Waite. On relinquishing control in the museum Sir Edward was appointed honorary curator in ethnology, which position he filled to the time of his death.

L. M. HARWOOD,
Acting General Secretary.

Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery
of South Australia, Adelaide, South
Australia, June 4.

LABOUR AND THE HIGHER VALUES.

AFTER the weary and fruitless efforts of the past century by those engaged in enlarging the boundaries of truth to educate their masters to an appreciation of the national importance of such higher values, it is a relief to turn to their frank espousal by the representatives and spokesmen of Labour in this country and in America. To those for whom Labour stands for everything that is evil in the best of all possible worlds and who are content to absorb their judgments on contemporaneous problems with their breakfast, such a view will be bizarre. But scientific men who are accustomed to deal with facts, and form their conclusions therefrom, cannot fail to be interested in the very marked growth of appreciation in the humanitarian value of their work which has occurred in the ranks of organised Labour.

At its recent Atlantic City convention, as announced in last week's issue of *NATURE*, the American Federation of Labour resolved adequately and generously to support the activities of the Federal Government in pursuing, strengthening, and extending a broad programme of scientific and technical research as being of major importance to the national welfare. The resolution was based on five grounds: That the work forms the fundamental basis of all modern industry; that the increased productivity and well-being of the whole population ensuing therefrom are of far greater value than the cost of the work; that, after all possible methods of readjustment, there is a limit to the increase of the average standard of living in the community, which can be raised only by research and the utilisation of research in industry; that it is necessary for the solution of many of the most pressing problems immediately confronting the Governments; and, lastly, that the war has brought home to all the nations engaged in it the overwhelming importance of science and technology in war or peace.

In this country the Labour Party in its Report on Reconstruction last year, entitled "Labour and the New Social Order," insisted on greatly increased public provision being made for scientific investigation and original research in every branch of knowledge, and for the promotion of music, literature, and the fine arts, upon which any real development of civilisation depends. It is humiliating also to note that it should have been a deputation from the Education Committee of the Labour Party who found it necessary to point out to the President of the Board of Education the grave injury done to the cause of education by the

exclusion from the older universities of men without money but with brains, and the welcome apparently accorded to men with money but without brains.

So far as the evidence goes, the causes of scientific education and scientific research at least seem to stand to profit enormously by the advent of a Labour Government. The view, of course, may be taken that this is the traditional lip-service to the higher values paid by all political aspirants for power alike, though the political expediency of expressing such sentiments in this country is not obvious. At least, if it be mere vote-hunting demagoguery, it is of a startling and original kind!

Labour may be trusted to make one important contribution to government which has been too long lacking, in that it cannot fail to realise the fundamental importance of the productive and creative elements in the community. It is not likely to make the mistake of putting the cart before the horse, an amusing illustration of which is our habit of speaking of commerce and industry. One may expect that if it intends to foster scientific research its efforts, however mistaken, will not be open to the interpretation that the resources of the State will be used for the exploitation rather than the encouragement of the research worker.

Sums, by previous standards munificent, have recently been voted by Parliament for fostering scientific research. What scientific investigators have so far mainly got is a set of rules and conditions that some lawyer had drawn up presumably, by which any investigator who is so hard-up as to accept money from this source puts himself outside the law with regard to any commercial rights that may ensue from his work and vests them in the Government. Willing as scientific men may be that their brains should be exploited for the benefit of the community, it must be remembered that the community is a vague term comprising drones as well as workers. Those to whom the destinies of civilisation have been entrusted during the past century have not shown themselves either very generous or very intelligent in their appreciation of the higher values which make for national well-being and prosperity. Under them, slums and millionaires have been the chief output of creative science, which certainly could not be in worse hands under Labour. The intense appreciation of the higher values that is growing up among the leaders of Labour is perhaps the most hopeful sign of the times, and the education of the workers into the real aims, uses, and aspirations of science now, more than ever, calls for the co-operation and support of scientific men.

F. SODDY.

AUSTRALIAN RAINFALL.¹

IN the continent of Australia rainfall is by far the most important meteorological element to the agriculturist, there being large tracts of country where the annual precipitation is barely

¹ "The Australian Environment (especially as Controlled by Rainfall)." By Dr. Griffith Taylor. Pp. 188+plates. (Melbourne, 1918.)