

A reticent and diffident man, Harkness used to say he devoted almost as much time to shunning publicity as to studying philanthropy. A widow survives him, but no children. WILLARD CONNELLY.

[It has been announced that Mr. Harkness has left the bulk of his estate, which is believed to exceed 100,000,000 dollars, in trust to his wife. After her death it is to be divided among twelve institutions including: the Commonwealth Fund, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University, Harvard University, Yale University, and Atlanta University.]

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Prof. Alexandre Desgrez, a member of the Section of Free Academicians of the Paris Academy of Sciences, and professor of medical physics in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Paris, on January 20.

Prof. S. J. Hickson, F.R.S., emeritus professor of zoology in the University of Manchester, on February 6, aged eighty years.

Mr. H. I. Smith, formerly chief Dominion archaeologist and assistant director of the Canadian National Museum, aged sixty-seven years.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Horace Bénédict de Saussure (1740-1799)

ON February 17 occurs the bicentenary of the birth of the celebrated Swiss naturalist and geologist Horace Bénédict de Saussure. He was born at Conches, near Geneva, in which city he passed most of his life and in which he died on January 22, 1799. As a boy he was a diligent collector of plants and minerals, being stimulated in his studies by his uncle, the naturalist Charles Bonnet (1720-93). At the age of twenty he made his first tour to the glacier of Chamoinix, an excursion regarded generally as dangerous. This was the beginning of his many journeys in the Western Alps and his travels in England, Germany, Sicily and Italy. At the age of twenty-two he was given the chair of physics and philosophy at the Academy of Geneva, and this post he held until 1786 when he resigned and was succeeded by his pupil Marc-Auguste Pictet (1752-1825). Among his earliest writings was a volume on electricity published in 1766. Year by year he extended his knowledge of the Alps, and in 1787 on August 2 with Michel Cachet he ascended Mont Blanc. The first Englishman to make the ascent, Mark Beaufoy (1764-1827), reached the summit a week later. In 1788 Saussure spent about a fortnight on Col du Geant and between 1789 and 1792 climbed Monte Rosa, the Breithorn, and other mountains. The upheaval in Switzerland due to the revolutionary movement in France drew him for a time into political life, but in 1794 most of his activities were brought to an end by a stroke of paralysis. From this he never really recovered.

Saussure's great work "Travels in the Alps 1779-1786" was described by von Zittel as a model of clear language, exact observation and cautious reasoning. His "glowing descriptions of the Alpine world removed the prejudice against the 'Montagnes Maudits', and awakened a feeling of enthusiasm for the infinite wonderland of beauty and delight in the higher altitudes of the Alps. Apart from his achievements in science de Saussure may be regarded as the pioneer of a practically new cult in human enjoyment, the love of mountain climbing". As a geologist de Saussure's aim was to observe, and to observe accurately. He

examined the mineral composition of the rocks and studied their topographical, meteorological and physical relations on the mountains. He improved the hygrometer and the anemometer and devised a cyanometer and a diaphanometer for comparing the degrees of transparency of the atmosphere at different altitudes. Half a century after de Saussure's stay on the Col du Géant, J. D. Forbes visited the same spot and in 1843 he wrote in his "Travels through the Alps of Savoy" that "No system of connected physical observations at a great height in the atmosphere has ever been undertaken which can compare with that of de Saussure. At any time such self-denial and perseverance would be admirable; but if we look to the small acquaintance which philosophers of sixty years ago had with the dangers of the higher Alps, and the consequently exaggerated colouring which was given to them, it must be pronounced heroic".

A biography of de Saussure was published by Dr. Douglas Freshfield in 1920 and was reviewed by Prof. T. G. Bonney in NATURE of February 10, 1921.

Evacuation and the Schools

LORD DE LA WARR's recent speech as President of the Board of Education in the House of Lords in reply to a motion by the Archbishop of Canterbury has been sent out as an announcement of the Board. It is a timely recognition that educational affairs in Great Britain are not as they should be, and that improvements are needed at once. Granting that the wholesale evacuation of children was a necessary and difficult process, more pains should have been taken to cope with the problems to be faced, one of which, now urgent, is an increase of illness at this time of the year. Every schoolmaster knows the dangers of the Easter term. Things have been done in a hurry and in alarm which should certainly be undone. An important school in a non-danger area was closed until further notice and reopened when better sense prevailed; much of the commandeering or use of school buildings for Government officials or civil defence was unwarranted, and its extent has been reduced.

The President of the Board says nothing of buildings long condemned as unsatisfactory and remaining unrepaired. Children lounging about the streets are a nuisance to themselves and everybody else, and rapidly deteriorate. This misguided leisure is being rectified by the allocating of camps and hiring of extra halls. Authorities have been told that children may be admitted to school before protection is completed. The 400,000 at present "receiving no schooling or care at all" present an urgent problem. In some cases "provision has been made and the children are not attending", and it is stated there are those who "bolster up evacuation by keeping schools closed". The announcement of compulsory school attendance for older children is a step in the right direction. Examinations should go on and full-time schooling be made compulsory as soon as possible. Lord De La Warr realizes that "education is not less important in wartime but more so". At a national conference of secretaries of the National Union of Teachers, a resolution was passed warmly welcoming "the decision of His Majesty's Government to enforce compulsory school attendance in evacuable areas no less than in neutral and reception areas".

Evacuation and Science Work in Schools

THE transference of schools from 'vulnerable' to 'safe' areas in Britain, where they now work in conjunction with other schools of the same type, was a necessary part of the scheme adopted at the outset of the War to minimize loss of life in the event of air attacks upon the civil population. Since last September, normal educational work has therefore not been possible for a very large number of secondary school pupils, and whatever gain there may have been for those from towns coming into closer contact with Nature, it is perhaps offset by reduced teaching and laboratory facilities. Even the better equipped of secondary schools cannot be expected to accommodate double the usual number of science classes, and though in many instances the amount of time devoted to science subjects has not been seriously curtailed, the work is often done in unfavourable circumstances, especially as regards the senior work. It is difficult to accommodate all the senior students in the small advanced laboratories found in most secondary schools even when a system of 'double shifts' is arranged, so that practical work has suffered more than theoretical teaching. The standard of proficiency of pupils who will leave school this year to continue at the universities will be examined with much interest. That the experiment of evacuating schools was a wise one, despite the dislocation involved, there can be no doubt, and the authorities are doubtless watching its consequences so far as secondary and higher education is concerned.

Health of the School Child

SIR ARTHUR MACNALTY'S report for 1938 on "The Health of the School Child" has been issued by the Board of Education (H.M. Stationery Office. 1s. 3d.). The introduction considers the circumstances rendering necessary the evacuation of school children from

large urban centres of population and its effect upon the school medical service. During the year the nutrition of 1,674,023 children was assessed at routine medical inspections, and 14.5 per cent were found to be excellent, 74.2 per cent normal, 10.8 per cent sub-normal and 0.5 per cent bad. During twenty years, improvement in the nutrition of the school child is striking. Thus in Sheffield, compared with 1920, five-year-old boys average nearly 2 inches taller and 3 lb. heavier, and five-year-old girls 1.4 inches taller and 1 lb. heavier; twelve-year-old boys are more than 2 inches taller and 9½ lb. heavier, and twelve-year-old girls 3 inches taller and no less than 12.4 lb. heavier. The numbers of children in receipt of free meals or milk continue to increase—from 535,300 in 1936-37 to 687,855 now—and the milk-in-schools scheme is in operation in 87 per cent of public elementary schools. Much information is given respecting medical inspection and treatment, hearing of children, the school dental service, and the care of the young child.

Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Northern Rhodesia

A BRIEF note on the work of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute since its inception in 1937 prefaces a contribution on "Anthropology as a Public Service" by Mr. Godfrey Wilson in the current issue of *Africa* (13, 1; January 1940). This Institute, it may be remembered, was founded largely through the efforts and interest of Sir Hubert Young, then governor of Northern Rhodesia, and was the first institute for systematic sociological research to be established in colonial Africa. In the words of the founders, it was intended "as a contribution to the scientific efforts now being made in various quarters to examine the effect upon native African society of the impact of European civilization." In the first instance, funds were asked for three years only, with a view to a special appeal in 1940, a year specially linked with the two men whom the Institute commemorates. It is the centenary year of Livingstone's departure for Africa and the jubilee year of the foundation of the two Rhodesias by Cecil Rhodes.

The Institute is not a Government department but an independent body governed by trustees. Although for the moment the bulk of the income is derived from Northern Rhodesia, contributions are made by all the Governments from Southern Rhodesia to Uganda. Not only has the museum founded in memory of Livingstone in 1934 been incorporated in the Institute, its curator acting as the secretary, but also two research officers have been appointed, of whom Mr. Wilson is one, and the results of their investigations will be published in a series, the *Rhodes-Livingstone Papers*, to which non-members are also invited to contribute.

Pioneers in Amerindian Portraiture

THE February issue of *Man* is a Catlin centenary number, and Mr. L. J. P. Gaskin recalls that on February 1, 1840, George Catlin, artist, traveller and ethnographer, opened his North American Indian Museum and Gallery in the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly,