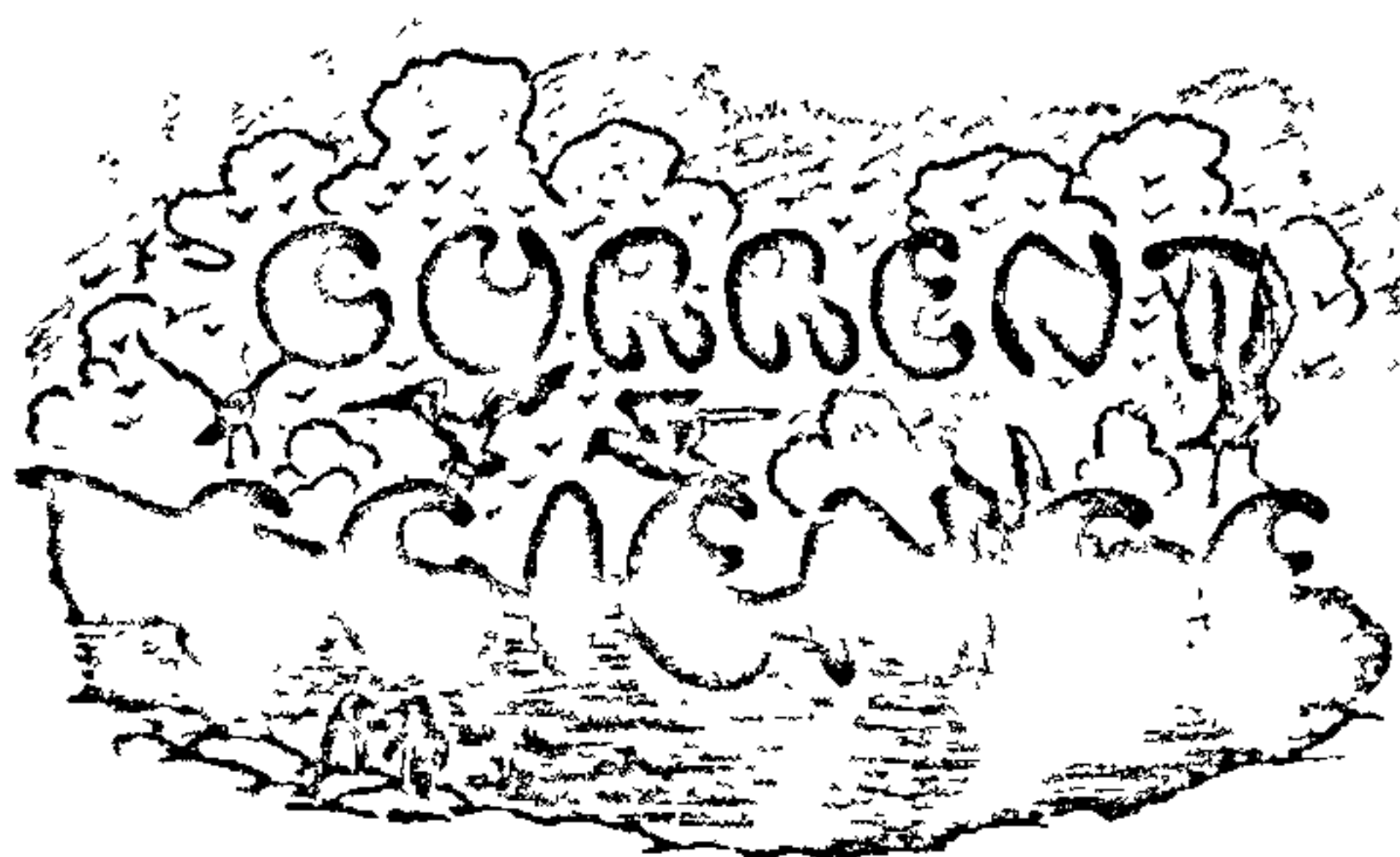

CURRENT SCIENCE—50 YEARS AGO



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[Extract from the Presidential Address before the Bombay Session of the Indian Science Congress, 1934, by Dr Meghanad Saha, D.Sc., F.R.S.]

COMING next to the question of the relation between Science and the problems of life, Dr. Saha points out that to a scientist life is a queer thing, not subject to reason or law like inanimate objects, but swayed in its action by inexplicable impulses which Schopenhauer collectively calls "Will". The idea of helplessness which was more keenly felt by men before the era of Science is probably the origin of religion, but it is doubtful whether the older religions which were based upon an insufficient acquaintance of the Universe, of Nature as well as of Organic Life, and are largely subjective in origin, have ever served the purpose claimed by their protagonists. In this connection one would like to know whether, on any of the myriads of heavenly bodies described above, there may be intelligent beings and whether they have been able to evolve a system of controlling life better than ours. There is no reason to think that life should be confined to our planet alone, although nobody has succeeded in establishing communication with such extra-terrestrial beings. Bishop Barnes is also of the opinion that doubtless there are many other inhabited worlds, that on some of them beings exist who are immeasurably beyond our mental level, and that com-

munication with them will be possible some day. Dr. Saha expresses the conviction that money spent on solving some of these problems would be well invested and the action would be statesmanlike. He believes, however, that for long years to come, men on this planet will be left very much to their own unaided resources, and that the best way to ensure the future is to foster the scientific spirit, by education as well as by propaganda, and to encourage scientific enquiry into not only purely scientific subjects like physics or biology, but also into Social Sciences. For, up to the present time, the forces which have been used for controlling human passions are religious, political and social laws. These laws have, however, been arrived at from an imperfect understanding of the problems of life, of world problems, and from the exigencies of situations of an ephemeral nature. Dr. Saha here quotes from H. E. Sir Malcolm Hailey's address to the U. P. Academy of Science to show how statesmen are looking to Science to provide man with means of dominating his own passions, and to rectify the psychology of fear which seems to rule the world. According to the Professor, Science can do this if its methods are applied with greater vigour to the subjects of human interest like Civics, Politics, Economics, History, Social Eugenics and Experimental Psychology. Science shows that there is enough for all the people in the world, if only rivalry amongst nations and communities gives place to co-operative construction and if the politician's task is, at least partially, handed over to an international board of trained scientific industrialists, economists and eugenicists who will think in terms of the whole world as a unit. A new educational scheme should be devised by a World's Congress of foremost thinkers like Bergson, Einstein, Bertrand Russell, Smuts, Spengler and others, with the special objective of weeding out mediæval passions from the minds of the coming generation, and for training them to a proper grasp and sufficient appreciation of the beauty and powers of Science. The joy of life for the grown-up men will be provided not in designing means for the plunder or exploitation of our fellow-men in various ways, but in administering to their needs, and in free development and display of the finer faculties of the mind.
