

News and Views

Ancient Monuments in Northern England

IN view of the services which are being rendered to archaeological and historical studies by the Office of Works through its activities in protecting and preserving our ancient monuments, it is both an advantage and a necessity that the co-operation of the public should be obtained in furthering the purpose of this work. For this, among other reasons, it is desirable that a knowledge of aims and methods, as well as of what has already been achieved under existing legislation, should be as widely diffused as possible. Much depends here, as with the collections in our national museums, upon the extent to which a suitable literature is available, from which the visiting public may learn what is most significant and best worth attention. Already at many of the ancient monuments—ultimately, no doubt, at all of any importance—detailed accounts, which cover technical matters, as well as plans and general descriptive notes, are available for the visitor; but a broader view which entails comparative treatment has been attempted in a new series of official publications which has been inaugurated by the First Commissioner of Works himself ("Illustrated Regional Guides to Ancient Monuments under the Ownership or Guardianship of His Majesty's Office of Works: Vol. 1, Northern England". By the Right Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore. Pp. 52. London: H.M. Stationery Office. 1s.). It is interesting to note how Mr. Ormsby-Gore has attacked what is really a difficult problem. The average visitor may be expected to have a historical background adequate for appreciation of the character of Norman castle or abbey; but how will such a visitor approach, for example, the Devil's Arrows at Boroughbridge? Wisely, differential treatment has been adopted. In the historic period the monuments are classified, each according to its kind, and then briefly described *seriatim*, but for the prehistoric period, the prehistory of the region has been reviewed as a whole, the protected monuments being used to support and illustrate the argument. This has the additional advantage that it brings out the essential function of the Department far more clearly than would be possible in a mere annotated list.

Electioneering in Ceylon

THE results, and still more the methods of electioneering, in the recent general election for seats on the State Council of Ceylon, afford an instructive, if somewhat alarming, example of the effects of the break in tradition, which comes with the wholesale application of the machinery of Western democracy to an Eastern society, in which the exercise of individual judgment has had neither training nor opportunity to function independently of the social or religious communal group. Everywhere religion and caste dictated the decision of the electors.

Group clashes were frequent, and twelve persons lost their lives. In at least two instances, it is stated by the Colombo correspondent of *The Times* in the issue of March 24, Christian members of long standing and conspicuous public service lost their seats to opponents, unknown before the contest, whose principal qualification appears to have been that they were Buddhists. This exploitation of sectional prejudice was, perhaps, no more than might have been anticipated, even though it scarcely appeared in the elections of four years ago. The grant of adult franchise to both sexes has placed on the electoral register 2,500,000 voters, of whom, it is estimated, 2,000,000 are illiterate. In consequence, the voting had to be conducted by the allocation of a colour to each candidate, the ballot paper being deposited in the appropriately coloured box in blank. Yellow, the Buddhist colour, swept the board. Of forty-three contested seats, thirty-three went to Buddhists, an increase from twenty-eight in the previous Council. Universal suffrage was granted to Ceylon on the report of the Donoughmore Commission, which visited the island in 1927; but the results of the present election have raised in an acute form the question whether it is likely to prove as beneficial as was anticipated. A strong body of influential opinion is pressing for an inquiry.

The Race Problem

IN his Friday Evening Discourse at the Royal Institution on March 27, Prof. Julian Huxley discussed "The Race Problem". It is obvious that different geographical groups of the human species differ inherently from each other; the term *race* is commonly employed to denote such a distinguishable group. Various difficulties crop up, however, as regards its usage in practice. First, characteristics which have no genetic basis, but are national, cultural, linguistic, etc., have been erroneously ascribed to races. For example, there cannot exist such a thing as an 'Aryan race', since the term Aryan concerns language; again, the main obvious differences between, say, the English, the French and the Germans, are not genetic but of national and cultural origin. Secondly, modern genetics has shown that after a cross, all possible combinations of the genes concerned will be produced, and will then continue to recur. In the absence of selection, no even approximately uniform blend will be formed. Thirdly, man is such a mobile organism that migration and intercrossing between different groups has been occurring on a large scale since before the dawn of history. Accordingly, nothing approximating to a pure race now exists, with the possible exception of a few remote and primitive tribes. *Race* is normally used of man in the same sense as race or subspecies of animals—that is, with an evolutionary implication.

At best, it may be legitimately used of the hypothetical major groups (for example, black, white and yellow) into which we deduce that our species early became differentiated, and which may be called *primary races*; and of the equally hypothetical sub-groups apparently produced by later differentiation (for example, Nordic, Alpine or Mediterranean), which may be called *secondary races*.

At the present day, there exists no important human group which can properly be called a race, and the use of the term not only has no useful application, but actually leads to confusion, both scientific and political. For groups of people genetically distinguishable from other groups, some non-committal term like *ethnic group* or *ethnos* is indicated. Ethnic groups of various degrees of difference will be distinguished; the only scientific method of so doing is to take the mean, the frequency curves, and the conditions of several measurable physical characters. For the common adjectival use of *racial* as opposed to national, cultural, etc., the terms *ethnic* or *genetic* should be used, according to circumstances. To define *race* in man scientifically is impossible, since the implications of the term do not conform with reality. Meanwhile, since the word *race* has been widely used in a pseudo-scientific way to justify and rationalise various political and nationalist activities, it is highly desirable that an international inquiry should be made which would result in an impartial scientific pronouncement on the subject.

Defence Against Air Raids

It is announced that the committee set up in February 1935, under the chairmanship of Mr. H. T. Tizard, Rector of the Imperial College of Science and Technology, has been considering proposals from various sources for countering raids by enemy aircraft. The vast bulk of these suggestions are impracticable simply because of a lack of appreciation of the conditions. A certain number are workable up to a point, but depend upon the enemy being visible from the ground, or upon the defending aircraft being able to make contact with the attackers. Two factors in modern aeronautical development tend to militate these chances. Advances in navigation and blind flying enable raiders to remain continuously in clouds, with a reasonable chance of reaching their objective. If observed, owing to an unexpected breaking of the cloud curtain, the high speed of modern aircraft helps them to avoid any measures directed against them from the ground, and also to keep away from defending aircraft, unless the latter are already at the same height and of considerably greater speed. There are, however, schemes in hand which promise workable results. Wireless-controlled aircraft either carrying explosives or depending upon direct collision, aerial bombs moored by balloons or carried by parachutes forming a screen, mechanical damaging devices such as rams, hooks or wires carried in the same way, big calibre anti-aircraft guns firing shells sufficiently explosive to damage machines even without actually hitting them, are among the many suggestions put forward.

The 200-inch Reflector

It is stated by the New York correspondent of *The Times* that the 200-inch disk began its 3,300-mile railway journey from Corning, New York, to Pasadena on March 26. It is encased in a steel crate weighing 10 tons, with the face of the disk protected by a 4-inch blanket of cork, and its rim by five layers of heavy felt, and is being carried on edge in a specially designed truck. The weight of the crated disk is supported by steel beams covered with cushions of compressed cork. The accompanying illustration (Fig. 1), reproduced from the article by Dr. George E. Hale on the 200-inch telescope which was

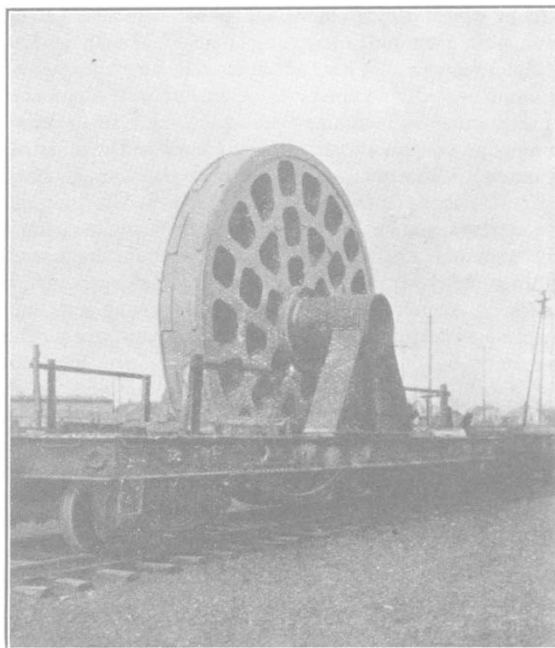


FIG. 1. Base of tube for 200-inch telescope.

published as a Supplement to *NATURE* of February 8, will bring home better than words the transport difficulties involved. The train will not travel faster than 25 miles an hour; the greatest care will have to be exercised, because the bottom edge of the crate is only six inches above the level of the rails, and at certain tunnels and bridges the top will have a clearance of only three inches. The news of the safe arrival of the disk at Palomar Mountain will be awaited with anxiety.

Sir Patrick Laidlaw, F.R.S.

SIR PATRICK LAIDLAW has been appointed by the Medical Research Council to be deputy director of the National Institute for Medical Research, and head of the Department of Pathology and Bacteriology, in succession to the late Capt. S. R. Douglas. Sir Patrick has been a member of the Council's scientific staff at the National Institute since 1922, before which he was lecturer in pathology at Guy's Hospital. He received the Royal Medal of the Royal Society in 1933, and was knighted in 1935. He has latterly been engaged chiefly in the investigation of diseases