and was a shrewd assessor of city values. As a collector of books and of specimens of the fine arts his name was so widely known that at a sale of these treasures a few years ago there was a large demand for the catalogue of items, for which a charge was made, and many of the lots brought high prices. After leaving Adelaide, Mr. and Mrs. Hackett settled in a flat at St. Kilda, and there again the collector's instinct went on accumulating. But no matter what things of beauty the deceased has left, none will be so highly valued as his precious "Common-place Book."

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REAFFORESTATION.

A FORESTRY BOARD SUGGESTED.

If the proposal of the Premier to spend £500,000 on re-afforestation is carried into effect, he is to be asked to appoint a Forestry Board of Control to spend the money.

Considerable discussion took place on Wednesday, at the meeting of the Advisory Board of Agriculture, regarding the proposal of the Premier (Sir Henry Barwell) outlined in his policy speech at Crystal Brook on March 4, that the Government, if returned, intended asking Parliament to sanction the raising of a loan of £500,000, to be used exclusively for the establishment of pine plantations during the following ten years.

The suggestion of the Premier met with the approval of those present, but the method of expenditure came in for criticism. The majority of the members of the board did not favor the work being placed under any Minister, but preferred that it should be under the Forestry Board of Control.

Mr. F. Coleman said at a conference of the Lower Northern branches at Riverton in 1920 reafforestation was discussed, and the conference favored the establishment of a board to control afforestation matters, rather than that the matter should be under the control of a Minister. It would be better if they spent £100,000 a year for five years, instead of £50,000 a year for ten years. The board should consist of the Conservator of Forests, a recognised timber merchant, and another gentleman. He moved—"That the Government be asked to appoint a forestry board."

Mr. H. Taylor seconded, remarking that forestry was one of the most important questions confronting Australia.

A note of caution was sounded by Mr. Colebatch. "Do you not think," he said, "that the matter you suggest should be further considered? Your proposal involves a big change in the administration of forestry matters. Perhaps a sub-committee could be appointed to wait on the Minister to hold an informal discussion. Then you might get a direct reply."

Mr. Coleman said there was going to be a great shortage of timber in Australia in a few years, and there would be considerable trouble in obtaining other supplies. They should do everything in their power to replant timber areas. They had been cut, cut, cutting for years, and had done nothing to make up the forestry areas.

Another speaker suggested a deputation from the board, but it was finally decided to discuss the matter further at the next meeting.

BEQUESTS TO CHARITY.

Estate of Late Mrs. B. A. Ayers.

In the will of Mrs. Barbara Agnes Ayers, who died at North Adelaide on February 29, the sum of £12,800 is left to relatives, friends, and old employees. The balance, £8,000, is bequeathed to the following institutions:—

Royal Institution for the Blind	£500
St. Mark's Residential College, North Adelaide	500
University of Adelaide	500
District Trained Nurses' Society	500
Sisters of the Church (C.E.), North Adelaide	500
Missions to Seamen	500
Bishop's Home Mission Society, Adelaide	500
Children's Hospital	500
Cottage Homes for the Aged and Infirm, Poor, and Widows	500
St. Margaret's Convalescent Hospital	500
Christ Church, North Adelaide	300
Orphan Home, Adelaide	300
Anglican Church of the Epiphany, Crafers	300
Children's Home (Boys), Walkerville	300
Girls' Friendly Society Lodge	300
School for Mothers	200
Blind, Deaf, and Dumb Institution	200
Minda Home	200
Home for Incurables	200
Adelaide Benevolent and Strangers' Friend Society	200
Salvation Army	200
Lady Victoria Buxton Girls' Club	100
St. Mary's Mission of Hope (C.E.)	100
Blinded Sailors and Soldiers' Association	100

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ST. MARK'S COLLEGE.

Previously acknowledged	£11,754 2 0
R. M. Cudmore, Esq.	25 0 0
Mrs. John Christison	50 0 0
Total	£11,829 2 0

Donations forwarded to the secretary (A. B. Harvey), 45-49, Steamship Buildings, will be immediately acknowledged. (Aq'vt.)

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Mr. Bazett David Colvin, M.A., the well-known Adelaide accountant, died after a short illness at his residence at Glenelg on Friday. He was 81 years of age. His father was a partner in a leading firm of East India merchants, and he was closely connected with members of the old East India Civil Service. The late Mr. Colvin was born near to London on May 18, 1842. His uncle, the Hon. J. R. Colvin, was Lieut.-Governor of the north-west during the mutiny, and was succeeded by his brilliant son, Sir A. Colvin. An uncle on the mother's side, Sir Stuart Colvin Bayley, was Lieut.-Governor of Bengal. An elder brother, Sir Sidney Colvin, is Slade professor of fine art at the University of Cambridge, and Keeper of the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum. He is also an author of merit, having published, among other books, his memories of famous literary men. Mr. B. D. Colvin graduated as Wrangler at Cambridge in 1864, and arrived in South Australia about 34 years ago, leaving the old country on account of his health. He had been practising as a consulting accountant and auditor, and as a tutor in accountancy for the past 30 years. He had great success as a tutor. Eighty members of the Institute of Accountants were trained by him. From 1902 to 1916 he was lecturer in accountancy and business practice at the Adelaide University, and a member of the Board of Commercial Studies. His mind was vigorous and alert almost up to his death. By his personal interest and sympathy he gained the affection of a large number of pupils and friends now holding leading positions in the world of accountancy. He was a lay-reader of the Church of England for many years, and latterly attended St. Peter's Church, Glenelg.

On Friday Mr. C. R. Hodge, the retiring registrar of the Adelaide University, formally said farewell to the administrative staff at a luncheon at the Grand Central Hotel. Mr. Hodge remarked that he thought this was a fitting way to assemble the staff and formally say goodbye to his old friends and colleagues. He also asked those present to drink success and long life to his successor, Mr. F. W. Eardley. Mr. Hodge stated that Mr. Eardley had been in the service for more than 20 years, and that he possessed the dual qualifications desirable for such an important office. Mr. Eardley not only had a commercial training but academic qualifications also, having graduated in arts at the Adelaide University. Mr. Hodge asked the same loyal, cheerful service that had characterised the staff during his long term of office. At the instance of Mr. Eardley those present wished Mr. Hodge renewed health and happiness in his retirement.

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VERIFICATION OF EINSTEIN.

Mr. Dodwell's Expedition.

The final results of the Adelaide Observatory eclipse expedition obtained on September 20, 1922, have just been received (states the London "Morning Post" of January 14). The expedition which was under the direction of Mr. G. F. Dodwell, the Government Astronomer of South Australia, was primarily concerned with the verification of the shift in the position of the stars predicted by Einstein.

Cordillo Downs, a site offering remarkably favorable weather prospects, was the station selected. This choice necessitated a journey of 400 miles on camels, the entire equipment having therefore to be unloaded and reloaded every day.

The importance of the work of the expedition lies not so much in the results obtained as in the entirely novel methods adopted in the observations. The chief objection to the ordinary methods of investigating the Einstein effect is the possibility of a change in the scale of the plates owing to the difference in the day and night temperatures. For the plate taken during the eclipse is exposed in the heat of the day, while that taken subsequently of the same stars when the sun is not longer in their midst is exposed at night. It is thus possible, even in spite of every precaution, that the relative shift in the positions of the stars on the two plates may be due in part to an expansion of the day plate and a contraction of the night plate.

Test Photographs.

Mr. Dodwell got over the difficulty by photographing, in addition to the stars close to the sun, another field of stars at a distance from the sun. Both these fields he rephotographed six months later at night time. It was thus possible, by comparing the two photographs of the field at a distance from the sun (in which no Einstein effect could be present), to see whether a change of scale had occurred and to determine the amount of change.

Whatever this change of scale was it would clearly be the same for the two photographs taken of the field near the sun. The necessary corrections could therefore be applied to them, and the shift due to the Einstein effect could be separated from that due to contraction or expansion.

These plates have been measured by Mr. C. R. Davidson at Greenwich, and the results are in remarkably close agreement with the Einstein prediction.

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ELDER CONSERVATORIUM CONCERTS.

The syllabus for 1924 series of Elder Conservatorium concerts has been published and promises much interest. These concerts, which are always held on Monday evenings, offer to students as well as to all other lovers of music, an opportunity of hearing a great variety of musical works at very little cost. The transferrable season ticket for the whole series entitles the holder to a reserved seat for every concert. The box-plan will be opened at Allan's, on March 29th, and Mr. F. Bowden, of that firm, will act as concert manager.