

CROYDON.— The second meeting of the above for the session was held on Nov. 24th at Oakleigh, Duppas Hill (by kind permission of Mrs. Barnard), when Miss Shakespeare lectured on “The Child in Literature.” The lecturer reviewed the treatment of children in the literature of the world down to the present day. She pointed out that children had always been treated objectively in the literature of the Ancients and showed that it was comparatively recently that the point of view had changed. She read quotations from Homer and other writers to prove this and to show the passionate love for children even in those days. Passing over the middle ages, which gives us no picture of childhood, not even from the pen of Chaucer, the lecturer dwelt on the formalities and ceremony existing between parents and children in the 17th and 18th centuries, quoting from Montaigne to show to what lengths these formalities went. The lecturer mentioned Locke’s view of the mind of a child as a sheet of blank paper to be written on to show how entirely objective the point of view still was. She then went on to Rousseau, pointing out that he was the first to recognise that children are born persons, and how from his day onward the ideas about children had been gradually changing until to-day the point of view had become entirely subjective; the rights of children were recognised, their individuality was given room to expand, and they were treated with a wise and thinking love. Miss Shakespeare illustrated this gradual change of attitude towards children by delightful and pertinent extracts from the literature of each period.