

## News and Views

### Chronology of Early Man and Cultural Associations

IN his recent presidential address to the British Speleological Association (see NATURE of August 1, p. 194) Sir Arthur Keith, when arguing for a parallel evolution in the development of modern races from primitive ancestral forms in their respective continental areas, demonstrated the connexion between the Australian and *Pithecanthropus* of Java, with the aid of mid-Pleistocene Solo man as the connecting link between the early Pleistocene *Pithecanthropus* and the late Pleistocene form of that region, Wadjak man. There would now appear to be a possibility that the chronological position of the undoubtedly archaic form discovered in the gravels of the Solo river at Ngandong, Java, in 1932, may be called in question. In another column of this issue of NATURE (see p. 293) reference is made to a communication from Dr. P. van Stein Callenfels, the distinguished Dutch authority on the archæology of Indonesia, appearing in the current issue of *L'Anthropologie*, in which he points out that the cultural associations of Solo man, harpoons and axes of stag horn, are such as in a European context would denote an antiquity of not more than nine or ten thousand years. While the early dating of Solo man has been generally accepted hitherto, if, as is stated, these artefacts are apparently beyond question contemporary with the human relics, this would appear to demand re-examination of the geological data. If further consideration supports Dr. Callenfels' argument, like the evidence of the Swanscombe skull in relation to the position of Piltdown man (see NATURE, August 1, p. 200), it would suggest that the current phylogenetic scheme, while valid as a logical classification, is an uncertain guide to chronology, and that the evolution and descent of man has been a far more complex process than has been demonstrated hitherto.

### Spiritual Healing

At the Methodist Conference held at Newcastle in July, the report of a Committee on Spiritual Healing was read by the Rev. Leslie D. Weatherhead (*Methodist Recorder*, July 23). He declared it to be an interim report only, and expressed the hope that the Committee would be reappointed. The report is cautious in tone, recognizing that the subject is full of difficulties. The trouble from the scientific point of view is that what appear to be like causes do not necessarily produce like effects. "We pray for one man and he gets better; we pray for another and he does not—and we don't know why in either case." Of course, in healing, the individual factor is the important one, and this makes scientific generalizations almost impossible. The only thing to do, presumably, is to record a large number of cases as accurately as possible, and to extract from them whatever may seem to establish some sort of a regular law of behaviour. Or, as the report puts

it: "the work which lies before students of this subject must include research into those conditions under which those energies which sweep through personality may be set free to do their work." The report wisely says: "We felt all along that a method is not less a manifestation of the Divine because it is understood." As for "orthodox" medical science, "We believe no method [of spiritual healing] is to be welcomed which brushes aside as irrelevant the amazing findings of modern medicine and surgery." It is indeed all to the good that religious bodies such as the Methodist Church should interest themselves in the systematic study of the psychological causes of physical health and sickness, and the report of this Committee is for that reason important.

### J. C. Loudon and the Waterloo Beeches

REFERRING to the note in NATURE of August 8 (p. 237) in which this excellent story was mentioned, a correspondent points out that there are many variants of it extant. Sir William Fraser's version, which is by far the most detailed, bears all the signs of study of the original sources. It would spoil the story to condense it; let the worthy baronet tell it in his own inimitable, if stilted, fashion.

"The Duke of Wellington . . . received a letter . . . from the eminent landscape designer and great authority on botanical matters, J. C. Loudon. It was . . . to this effect:

"My lord Duke: It would gratify me extremely if you would permit me to visit Strathfieldsaye, at any time convenient to your Grace, and to inspect the Waterloo beeches. Your Grace's faithful servant, J. C. Loudon."

"The Waterloo beeches were trees that had been planted immediately after the battle of Waterloo; as a memorial of the great fight. The Duke read the letter twice, the writing of which was not very clear; and, with his usual promptness and politeness replied as follows; having read the signature as 'C. J. London' instead of 'J. C. Loudon':

"My dear Bishop of London, It will always give me great pleasure to see you at Strathfieldsaye. Pray come there whenever it suits your convenience, whether I am at home or not. My servant will receive orders to show you so many pairs of breeches of mine as you wish; but why you should wish to inspect those that I wore at the battle of Waterloo is quite beyond the comprehension of Yours most truly, Wellington."

"This letter was received, as may be supposed, with great surprise by the Bishop of London. He showed it to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and to other discreet persons: they came to the melancholy conclusion that the great Duke of Wellington had evidently lost his senses. The Bishop of London (Blomfield) declared that he had



not written to the Duke for two years; and to receive this extraordinary information puzzled the whole Bench of Bishops."

So far Sir William Fraser, whose account may be regarded as authoritative. Fraser (1826-98, Eton, Christ Church, and 1st Life Guards) worshipped the memory of Wellington with a devotion that almost reached fanaticism; his "Words on Wellington", from which this account is taken, is one of the most remarkable collections of sayings and doings that have ever been recorded concerning one individual—remarkable not only in the variety of its Wellingtoniana, but in the insight which it gives into the character of its compiler. The book is long out of print, and has a certain historical value. The author carried out a first-rate piece of detective work, of which he gives a full account, in his identification of the scene of the Duchess of Richmond's famous ball on the eve of the battle of Waterloo.

#### Scientific and Industrial Research in Australia

THE Australian Government has announced that the work of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research is to be extended in the interests of secondary industry generally. Since its establishment in 1926, the Council has deliberately restricted its attention to problems of the primary producing industries, though no such restriction is imposed upon it by the Act under which it is constituted. It has always been assumed that an extension was only a matter of time in view of the contraction of world markets for primary products and the consequent pressure to increase the home market by expanding secondary industries. A recent decision to establish aircraft and motor production in the Commonwealth has intensified a growing demand for an extension of national scientific research, and an influential committee, including leading engineers and industrialists, is now at work preparing a definite scheme of work. Existing institutions will be utilized wherever possible, but it is fully recognized by the Government that considerably increased financial obligations must be carried by it. A first step is to establish an agency for the maintenance of accurate fundamental standards of measurement and for the testing of master gauges for controlling precision manufacture. It is intended that in all developments intimate contact shall be maintained with, and guidance sought from, established British institutions engaged on work of the same type.

#### Luminous Phenomena on the Sea during a Thunderstorm

THE occurrence, during a tropical thunderstorm between Singapore and Bangkok on the morning of May 21, 1936, of a diffused white light over the surface of the sea, pulsating at regular intervals of about two to the second, so that the ship seemed to be sailing through waves of light and darkness, was referred to by a correspondent in *The Times* of June 26. The phenomenon is said to have continued for about half an hour. Another correspondent referred to a similar phenomenon in the Persian Gulf in March

1908, when waves of light were observed wheeling round the ship. Both these phenomena would appear to have been due not to electrical conditions but to phosphorescence. A description and sketch of a "Phosphorescent Wheel" near Sumatra (with an interval of about one second between the waves of light) is given in the *Marine Observer* of the Meteorological Office of November 1926; waves of light with an interval of half a second were observed on October 27, 1924, at 1 a.m. near Krakatoa Island (*Marine Observer*, October 1925); streaks of luminescence, observed in January 1927 in the Equatorial Atlantic, were practically parallel with the wind, which was south-east, about force 4 (*Marine Observer*, January 1928). These observations indicate that phosphorescence is not uniform over the wave profile, and consequently streaks of light will appear to an observer on board ship to move as the ship moves relative to the waves. Phosphorescence is most readily observed on ripples or on the breaking crests of waves, and while no one has yet worked out in detail the conditions under which the streaks will appear, the period of pulsation, which is reported as 0.5-1 second, is probably equal to the interval of time between the passage of the ship over successive waves.

#### Lightning and Atmospheric

IT is now generally agreed that the majority, if not all, the atmospheric encountered in radio communication originate in lightning flashes. When the storm is close to the receiver, it is possible to identify the stronger atmospheric with the neighbouring flashes. In a recent communication, Mr. P. F. Fyson, Langherne House, Rushwick, Worcester, claims to have observed that the atmospheric crackle produced on a broadcasting receiver was heard before the lightning flash which caused it was perceived visually. If this difference in the perception of the two effects is real—it obviously needs verification by other observers—it would appear on first consideration that the human eye is rather more sluggish in its operation than the ear; and Mr. Fyson suggests that this may be due to the time required for the chemical change in the retina to affect the optic nerve. An alternative explanation, however, may be found in the fact, which has arisen from recent research on lightning, that an intermittent electrical discharge appears to precede the actual main lightning flash. It is possible that this discharge may be invisible and yet may be capable of producing audible effects on a wireless receiver. These sounds may thus be heard a very short time before the visible flash was observed.

#### Champollion and Hieroglyphics

In "Science News a Century Ago", in *NATURE* of August 8 (p. 257), an extract appears from the *Athenæum* describing an obelisk erected to the memory of Champollion, and bearing the inscription "To the memory of F. J. T. Champollion, who first penetrated into the mysteries contained in the writing and monuments of ancient Egypt. . . ." A correspondent has pointed out that, even allowing