

A CHAT ON HEREDITY.

(By CAPTAIN E. V. SANDERSON.)

A versatile writer, Mr. A. S. Patterson, has pointed out that civilisation does not advance on a front, as it were, but more in the form of a queue. There are always to be found a few in the lead, who are strenuously fighting for a better state of things; yet, ever and anon, they are being pulled back by those behind. This queue is formed of all grades from the most advanced form of civilisation right down to almost the ape man, at least in disposition if not altogether in form.

Heredity is that which retards man's progress. Look around and you will see it in many ways, both in man and all animals. Why does a dog attach itself to Man, for instance? When ancient Man went out with his spear or club in order to obtain food, he took the palatable parts of his prey only. The dog, being primarily a scavenger, soon learned that food for him, too, was always to be procured by following Man. The dog, not being good eating, was not harmed in these hunting trips, and in the course of time followed Man closer and closer until at last he even learned to assist in the kill.

When one sees the modern hunter, equipped in a nice shooting suit and armed with a modern gun, proceeding in quest of his quarry in a motor car, accompanied by his setter, we can recognise that he is merely following the call of heredity—a call which is inherent in all and which, wherever it is of a harmful or cruel nature, we should strive to overcome.

In the same manner, if we look enquiringly around, we shall find this hereditary drag ever present within Man and animal. A cow instinctively uses its horns to protect its calf. A woman pulls the blinds down, ostensibly to protect the wallpapers and furniture, but it has been stated that, because the human male does not bother in a like manner, this trait is hereditary from the days when woman hid in the darker part of the cave while her lord and master was away hunting or fighting his neighbours.

On and on we may trace the working of this hereditary drag almost everywhere, even down to the small boy and often the ornithologist who loves bird-nesting. The latter camouflages the hereditary call on the plea of scientific research upon a matter which has been enquired into time and time again. Why are birds' nests attractive? Our ancestors were ever looking for them as the raw eggs and young birds were an addition to their food supply. The Maori in the same way still eats huhu grubs, and they are probably good eating, just as much so as nestlings