

## Rivers Medal, 1934, and North African Studies

THE selection of Miss Gertrude Caton-Thompson for the award of the Rivers Memorial Medal for 1934 by the Council of the Royal Anthropological Institute will be cordially endorsed by all who follow the progress of archaeological studies with any degree of close interest. The medal is awarded annually, and was founded to perpetuate the memory of the late Dr. W. H. R. Rivers by recognising work of outstanding merit in any branch of anthropological studies. Miss Caton-Thompson's work as an excavator of archaeological sites has covered a varied field in time and space. It has ranged from the earliest prehistoric period to the fringe of historic times in Egypt, the Libyan Desert and southern Africa. Her investigation of the Zimbabwe culture of Southern Rhodesia has not only pricked the bubble of speculation, but it has also based the solution of an obscure problem of African ethnology on an assured body of archaeological fact. No one will question that Miss Caton-Thompson's work is "characterised by wide knowledge, sound judgment and insight", to quote the words of Dr. H. S. Harrison in making the presentation of the medal at the meeting of the Royal Anthropological Institute on April 9, at which Miss Caton-Thompson delivered a lecture on the results of the Institute's archaeological expedition to the oasis of El Kharga, of which she has been in charge. The importance of these investigations may be gauged from her examination of their bearing on some Stone Age problems of North Africa—problems which recent studies, especially by French archaeologists, show to be assuming an increasing importance in the reconsideration of the prehistory of North Africa and its relation to the origin and development of the later palaeolithic and mesolithic cultures of Europe. (See *NATURE*, 133, 107; 1934. 134, 975; 1934. 135, 550; 1935. An account of the investigation of the rock-shelter of Afalou in Algeria will appear shortly.)

MISS CATON-THOMPSON'S investigations of geological and archaeological conditions at Kharga, which have extended over a period of three years, have fulfilled expectation in throwing much light on the succession of cultures in the early stone age of Egypt and the desert, and have provided material of crucial importance for the problem of early man in North Africa as a whole. They have demonstrated the inseparable relation of the distribution of early man to water supply throughout this region, even where no visible indications of water supply are associated with isolated finds in the desert conditions of to-day. Variation in the quantity and distribution of moisture in quaternary times, as indicated by an examination of the geological conditions at Kharga, affords a chronological criterion in determining the age and succession of stone age cultures. Miss Caton-Thompson indicated the significance of the mound springs in French North Africa, where an Upper Acheulean, with which nothing in Egypt is comparable, shows non-local peculiarities which link with Palestine. In comparing and contrasting the succession of cultures at Kharga from Acheuleo-Levalloisean to neolithic

with that of adjacent regions, Miss Caton-Thompson pointed out that M. Vaufrey's views on the dating of the Capsian culture, if fully accepted, force a revision of ideas concerning Aurignacian origins in western Europe and Kenya, and a redating of desert pictographs. Certain gaps in the series might, she thought, be bridged by discoveries in the later Aterian series. On the whole, Miss Caton-Thompson's investigations in the later phases of the Kharga series would appear to support the most recent views of French archaeologists on the weight to be given to local development and specialisation rather than to contact and movement.

## F. W. Harmer (1835-1923)

APRIL 24, 1835, saw the birth of Frederic William Harmer, one of the pioneers in the field of East Anglian geology, and one of the last of the distinguished amateurs by whom the science was advanced so much during the Victorian era. Harmer came of an old Norfolk family, and by his public services was prominently identified with the city of Norwich. In his early years he had only scanty leisure to devote to geology, but a chance meeting with the younger Searles Wood was the beginning of a long-continued geological partnership. The map they prepared of the glacial deposits of Norfolk and Suffolk on a scale of 1 inch to the mile was the first 'drift' map of the kind in the world. After the publication of much valuable material on the Pleistocene deposits of the east of England, came Wood's death in 1884. For a time, Harmer devoted himself to municipal duties and the politics of the day, but some ten years later, when he might well have felt entitled to the leisure of life, he resumed an intensive study of the Tertiary and Quaternary geology of East Anglia and the Continent. A series of papers on the Crags, still standards for reference and highly esteemed, inaugurated a new regime in East Anglian geology; and his contributions to glaciology and palæo-meteorology were no less stimulating. Two outstanding productions of the eve of his life, each entailing immense labour, were the detailed map showing the types of boulder clay and trails of erratics in England and Wales, and the great monograph, published by the Palæontographical Society, on the Pliocene Mollusca. The latter work was an achievement which will long earn the gratitude of investigators, and will ever remain a fitting monument to his memory. An appreciation of Mr. Harmer's scientific work appeared in *NATURE* for June 9, 1923 (p. 779). Sir Sidney Harmer, formerly director of the Natural History Departments, British Museum, is a son of Mr. F. W. Harmer.

## Franz Chvostek (1834-84)

THIS year marks the centenary of the birth of Franz Chvostek, one of the most eminent Austrian military doctors of the last century. The exact day and month of his birth are not ascertainable. He qualified in 1861, and for the next few years he served as a regimental medical officer. In 1868 he was appointed lecturer in electrotherapy at the