

News and Views

The Loch Ness "Mystery"

SINCE a note appeared in NATURE regarding the alleged "monster" of Loch Ness (Dec. 16, 1933, p. 921) evidence has accumulated, on one hand, to warn the credulous against the suppositions of unskilled observers, and on the other to point to the identity of the creature which has caused so much commotion in the daily newspapers. In the first place, the writer of these notes has examined, through the kindness of the Associated Press, the original negative, said to be a direct photograph of the Loch Ness "monster", from which prints appeared in various newspapers about December 6 and 7. Regarding this photograph, it is not necessary to say more than that the object appears not to have been photographed at the distance stated, 200 yards, and that in the writer's opinion the object represents no animal known to science. In the second place, the "spoor" of the animal, about which fantastic tales were spread, has, according to the *Morning Post*, led the authorities in the British Museum (Natural History) to conclusions decidedly unfavourable to some of the expectations previously aroused. No support was found in this evidence of the 'monstrousness' of the monster.

As to the other side of the story; in the *Scotsman* of January 1, appeared a sketch made by an observer, and on January 6, the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* published a sketch made by a final year veterinary student who saw the creature on land by the Loch side, by the light of the moon and of his motor-cycle lamp, who, somewhat boldly it would seem, upon his knowledge of natural history and prehistoric animals, stated his opinion that it was "a cross between a seal and a plesiosaurus". But the sketch and the description of the beast and its movements are more reliable than the identification. Without analysing these in detail, for they are wonderfully accurate considering the physical light and the mental atmosphere which surrounded the creature, one can have little doubt that the object figured in the *Scotsman* and seen and sketched by Mr. A. Grant in the early morning of January 5, was a large grey seal. The species occurs not infrequently in the Moray Firth, whence it probably comes from its nearest breeding grounds in the Orkney Islands; it is the common species of the western isles of Scotland.

Exhibition of British Art

THE winter exhibition at the Royal Academy is devoted this year to British art and it was opened to the public on January 6. The first president of the Academy, Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose dignified statue by Mr. Alfred Drury, R.A., stands in the courtyard before the entrance to the Royal Academy at Burlington House, once said: "Variety reanimates the attention, which is apt to languish under continual sameness". There is certainly no lack of variety in this exhibition. Sir Joshua was one of the earliest to make scientific experiments as to the effect of light and atmosphere upon the permanence

of pigments. Since his day the chemist and physicist have given much attention to this subject, with the result that modern paintings, as well as showing great brilliance, undoubtedly possess that lasting quality which is so desirable. No. 568 in Gallery IX is a striking example, and if the rainbow is a little too solid-looking, it at least has the merit of having the colours in the right order. The greater permanence under suitable conditions of water colours, which of course do not suffer from the darkening of varnishes or media used in oil paintings, is a feature of the exhibition, and attention may be directed in this respect to No. 801, by Rowlandson, and especially to the beautiful work of Cotman, Turner and others. In the Architectural Room may be seen a case containing thirty-five watches all made in England between the years 1583 and 1751.

Symbolism in Art

AT the Friday evening discourse delivered at the Royal Institution on November 17, the audience had the unusual, but instructive, experience of hearing, in Sir Herbert Baker's account of "Symbolism in Art", a distinguished practitioner of this form of expression in architecture on his principles, not from the æsthetic, but from the historico-scientific point of view. The discourse is now available in printed form. The interpretation of symbols, which is an element of no little importance in the study of art and the history of religions, suffers in a large number of instances from the drawback that it must be a matter of inference, and sometimes merely guesswork. Sir Herbert, in demonstrating to his audience the ideas which inspired, for example, the choice of motifs and subjects in the design of arms for the provinces of India used in the decoration of the new Delhi, showed the methods of the symbolising mind, first seeking the characteristic quality or incident pertinent to its subject, then giving it concrete form—thus, for example, selecting for the arms of the United Provinces the meeting of the sacred rivers at Allahabad, the bow of Rama, whose capital was at Oudh, and the fishes, the emblem of world power of the old Nawabs of Lucknow. Should events confirm Sir Herbert's diagnosis of the present trend of development in art towards symbolism, as the place of representational art is taken by mechanical means of reproduction, clearly the historical study of these principles and methods of symbolic art, of which he deplored the lack in the early part of his discourse, will demand increasing attention.

SIR HERBERT BAKER treated his subject-matter under two heads, touching first on early historical phases of symbolism and then describing attempts which he and collaborating artists have made to embody in the medium of art some facts of human experience. As already indicated, it is the personal experience upon which the latter part of the discourse was based, which gave weight to the view of sym-