

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

Joseph Academy in Vienna, where he succeeded Duchek as director of the medical clinic in 1871. He held that office until 1874 when he became head of a medical department in the Garrison Hospital, Vienna, and remained there until his death on November 16, 1884. His literary activity is shown by the fact that during the last twenty years of his life he published no less than 163 articles on various medical subjects. Although he specialised in electrotherapy, he published only six papers on the use and value of electricity in medicine, most of his writings being concerned with the pathology and treatment of diseases of the nervous system. His name is attached to a sign consisting in the sudden spasm seen on tapping one side of the face.

Excavations at Colchester

THE preliminary survey, anticipatory to complete publication, of the results of five years excavation on the Romano-British site at Colchester, which Mr. Christopher Hawkes contributed to *The Times* of April 12, by bringing together the more significant of the details already reported in the accounts of current progress, gives a clearer conception than has previously been possible of the extent to which this investigation has added to our knowledge of conditions in south-eastern Britain immediately before, and in the early days of Roman conquest. The magnificent system of fortification which has been revealed, in its relation to the occupation site which it defends, bears eloquent testimony to the high degree of organisation and the social and political importance attained by this British town; while the character of the finds, especially the local factory of Samian ware, a feature without known parallel in Britain, indicates, on one side its importance as a centre of British culture, and on the other its standing as a point of close economic, and probably political, relation with the Continent. Although it has been possible to follow the course of events on the area of British occupation and its history in later days in some detail, the position still remains somewhat obscure. It would appear as if still more important discoveries have yet to be made. Nothing that appeals as adequate to the dignity of this centre of the Belgic settlers has as yet been discovered. It is all the more important, therefore, that means should not be lacking to follow up the investigation before the commercial development of the area precludes further excavation. The appeal of the Colchester Excavation Committee for further funds deserves, and should receive, generous support.

Unveiling of the Replica of the *Rocket* Locomotive

ON April 11, the Minister of Transport, Mr. L. Hore-Belisha, unveiled the new replica of the *Rocket* which has just been added to the locomotive collection in the Science Museum, South Kensington. Mr. Hore-Belisha pointed out that the importance of the *Rocket* in the history of the locomotive lies in the fact that the chief features of its design had been followed down to the present day. He then referred to the precautions for the public safety which have

been taken from the earliest days of the railway, so that the numerous regulations which govern the movement of traffic on rails are not regarded as restrictions, but as guarantees of efficiency and security. Had similar foresight been shown in connexion with the motor-car, the nation might have been spared the material, economic and personal loss which the weekly casualty lists reveal. We are now trying to make good rapidly the omissions of forty years. The measures we are now forced to institute, had they proceeded *pari passu* with the growth in the numbers of mechanically propelled vehicles on the road, would have been regarded as natural. Methods of road traffic control are being borrowed from the railway. The *Rocket* demonstrated its capacity in a competition on the railway. To-day, it would probably have been sent to the testing station at Vitry, in France, to enable its operation to be scientifically studied. In the country which produced the *Rocket*, there is no similar testing station for locomotives, and Mr. Hore-Belisha expressed the hope that the omission would be repaired.

Liverpool Naturalists' Field Club

ON April 27 the Liverpool Naturalists' Field Club celebrates the seventy-fifth anniversary of its foundation by a field meeting at Rabymere, Cheshire, where its first meeting was held in 1860. The Club has been responsible for three floras of Liverpool, one the work of Mr. Robert Brown, who also wrote the botanical section to the British Association Liverpool Handbook, and the last two the works of Col. C. T. Green. Founded by the Rev. H. H. Higgins (president 1862-93) and Dr. Joseph Dickinson (president 1860-62) the Club has maintained an active and amiable co-operation between professional scientific workers and amateurs in all branches of field natural history, and at present has referees in botany (W. S. Laverock), micro-fungi (Dr. C. T. Green), aquaria (Fred Jefferies), lepidoptera (Mrs. Makinson) and ornithology (Eric Hardy), the ornithological section having plans to form a local bird observatory or ringing station like that at Heligoland, as a mark of the anniversary. Some of the leading members in the Club's history were: Rev. H. H. Higgins, who discovered 200 additions to the local flora in four years, and was author of works on the fungi, Diptera, flora and other subjects of the Liverpool district, and particularly the notable collection of fern fossils he discovered at Ravenhead, Lancashire; G. H. Morton (president 1894), who delivered an address to the Club on the geology of Liverpool which the council published and which was later enlarged into his celebrated "Geology of Liverpool"; Col. J. W. Ellis (president 1899 and 1910) and Prof. Robert Newstead (president 1907-8), entomologists; and Dr. Joseph Dickinson, author of the second "Flora of Liverpool". Since its foundation, the Club has not failed to issue an annual proceedings of 40-50 pages, and at one time its members issued their own monthly journal, the *Liverpool Naturalists' Scrap Book*, followed by the *Liverpool Naturalists' Journal*. The honorary secretary is Mrs. W. S. Laverock, Millbank, Mill Lane, Wallasey.