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UPON THE NEW OCCULTISM

The Secret of Ancient Egypt. By Ernest C. Palmer, 3s. 6d. net.
Vampires and Vampirism. By Dudley Wright, 5s. net.
Crystal-Gazing. By Theodore Besterman, 5s. net.
(All published by Rider and Son.)

The publishers of these three books are to be congratulated; the works prove that the old, slipshod, sentimental method of writing upon theories loosely called "occult" has passed away, I hope for ever. Given a score or two of books like Mr. Besterman's *Crystal-Gazing*, and we shall possess a new and proven Science, the phenomena of which will have their place amongst other observed facts, to modify profoundly, in the years that are to be, our conceptions of the universe. It is not claiming too much to assert that the next twenty years will see a revolution in thought that, twenty years ago, would have seemed incredible.

The Secret of Ancient Egypt is a succinct and, to the comparative religionist, exciting account, all-too-brief, of the origins (at second-hand; for Egypt was herself a colony, in all probability of Atlantis) of not only the popular creed of England, but of her science and her social order. Mr. Palmer's summary is admirable; cool, dispassionate, easy; but I think that, in his chapter upon the Mysteries, he might have sailed much nearer to the wind without upsetting any but incurable Puritans in the sea of thought. For those who can "read into" this book what is so obviously and neatly concealed, it will be a treasure.

Mr. Wright and Mr. Besterman approach their respective subjects from different angles; the former is mainly entertaining, the latter scientific.

Mr. Wright shall be presented with a hint or two for a new edition of his book. There is a superb vampire-tale in Algernon Blackwood's *John Silence*; and in the pages of the Master Lévi there are references to the Old Testament blood-raised demons who are unquestionably true vampires. Mr. Wright gives a case or two that seemingly belong to the realm of Bloch and Krafft-Ebing rather than to the Vampire-world. In any case, he will

find numerous parallels among those writers and their peers. Much might be added, too, about incubi and succubi and their pastimes; but again we might be overset! Alas, that England should be so "windy"! As usual, it is to the astounding knowledge of Madame Blavatsky that we owe the most reasonable and "covering" explanation of the phenomena of Vampirism. The reader is referred to p. 203 of Mr. Wright's book.

Crystal-Gazing is the best specialised treatise upon a branch of Occultism that I have seen; Mr. Besterman is patient, painstaking, thorough and humorous. It will be a generation, and probably two, ere *Crystal-Gazing* is superseded. So well-tempered is our author's critical faculty, that it is with the utmost interest that one reads this: "I therefore content myself with saying that the evidence above quoted, which is only a small fragment of the whole, has been sufficient to convince me, much against my desire and inclination, of the existence of some unknown faculty which enables a person who possesses it to obtain knowledge otherwise than by the normal intermediary of the sensorial channels or than by telepathy."

If there can be suggested an addition or two to *Crystal-Gazing*, it is in order that a second edition of Mr. Besterman's book may be even more valuable than the first. In the days of our youth, then, there was a "side-show" upon the pier at Brighton called the "Camera Obscura," and this, I think, might legitimately find a place in the evolution of the idea of scrying. There are in *The Ingoldsby Legends*, that delightful but neglected storehouse of tradition and folk-lore, at least two instances of mirror-gazing; in "The Leech of Folkestone" and "The Lord of Thoulouse." "The Luminous Shield," one of Blavatsky's *Nightmare Tales*, bears all the marks of truth, and provides an instance of a species of scrying whereof no examples are given by Mr. Besterman. In No. V. of *The Equinox* occurs "The Vision and the Voice," purporting to be a continuation of the clairvoyance of Doctor Dee, probably the most famous scryer in all history. I think that Mr. Besterman is incorrect in identifying "Frater Achad" with C. Stansfeld-Jones.

But, after all, *Crystal-Gazing* is almost exhaustive, and it has an admirable index.

Victor B. Neuburg.