

Birth of a Chimpanzee at the London Zoo

THE birth of a chimpanzee, at the Gardens of the Zoological Society of London on February 15, is an event worthy of record; and it shows, in no uncertain way, how carefully the well-being of the great apes is studied at the Gardens. The mother, and her daughter, we are told, are doing well. Dr. Wyatt, of St. Thomas's Hospital, and Dr. G. M. Vevers, a member of the staff of the Society, missed no opportunity of studying all the phases of pregnancy, from the time that it was detected until the birth took place. The period of gestation was 250 days. The period of labour Dr. Wyatt describes as precisely similar to that of the human being. A detailed account of the birth is to be given in the next issue of the *Proceedings* of the Society. A deficiency of calcium being suspected, the prospective mother was given regular supplies of 'Micklefield irradiated milk'. This is prepared by passing fresh milk, in a thin film, under ultra-violet rays; a process which results in an increase of the vitamin D content of the milk; thus making the lime-salts in it more easily assimilated.

Fertility of the Earth

IN his Research and Development Lecture delivered under the auspices of the Royal Institution and the British Science Guild at the Royal Institution on March 6, Sir Frederick Keeble spoke on the fertility of the earth. Soil-fertility is a product—a by-product—of the bacteria and other microscopic forms of life that teem in incredible numbers in the soil. The crops grown in field and meadow serve mankind in two ways. On one hand, they supply substance for making blood, bone, flesh and sinew and for providing energy for the work of life. On the other hand, they supply substances which stir up the body to activity so that it can use the foods for building purposes and for supplies of energy. Therefore the most important task that agricultural science can accomplish is to discover and learn to control the conditions in which soil and crop provide both the necessary body-building and energy-yielding food materials and also those that stir up growth and activity in the animal and human body. Much is known of the conditions necessary for the production of the first kinds of food. But little is known about the conditions under which crops provide the growth- and activity-provoking foods. When this is understood, foods will be judged by a new and higher standard than they are at present; and with foods conforming to that standard, human strength will increase and health will improve.

Maiden Castle, Dorchester

DR. R. E. MORTIMER WHEELER's account of his excavations at Maiden Castle, Dorchester, presented to the Society of Antiquaries of London on February 28, and his report in *The Times* of March 1, make possible a judicial estimate of the importance of this remarkable site in the prehistory of south-western Britain on more assured evidence than size alone, impressive though this may be. As Dr.

Wheeler points out, Maiden Castle stands at the centre of an area noteworthy for the number of its sites of prehistoric occupation. It is clear that its history must be that of a pivotal point in cultural and social development. On the evidence afforded by the first season's exploration, four periods of occupation have been differentiated. Of these the earliest, surprisingly enough, was found to date back to the stone age—an occupation by a neolithic people, pastoralists, keeping sheep, pigs and a large breed of ox which had become extinct by historic times. They were pit-dwellers and makers of pottery of the 'Windmill Hill' type. This settlement is dated tentatively at 2,000 B.C. Of the later occupations two are pre- and one late-Roman. In the early Iron Age, towards its end, possibly about the fourth century B.C., a site of about fifteen acres was enclosed by ditch, rampart and palisade. The extension of the area to its present size of about a hundred acres, with its complicated series of defences, is perhaps to be attributed to the next period of settlement, but this is not yet clear. It was in this period in the second century B.C. that peoples from Brittany, with their Celtic craftsmanship, spread over the Somerset plain, reaching Glastonbury and Meare. At Maiden Castle, however, Dr. Wheeler has as yet discerned no fundamental change in the character of the population. Towards the close of the period of Roman occupation the site, which for a time had been left derelict while the neighbouring Roman town of Dorchester was flourishing, was reoccupied and the building took place of the now famous Romano-British temple which Dr. Wheeler has rediscovered.

Kalevala Centenary

ON February 28, the Finnish people celebrated the centenary of the completion by Elias Lönnroth of the first edition of the *Kalevala*, the Finnish national folk-epic. The celebrations culminated in a great gathering in the recently completed Fair Hall at Helsingfors, at which a large number of scholars and delegates from foreign countries were present. Great Britain was represented by Mr. Robert Nichols, Dr. Margaret Murray (Royal Anthropological Institute) and Miss Agnes Dawson (Folk-Lore Society). It was at one time the fashion to compare the *Kalevala* with the Homeric poems; but in fact this great collection of the legends and folk-lore of Finland is unique in European literature, both as a picture on an enormous canvas of a very primitive stage of society and as a mosaic of pagan magic, pagan religious belief and heroic legend. In this respect it surpasses anything that can be found in the pagan element of Germanic or Scandinavian saga. It consists of a large number of ballads which Lönnroth collected among the peasantry of Karelia, the eastern province of Finland, and wove into a composite whole. It has played an important part in fostering Finnish national aspirations, and has been a fertile source of inspiration in literature, art and music. Since Lönnroth's day much further material of a similar character has been collected. The esteem in which this body of literature is held as a national possession was marked in the