

## Dr. Hrdlička on Early Man.

AT a special meeting of the Royal Anthropological Institute held on September 29, when Sir Arthur Keith, ex-president, was in the chair, Dr. Aleš Hrdlička, of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, gave an account of his recent journey to India, Java, Australia, and South Africa for the purpose of visiting the sites upon which discoveries relating to early man had been made, and exhibited bones and other relics from the cave at Broken Hill in which the skull of Rhodesian Man was discovered. These remains are to be deposited at the British Museum (Natural History) at South Kensington. Dr. Hrdlička said that on his arrival in India he was surprised to find that, in addition to the new species of fossil apes from the Siwalik Hills already known, two or three more new species had been discovered and were in the Calcutta Museum, but had never been described. Their discovery had been made by Dr. Pilgrim, superintendent of the Geological Survey, and there was a risk that these important investigations in the Siwalik Hills, where fossil remains abounded, might not be continued. In Java he had visited the site on which *Pithecanthropus erectus* had been discovered. Here again there was a great field for discovery; but priceless material which might bear upon the history of man was being lost for ever as it washed out of the deposits and was thrown away or destroyed by the natives. From Australia, perhaps, a great deal was not to be expected. The Talgai Skull was so nearly akin to those primitive specimens, the Australian skulls, that it may not be very ancient; but definite conclusions are not yet possible.

In South Africa, within the last four years, two discoveries of the greatest importance had been made—Rhodesian Man and the Taungs Skull. On the position of research in South Africa, Dr. Hrdlička had a great deal to report and a great deal that was favourable. In the matter of the finds themselves, some very important details were not yet known and had not been mentioned. Broken Hill itself, the kopje in which Rhodesian Man had been found had now disappeared, owing to mining operations, but nearby was a similar hill, which, like Broken Hill, was honey-combed with fissures and caves in which it was hoped that further discoveries might be made. Dr. Hrdlička then described the mining operations which, in digging out the material of the hill from the top, had cut across a section of the cave. In clearing out this cave, which was full of refuse highly consolidated, it had been found that the upper and nearly level part before the steeper slope began, was nearly choked

with animal bones, which have now been smelted down. Here and there were softer spots from which the material had been thrown out into dumps. In the lower part of the cave were deposits which were nearly pure lead and of the consistency and colour of brown sugar. Near the cul-de-sac in which the cave ended, a miner named Zwiegler, working with a native boy, had brought to light the Rhodesian Skull resting on its base on a shelf as if placed there. No bones of any kind were near it. Under the skull was something which was described as a bag of "petrified" skin. This had now disappeared. From 3 to 6 feet further in had been found a human tibia, and still further a skull of a lion. Dr. Hrdlička had himself worked over the dumps which still remained and had found a stone implement, possibly part of a knife, a stone ball similar to some found before in the cave, a number of animal bones, some of which had been split as if to extract the marrow, and part of a humerus. Both the humerus and the femur, of which fragments were found, had been fractured in the same way and as if for the same purpose as the animal bones. The fracture of the humerus was undoubtedly ancient, and cannibalism would be no matter for surprise.

The discovery of the Taungs Skull, like that of Rhodesian Man, was wholly unlooked for in this part of Africa. It was an anthropoid of a new type, and it came from a site that was only partly exhausted. From pockets of soft pink limestone due to the filling in of caves which had formed in a hard ferruginous limestone plateau, large numbers of skulls of baboons were to be, and had been, obtained, and also in some cases where the skulls had perished, brain casts had been obtained. Dr. Hrdlička himself had found five skulls, of which he had succeeded in extracting three unbroken. These baboons had apparently crawled into the caves and fissures to die and had then been covered up by the deposit. Among these the Taungs Skull, the skull of a young anthropoid of a new species, had been discovered. It had been cleared of the deposit in a month's careful labour by Prof. Dart, and it was a tribute to his skill that the skull had not suffered a scratch in the course of the process. Arrangements had been made for a careful watch to be kept for any further discoveries and for Prof. Dart to be summoned at once should anything be found, so that it might be seen by him *in situ*. This skull was not the "missing link," but only one of many missing links, but in view of these remarkable finds, it was impossible to say what South Africa might not produce in the future.

## Library and Information Service.

THE second annual conference of the Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux was held at Balliol College, Oxford, on September 25-28. Nearly two hundred delegates attended, which was more than double the number present at the first meeting. The diversity of interests attracted to the conference was surprising; scientific and research institutions, industry and commerce, and public affairs all being strongly represented. The marked variety of the professions of those attending caused widespread comment as to the real source of interest which was taken in the proceedings. A heavy, almost overloaded, programme of papers, numbering more than thirty, fully occupied the conference during the whole of the session.

Undoubtedly, the common link is the collection and the distribution of fact information. Special

organisations for assembling and systematically storing literature in limited fields of knowledge, and still more those for distributing information therefrom, for the service of their members or others, are found to be much more numerous than was previously recognised. The Association has done much good by demonstrating this, and is now engaged in pursuing some obvious developments which arise from the discovery. Most of these organisations are quite distinct from ordinary libraries; in fact, in some cases their own collections may be limited to indexes, or other aids to rapid contact with scattered outside library resources.

One of the first objects in view is the preparation of a "Directory of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux" in Great Britain, for which the support of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust has been