

News and Views

Mandates

MR. BALDWIN'S statement on the future of the mandated territories under Great Britain in the House of Commons on April 27 no doubt went as far as it is possible to go in the conditions which, as he explained, govern the allocation of these areas and their peoples. Ultimately, consent to any proposed transfer rests with the Council of Nations. While Mr. Baldwin's assurance not only that the question of a transfer of mandated territory to another Power had not been under consideration by the British Government, but also that no decision or proposal would be made without full discussion by Parliament, may in some measure allay the growing feeling of anxiety, his statement was not such as to give absolute confidence to those who fear that the wishes of the inhabitants of the mandated territories, and more especially the indigenous inhabitants, will not be consulted. The case for Tanganyika and that for South-West Africa are being argued with no little point, because of the weighty European and South African interests involved; but for those who appreciate the efforts which are being made in such territories as Togoland and the Cameroons, for example, or in New Guinea, to advance the interests and status of the native in the light, more or less as the case may be, of a scientific approach to the problems of administration, too little is heard of their even stronger claims to consideration. Any change in such territories would be little short of disastrous. The same applies in almost an equal degree to the mandated territories in Africa under France and Belgium, where, whatever may be our opinion of the suitability of the measures adopted, they have at least been framed with the advantage of the native as their primary objective.

Eskimo Origins

It is announced that the Danish Government has awarded the gold medal and prize of 1,000 kronen, open to international competition for the best study of Eskimo origins, to Henry B. Collins, jun., of the U.S. National Museum, Washington, D.C. The problem of Eskimo origins is one in which the Danish people by historical association are peculiarly interested. Their anthropologists have on the whole adhered to the view put forward by Steensby of an eastern source. K. Birket-Smith, for example, in his book, originally published in 1927, but recently appearing in an English translation (see p. 722 of this issue), holds that the distinctive Eskimo culture developed somewhere in the neighbourhood of Hudson Bay; and that one line of migration, which travelled to the west, acquired elements of the earlier culture of Alaska and pushed on to Siberia. In America the cumulative effect of Asiatic affinities in indigenous cultures, as well as the evidence of physical

anthropology, supporting an Asiatic source for American origins, has weighed against the acceptance of the eastern theory; while the archaeological evidence, which has accrued from the intensive investigations of recent years on ancient village sites in Alaska, has been interpreted in a like sense and as pointing to the extreme north-west, or even farther in Asia, as the area in which the beginnings of Eskimo culture must be sought. Mr. Collins, who himself has conducted excavations on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, in his thesis puts forward the view that Eskimo culture is derivative from the earlier Archaic or Bering Sea and Punuk cultures, its characteristic and fundamental elements, the house with entrance passage, skin boots, sledge, etc., going back ultimately to Siberia; while the eastern Eskimo, so far from being original, represent a degeneration in culture which came about in the course of their migration from the west eastward.

A. J. B. Parent-Duchatelet (1790-1835)

MAY 7 marks the centenary of the death of Dr. Alexandre Jean Baptiste Parent-Duchatelet, one of the most eminent hygienists of the nineteenth century. He was born on September 29, 1790, in Paris, where he qualified on August 13, 1814, with an inaugural thesis on cholera. After an unsuccessful attempt to establish a private practice, he devoted himself to public health. His numerous works included essays on the Paris sewers (1822), the influence of tobacco on the health of workmen in tobacco factories (1829), the effect of emanations from putrifying animal matter on food substances (1831), steeping of hemp in relation to public health (1832), sanitation of dissecting rooms (1835), and prostitution in the city of Paris in relation to public health, morality and administration (1836). This last publication, which appeared posthumously, is an epoch-making work and ranks as a medical classic. The second edition, which was published in 1837, contains an essay on his life and work by F. Leuret, physician to the Bicêtre infirmary. In 1829, Parent-Duchatelet was one of the founders of *Annales d'hygiène et de médecine légale*, which is still one of the most authoritative journals in the world on hygiene. He was physician to the Hôpital de la Pitié and member of the Conseil de Salubrité, of which he became vice-president three months before his death at the early age of forty-five years.

A Close Approach to the Earth

THE closest celestial object to the earth is our own moon, the mean distance of which is roughly a quarter of a million miles. No other object is known to have approached nearly so closely to us without falling to the earth's surface. The record for a close approach had been held by an eighteenth-century