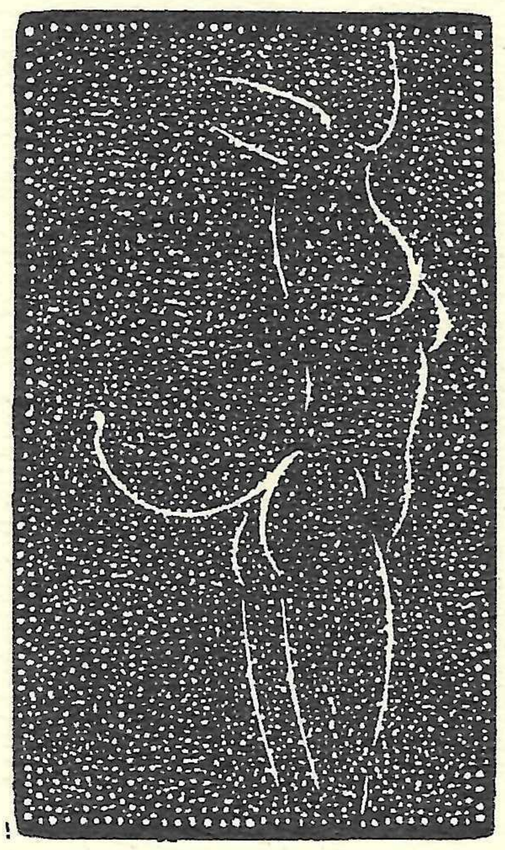
# NOTES UPON THE LITERARY, SCIENTIFIC, AND ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES OF EDWARD HERON-ALLEN, F.R.S.

*Extracted from his Diaries and other Documents by*

*Christopher Blayre Ph.D., D.Litt.*



*Opusculum I*

Heron-Allen Society

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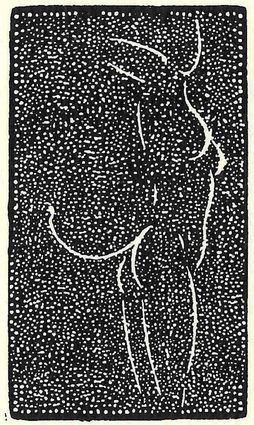

*Opusculum I*

Heron-Allen Society

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# Prefatory Note

My friend Heron-Allen, himself the writer of several obituary notices of scientific contemporaries which have been highly appreciated by the relatives and friends of the men concerning whom they were written, has often remarked that his only objection to death lies in the fact that he will not be able to read the obituary notices which are likely to appear when that event has taken place.

More than one personal friend, editors or contributors to scientific and other journals, have promised him to write these notices themselves and have asked him to give them an authentic outline of the events and activities of his singularly full and varied life. To this task he has never addressed himself, but he has confided to me all his travel and other journals and papers, as well as the condensed diaries that he has kept without any *hiatus* since the 1st of January 1882, in order that I may write an authentic obituary notice and perhaps, in fullness of time, a memoir of him, that, it is perfectly obvious, could never be published until many years have elapsed after his death.

From these materials I have made a short abstract setting out his literary, scientific, and artistic activities so far as they can be gathered from a rapid perusal of these voluminous documents.

For equally obvious reasons I have carefully avoided all records of any sentiments, opinions, or reactions that

appear in the materials reserving such controversial matters for the memoir—should it ever come into being and arrive at a conclusion.

C.B. January 1936

*With minor amendments by his grandson.*

*I.E.J. February 2000*

1861 Heron-Allen was born on the 17th December. Son of George Allen, head of the firm of Allen and Son, Solicitors, of Soho, which was founded in that place in 1780 by his Grandfather Emanuel Allen, the holder of many county and parochial appointments which were held in succession by his descendants down to H-A. himself.

The family came originally from Staffordshire (temp. Edward III). A branch, bearing the same Coat of Arms—but spelling their name Alleyne—was established at Grantham in Lincolnshire in the XVIIth, Century, and of this family a branch proceeded to Barbados in the XVIIth, Century, where it achieved great distinction; the branch remaining in England produced in course of time, Dr. John Allen M.D., F.R.S. (1660-1741) the ancestor of Emanuel Allen above mentioned.

1872 Went to Elstree School preparatory for Harrow.

1876 At a tutor's, the Vicar of South Bersted, in Sussex, where he made his first appearance in print in a local paper. This was a short article on "The Geological Formation of Bognor".[1]

Whilst at Elstree he delivered, at the age of thirteen, his first lecture on the Foraminifera (*Globigerina* ooze) before a small audience of school fellows. (His attention had been arrested by passages and figures of chalk foraminifera in Geikie's Science Primer *Geology*. (London. 1873)).

1876 Entered Harrow School where he became an assiduous member of and Lecturer at, the meetings of the school 'Scientific Society'

1879 Articled to his father in the firm of Allen and Son.

1880-1 Having played the violin since he was ten years old, he now studied its history and evolved a new and universally accepted theory of the Ancestry of the Violin, on which at the invitation of Bernard Quaritch he delivered in 1882, before the Sette of Odd Volumes (of which he subsequently (1883) became a member), a lecture which was published in pamphlet form in the same year.[2]

1882 Founded with Norfolk Megone "The Strolling Player's Amateur Orchestral Society".

With a view to studying the theory and practice of Violin-making, he became (whilst articled to the firm of Allen and Son), part-time apprentice to George Chanot, the Violin-maker in Wardour Street where he made two violins which were played upon in later years, with great appreciation, by Joachim, Sarasate, Wilhelmj, Nachez, Piatti and other notable violinists. He made and kept elaborate notes of the minute processes of Violin Making in 1884[3] which is still constantly reprinted and remains the only complete treatise on the practical construction of the instrument. It also contains amusing sidelights on fake-spotting.

1883 Deeply interested with the late Sir Victor Hoarsely in the scientific basis of "Cheirosophy" (Chiromancy, or



Palmistry), he published with Ward Locke the first complete and scientific work on the subject which has since been through innumerable editions.[4]

1884 Admitted a Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Judicature. Had been further interested in Foraminifera ever since Griffith, the Science Master at Harrow had given him a sample of foraminiferous sand in 1877. His father had given him a first class binocular microscope (by Swift), and his chief relaxation from the law, besides Literature and Music, was the search for and mounting of slides of Foraminifera, which he collected whenever and wherever he could.

1885 Appointed on account of his work on the History of Musical Instruments, Special Commissioner for Italy, to collect ancient musical instruments and manuscripts for the historic Loan Collection in the Music section of the Invention's Exhibition of that year.

In July he joined the Staff of the Dictionary of National Biography under Leslie Stephen, with A.H. Bullen, Sidney Lee and others. Most of the articles on violinists and astrologers in the early volumes were from his pen.

Still working on Cheirosophy with Victor Horsley with whom he collaborated the Introduction to his translation of D'Arpentigny's work *La Science de la Main*, which was published in 1886[5] and, like his *Manual of Cheirosophy* went through a great number of editions.

In this year he began his study of the Persian language attracted thereto by Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat Omar Khayyam*, and learnt the Turkish language colloquially from G. Hagopian, the Armenian representative in London. He now made friends and worked with Prince Malcom Khan, the Persian Minister in England and was developing an oriental alphabet capable of being cut and composed as moveable type.

1886 Wrote several of the "Queer Stories" for *Truth* at the invitation of Henry Labouchere and his sub-editor Horace Voules.

Being regarded (now rather against his will), as an authority on Palmistry, he was frequently invited to attend Spiritualistic Seances. He exposed the blind medium Husk, and the popular medium "Miro". He was one of the earliest members of the Society for Psychical Research, and, all his life, attended adult seances at intervals, he never witnessed any phenomena that he could not himself reproduce as "parlour tricks".

In November, having greatly astonished with a Cheiroscophical demonstration, Major J.B. Pond, the celebrated Lecture Agent who was in England with Henry Ward Beecher, he was invited to go to America on an extended Lecture Tour, his subject being "Cheirosophy". He had an extraordinary success both financially and otherwise, in New York, Boston, Chicago and other American cities, for six months.



1887 After that he adopted a literary life and led a Bohemian existence for three years, during which he wrote several novels and volumes of short stories and verse.[6]

1889 In March his eldest brother being at the point of death (he died in April) he returned to London to take his place in the family firm of Allen & Son.

1890 He combined literature and law for two years, taking up again his articles in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and publishing a volume of verse.

1891 In February he met Miss Marianna Lehmann, daughter of Rudolph Lehmann, the eminent painter, whom he married on the 1st of July and found himself at once, a member of the most literary and artistic and musical society in London.

It was now that he began to devote himself in all his leisure hours to the collection and study of Foraminifera, and in 1894 he published his first paper on the Chalk Foraminifera[7] which remained and still remains the leading practical treatise on the technique of preparation and the study of fossil forms.

Meanwhile, during his absence in and since his return from America, he was keenly at work on his great "Bibliography of the Violin" which was published in parts by Griffith Farran & Co. (1890 *et seq*) and was completed and published in two 4to volumes in 1894~9)

Meanwhile, also, he had joined E. Polonaski as Editor of the *Violin Times* (1893) and was publishing the rest of his eight "De Fidiculis Opuscula".

In 1892 he had began work on the Torres Straits Foraminifera with F.W. Millett of Marazion, and this occupied him until 1904.

1894 In this year (1894), in recognition of his contributions to musical literature, and his position in the Musical world, the Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome elected him an Honorary Academician. After the death of Sir Alexander Mackenzie in 1934 he became the only other English "Socio onorario" and, with the exception of Gui do Adler, of Vienna, he was the Doyen of that august body.

1895 He wrote and acted in a series of Drawing-room Duologues, some of which were published in magazines.

1896 In this year he commenced his intensive study of the *Rubaiyatt of Omar Khayyam* and made a literal translation of the then earliest known manuscript in the Bodleian Library which was published in 1898[9], and he also commenced the study of colloquial Persian with Mirza Alnaki of the Persian Legation.

He was also at this time, deeply interested in the study of old silver and laid the foundation of what became, and is, an extremely fine collection.

1897 This year he was continuously occupied with his work on *Omar Khayyam* and the Foraminifera.

1898-9 These years were similarly occupied and in 1900 he made his translation (at the instigation and by the encouragement of Professor E.G. Browne of Cambridge) of *The Lament of Baba Tahir* from an



almost unknown dialect of Persian known as Luri. This was published in 1901.[10]

It was in this year that his firm (of which he had become Senior Partner) were appointed Solicitors and Parliamentary Agents to the City of Westminster, and he took charge of the difficult and onerous work of the Parliamentary Practise of the City.

1902 In January, his wife Marianna, who had been seriously ill for some time, died.

1903 During a three months tour of Egypt he met Miss Edith Pepler whom he married in the following November.

1904 He was engaged most of the year re-writing and contributing new articles on the Violin and Violinists for the second edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians.*

1905 He was largely instrumental with Mr Robert (now Sir) Mond in starting The Infants' Hospital in Vincent Square.

1906-7 He built his house on the "Large Acres" estate at Selsey Bill and began at once an intensive study of the Foraminifera of that coast. It was then that he met, at the suggestion of F.W. Millett, (for whom he had finished the work on the Torres Straits Foraminifera), Arthur Earland, who had published a paper on the neighbouring sands at Bognor. Thus began a collaboration which lasted until 1933.

1908 He began collecting the materials for his great book on Selsey Bill[11]. He also contributed the literary and historical chapters to the work *My Life and Dancing* compiled by his great friend Maud Allan, who had made a great sensation and success with an entirely new form of plastic dancing.

1909 The Selsey Foraminifera and other papers upon the group, as well as his vast work on Selsey Bill were occupying all his time. The Rector of Selsey, the Revd. J. Caves Brown who had projected a work on Selsey, died, and H-A. took over from his widow, who was left in poor circumstances, the material collected by Cavis Brown and worked it into his book.

1910 In March he gave, from his own experience and practice, the evidence before the Divorce Commission which led to the suppression in the newspapers of all published details of the evidence in Divorce Cases.[12]

1911 Became Commissioner of Boy Scouts for West Sussex at the request of Sir Robert (now Lord) Baden-Powell.

His father having died in April he now became independent of his profession from which he retired on the 17th of December, his fiftieth birthday.

1912 In this year, Ray Lankester, who had been since 1901 and remained until his death, one of his most intimate friends, was widening his researches on the Rostocarinate Flints (see Phil. Trans. B. 202. 283 ff.) and Heron-Allen sent him two specimens from the foreshore at Selsey Bill which greatly impressed him. H-A



did not wholly agree with Lankester but the latter wrote an elaborately illustrated article upon the Selsey Flints, which, however, was not published till 1921. (Proc. Roy. Soc. B.92. 162). Ray Lankester who was a frequent guest at "Large Acres" visited Selsey, for the purpose of studying the locus, in June and August.

1913 Professor Sollas, Hazzeldine Warren, Reginald Smith and Reid Moir all active in the controversy, visited Heron-Allen at Selsey in 1913.

In March, he delivered, for the first time, his often subsequently repeated lecture "On the Place of the Rubai in Persian Poetry"—a feat of memory which involved the recitation of practically the whole of Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyam*.[13]

As District Commissioner for West Sussex he directed the "Prospector section" (Geology and Mineralogy) at the great Scout Rally at Birmingham. He was then conducting his researches upon living Foraminifera at Selsey and drafting his paper on the Bionomics of the group, published in the Phil. Trans. of the Royal Society in 1915[14]

1914 He was the last Zoologist at work with Sir John Murray at Edinburgh on the "Challenger" Collections before the latter was killed on March 16th.

In August, on the outbreak of the War, he organised the Scout Patrols of the Sussex Coast and raised and equipped a large troop at Selsey. From the first day of the War till the last, he kept a minutely detailed Journal of the War as it affected the civilian population of the country.

1915 He added the Siddall and Millett Collections to his own, which are now preserved in the Zoological Department at the Natural History Museum.

On the 21st of May he delivered the Friday evening Discourse on "Purpose in the Foraminifera" at the Royal Institution.[15]

In September he represented at Manchester, and read the Presidential Address to Section D. of Prof E.A. Minchin who was dying in his house at Selsey. (He died on September 30th).[16]

In December he was elected President of the Royal Microscopical Society. His first Presidential Address was a condensation of this elaborate and exhaustive Memoir of Alcide d'Orbigny.[17]

1916 He volunteered twice for service in Salonika thinking that his knowledge of general science and of the French, German, Italian and Turkish languages might be useful. His applications were rejected by the War Office.

1917 In the concluding months of the year he analysed and reported on the whole of the German Propaganda literature for his friend, Captain (now Sir Peter) Chalmers Mitchell.

In this year he began his experiments in the culture of Asparagus which it took him 16 years to bring to a successful issue, and upon which he published a brochure in 1933.[18]

He also became the Commissioner for National Service for West Sussex.

He became a member of Council of the Paleontographical Society and of joint Board of Scientific Societies.



At the end of the year he made with J.E. Barnard (now F.R.S) the Skiagraphs of the interior structure of Foraminifera, upon which he lectured before the Linnean, Microscopical and Geological Societies.

1918 The Volunteers having been warned for service, he took an Officer's course of training and signalling, attached to the West Kent Regiment, at Tunbridge Wells.

In May having been gazetted a Lieutenant he joined Chalmers Mitchell at the War Office (M.I.7.b.1.) and shortly after became Editor of the *Courier de l'Air*, "the poisoned arrows from the air" so fervently inveighed against by the Field Marshals Ludendorf and Hindenburg.

At this time he was working for the War Office from Monday till Friday in every week, Saturdays and Sundays being occupied by his duties as Platoon Commander at Selsey.

In October he was sent to the War Zone in France on Intelligence Service from the War Office.

1919 He completed his observations upon the living Foraminifera and his final monograph on the subject was published by the Royal Irish Academy.[19]

In February he was selected for election to the Fellowship of the Royal Society and elected in May. In December he sorted and catalogued the "Challenger" Collections in Edinburgh and arranged for their transfer to the Natural History Museum.

1921 In May he went to Corsica to study "Sables rouge" upon which he worked out and described the life history of Polytrema miniacaeum (Pallas).

In this year he published his first volume of scientific and other short stories *The Purple Sapphire and other Stories* under the pseudonym of Dr. Christopher Blayre.

1922 He was lecturing alternatively on *Omar Khayyam*, as well as on the Foraminifera at different Universities and before other scientific Societies.

1923 In September he co-ordinated and studied the d'Orbigny collections of Foraminifera at the "Laboratoire de Paleontologie" in Paris.

1924 He assisted W.W. Cobbett in the foundation of his *Encyclopaedia of Chamber Music* and wrote, in the *Ypres Times* his articles upon the distribution of the *Courier de l'Air*, and upon why it had been impossible to follow the German Army in their retreat from France, which roused the furious ire of arm-chair military critics.[20]

In this year he became President of the "National Auricula Society". He had grown this plant as a hobby for many years and projected an authoritative and historical work upon it which, however, he did not write, but in latter years made over his material to the Revd. G.A.D. Dunlop of Dewberry who was at work on the same subject.



1925 In this year he joined the Committee of the then recently resuscitated magazine *Discovery*.

At the same time he undertook to work out and describe the Foraminifera sent home by the "Discovery Expedition" of which Part I collaborated with Arthur Earland, was published in 1932. After the completion of Part II (in 1933) for good and sufficient reasons he withdrew his name from these Reports and severed his working connection with Arthur Earland.

In this year he presented the whole of his Foraminifera collections and library to the Natural History Museum and accepted the position of Honorary Curator of that department.

1926 During the year he collected the material which resulted in his book on the Barnacle[21] which almost caused a breach of his long friendship with Ray Lankester who considered the subject to be peculiarly his own but had neither the time nor the energy to work it out to a conclusion. This involved several months hard work in the British Museum and other Libraries.

He had now given up his London house and built a library attached to his house at Selsey, to contain 12,000 volumes.

He lectured on the Barnacles Myth at Oxford and Cambridge and before several other literary and scientific societies.

1927 In July he became President for the ensuing year of the Sette of Odd Volumes, it being the fiftieth year since the foundation of that society of which he was the

senior active member. In July his friend J.J. Lister having died, he arranged with his widow for the presentation of all the Lister Collections and Note Books to his Department in the Natural History Museum.

In September he assisted (financially) at the formation of the Great Barrier Reef Expedition and joined its Committee.

He also published as one of the Odd Volume Opuscula his "Memorabilia" from the Letters of Mme. de Sevigne.[22]

1928 His work at the Museum occupied much of his time and he presented to it the so-called Hangchow meteorite, which he had acquired under mysterious circumstances.

He also edited Lister's final researches upon Polystomella crispa upon which he lectured before the Linnean Society in February. The Paper was, under circumstances to which it is needles to enter, rejected by the Publication Committee of that Society and was subsequently published in magnificent form by the Smithsonian Institute of Washington D.C.[23] This rejection annoyed him so much that he resigned his Fellowships of all his scientific societies, with the exception of the Royal Society and the Royal Microscopical Society.

1929 In April he was working on the Foraminifera of the District at the Marine Biological Laboratory at Plymouth.

In October, on the death of Ray Lankester, he



wrote the sympathetic Obituary Notice which was published in the Journal of the Microscopical Society.[24]

In this year he became deeply interested in the Buddhist religion, a study which resulted in the publication of his Odd Volume Opusculum *The Gods of the Fourth World*.[25]

1930 In July, he lost in a motor accident, his daughter Armorel Daphne, within a fortnight of her having taken her Degree (with First Class Honours) in Science, at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. He had accurately foretold her death having accidentally seen her palm in November 1918, and never read another hand again. This tragic occurrence practically put an end to his activities in literature and science.[26]

1931 His work at the Natural History Museum continued however, and he made a further exhaustive study of the d'Orbigny collections in Paris.

1932 In this year he began making the notes for his own "Obituary Notice" being dissatisfied with proofs of such notices that he had seen in the offices of more than one newspaper. I have referred to this in my Prefatory Note.

In April, for the first time in his life, he had a severe illness and in November he went with his wife to Ceylon to visit the Estates of the Lanka Plantations Company, of which he was a Director, and which had been founded in 1880 by his father who had owned an estate in the island since the middle of last Century.

1933 It was on his return from this journey that he finally dissolved his partnership with Arthur Earland.

At the British Association, in September, he delivered what he termed his "swan song"—a paper upon Huxley's "Bathybius" which had been in his mind for many years.[27]

From this time he spent his life clearing up, and completing many matters and collections, and presented all the objects of which illustrations had been published in his book on Selsey, to the various Museums to which they were appropriate.

In November 1934 he received from the War Office the service medals for which he had applied in December 1918. In this year he printed, in a limited edition for private circulation, the remainder of his *Purple Sapphire* stories under the title *Some Women of the University*. An enlarged edition of the original collection had been published in 1932 under the title *The Strange Papers of Dr. Blayre*. He had nearly always published his works of fiction under various pseudonyms from 1887 onwards.[28]

In December 1934 he read his final paper on the rare genus Keramosphaera, before the Royal Microscopical Society, which was published in their Journal of the following year.

(*For many other publications of Heron-Allen, see the Library Catalogue of the British Museum, and the Royal Society's Catalogue of Scientific Papers.*)



## NOTES

[1] See *Bognor Observer* 23 February 1876. Also *Chichester Observer* 28 April 1915 and 15 March 1919.

[2] *The Ancestry of the Violin* etc. London (for the Author) 1882.

[3] *Violin making as it was and is* etc. London 1884. Second Edition 1885.

[4] *A Manual of Cheirosophy* etc. London 1885. Second Edition 1886. Seventh Edition 1894. After this the editions were not numbered.

[5] *The Science of the Hand* etc. London 1886. Third Edition 1890. After this the editions were not number- ed.

[6] *Kisses of Fate.* New York 1888. *Princess Daphne* N.Y. 1888. *A Fatal Fiddle* N.Y. 1889 etc.

[7] *Prolegomena towards the study of the Chalk Foraminifera* etc. London 1894.

[8] *De Fidiculis Bibliographia* etc. London 2 vols. 1890- 1894.

[9] *The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam* etc. London Jan. 1898. Second edition May 1898. *Some side-lights upon Edward Fitzgerald's poem* etc. London 1898. *E.F-G.'s Ruba'iyat with their original Persian sources* etc. London 1899. *The Second Edition of E.F-G.; Ruba'iyat* etc. London 1908.

[10] *The Lament of Baba tahir* etc. London 1901.

[11] *Selsey Bill. Historic and Prehistoric* etc. London 1911. Also *Nature and History at Selsey Bill* etc. Selsey 1911. Second Edition 1911. *Visitor's Map and Guide to Selsey* etc. Selsey 1912.

[12] *Royal Commission on Divorce and Matrimonial Causes.* Vol.1. London, 1912. pp.158 (ff).

[13] Published in *The Poetry Review.* Vol.2. No.5. May 1933 pp.205-220.

[14] *The Bionomics and Reproductive processes of the Foraminifera.* Phil. Trans. Roy. Soc. B. Vol.206.1915 pp.227-279 (6 plates).

[15] *On Beauty, Design and Purpose in the Foraminifera*. Proc. Roy. Inst. 1915. in Vol.21. London 1918. pp.433-485. Also printed in *Nature*. Vol.95. 1915. pp.630-634.
[16] HA's Obituary Notice of Minchin, appeared in the Proc. Linnean Soc. London 1915-16. pp. 67-71.
[17] *Alcide d'Orbigny*. Journ. R.Micr. Soc. 1917. pp. 1-105.
[18] *Asparagus as a Hobby for Amateurs* etc. Bognor Regis 1934. Also in *Wine and Food*. No.2.1934. pp.12-18.
[19] *Study of the Species Veneulina polystopha*. Proc. R. Irish Academy. Vol. 35. Sec. B.
[20] "The Poisoned Arrows from the Air". and "How the Boche got home". *The Ypres Times*. Vol.2. Nos. 2 & 3. April and July 1924.
[21] *Barnacles in Nature and in Myth*. Oxford University Press 1928.
[22] Odd Volumes. Opusculum No.85. Printed by the Oxford Press 1928.
[23] Miscellaneous Collections. Vol.82. no..9. 1930. 11. pp. and 7 multiple plates. In a 3-page "Note" inserted in all the Author's Copies, he related the circumstances of the rejection of this paper by the Linnean Society.
[24] JR. Micr. Soc. Vol.49.1929. pp. 389-365.
[25] Opusculum No.92. Printed by the Pelican Press. London 1931.
[26] In her memory he founded at Lady Margaret Hall, "The Armorel Holiday Gift" of £60 a year, and the "Armorel Daphne Heron-Allen Scholarship" (in Science) of 300 a year.
[27] See Report in *The Times* 8 September, 1933.
[28] These were generally anagrams of his own name, e.g. Ronald Redhew Neal; Darrell o'Dennahew; Nora Helen Warddell. Two novels published in America under the name of Selina "Dolaro" were written by him.