

alkaloids now in progress in the experimental laboratories at Dartford, to show that his inspiring personality was as vigorous as ever after forty years service to the Wellcome Foundation.

Dr. Jowett was not only skilled in chemistry, administration and the management of men: he became a motorist almost as soon as motor-cars were available; he was a keen golfer and an enthusiastic Wagnerian, and in recent years he developed a great interest in local government, becoming a member of the Dartford Borough Council, where as chairman of the Health Committee his administrative experience and scientific knowledge were of great service to his fellow citizens.

Dr. Jowett's friends are not likely to forget his achievements, but they will remember even more vividly his kindly and lovable personality.

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Prof. F. Breinl, professor of hygiene in the German University of Prague, an authority on bacteriology, on July 29.

Prof. B. G. Cormack, emeritus professor of botany in the Anderson College of Medicine, Glasgow, on August 19, aged seventy years.

Dr. W. G. Plummer, assistant keeper in the Science Division (Physics and Geophysics) of the Science Museum, South Kensington, on August 2, aged thirty-eight years.

W. Rintoul, O.B.E., a director of research of Imperial Chemical Industries, Ltd., formerly manager of the Ardeer factory of Nobel's Explosives Co. Ltd., on August 24, aged sixty-six years.

## News and Views

### Synthesis of Vitamin B<sub>1</sub> (Antineurin)

SINCE the realization that the molecule of vitamin B<sub>1</sub> contains two heterocyclic rings, a substituted pyrimidine and a substituted thiazole, intensive research has been directed towards establishing the positions of the substituent groups and the method of combination of the two rings. According to a paper of which a brief abstract appears on p. 372 of this issue, Prof. Williams and his collaborators at Columbia University have now succeeded in isolating a compound which is chemically and physiologically identical with the natural vitamin. Several groups of workers in Great Britain and Germany have been working at the same problem, but they will doubtless be among the first to congratulate the American chemists concerned on a brilliant and important piece of organic synthesis. It may be noted that this achievement means that, with the syntheses of ascorbic acid, lactoflavin, vitamin D and vitamin B<sub>1</sub>, four vitamins have now been produced from completely inactive organic reagents by purely chemical means.

### New Fossil Anthropoid Skull from South Africa

A DISCOVERY is announced from South Africa which, if first impressions are confirmed by more detailed examination, may go far towards clearing up a point which has been a matter of acute anthropological controversy for more than a decade. Dr. Robert Broom, of the Transvaal Museum, and his colleagues, it is reported in a dispatch from the Johannesburg correspondent of *The Times* in the issue of August 26, have discovered in the Sterkfontein caves near Krugersdorp, a natural cast in limestone of the brain of an advanced type of ape and a number of fossilized bones of the skull, including jaws and teeth. It is anticipated that this new evidence will prove of importance in its bearing upon the status of the phylogeny of man and the

great apes, and more especially on the position of the Taungs skull. It will be remembered that, when that fossil was found in 1924, some doubt was expressed as to how far the approximation to the human type in its characters stressed by Prof. Raymond Dart, by whom it was discovered, was due to its immaturity. The young of the chimpanzee, it was pointed out, is well known to exhibit pseudo-human characters, which disappear as maturity approaches; and it was agreed that the Taungs skull was that of an individual of not more than six years of age. As the Sterkfontein specimen, it would appear, is adult, a comparison with the Taungs skull may determine these uncertainties, and at the same time afford an indication of the relation of these fossil types to existing anthropoids as well as to early forms of man.

### Roman Leicester—a National Asset

THE fate of Roman Leicester, which now hangs upon the decision of the City Council, is a problem in which the nation is no less deeply concerned, though from a slightly different point of view, than the city itself. A site in the heart of the city's oldest relics, purchased at a cost of £24,000 for the erection of public baths, has yielded on excavation remains of the Roman period, more particularly of the forum, the centre of municipal life, which in certain respects are unique (see *NATURE* of July 11, p. 69). While on one hand the local authority may allow due weight to the advantage to Leicester in the possession of this unique and irreplaceable monument of the past, yet local pride must inevitably be tempered by a sense of the duty of trustees of public funds; on the other hand the nation at large is a custodian of such treasures as this for the benefit not only of contemporary archaeological studies, but also of posterity. The most meticulous records of excavation, however valuable for scientific study, cannot take the place of relics