

## News and Views

### Hugh Miller Commemoration at Cromarty

THE cottage at Cromarty in which Hugh Miller was born on October 10, 1802, was handed over to the National Trust for Scotland on September 26. The occasion was of interest not only to geologists but also to many who have been attracted to his writings by their highly individual style and charm, and to those who are interested in the religious history of Scotland in the nineteenth century. Few geologists have appealed to such a large reading public as did Hugh Miller; his assured place in the history of the science depends perhaps no less upon the stimulus and influence of his work than on its actual scientific content. His apprenticeship to a stonemason turned his attention to the geology, and particularly to the sedimentary rocks, of the north-east of Scotland. He made the Old Red Sandstone a familiar term all over the world, and his book with that title "amazed and delighted" such an eminent geologist as Buckland. Many of his other books were original attempts to make palaeontology a contribution to Christian apologetics; Miller, as editor of the *Witness*, played a large part in the "non-intrusionist" movement in the Church of Scotland. Other collectors such as Robert Dick of Thurso (an acute observer who might, one feels, have rivalled Miller as a writer) looked upon Miller as their mouth-piece, and their new specimens and information were often made known through him. Miller's lack of orthodox anatomical knowledge was balanced by a "natural insight", and, even though much of his writing is now disregarded, his contributions to geology and to English letters form a durable record.

### Anniversary of the Discovery of Radium

THE fortieth anniversary of the discovery of radium is the occasion for the issue in France of a special postage stamp in honour of the discoverers, Pierre and Marie Curie. Their lives and characters have been well revealed by their daughter Eve Curie, who



wrote that her mother did not know how to be famous, while Einstein declared that Mme. Curie alone of famous people was unspoiled by prosperity. Her other daughter, Irene, has carried forward the illustrious scientific work of her parents by her discovery, with her husband, Prof. Joliot, of 'artificial' radioactivity. The stamp, printed in blue, is excellent in design and carries faithful portraits, as may be seen by the accompanying reproduction. It carries a surtax of half a franc for the benefit of the

"Union Internationale contre le Cancer". On its merits, this stamp should have a wide appeal, enhanced by the desire to aid in the fight against a baffling disease.

THE International Union against Cancer, which comprises ninety-two organizations representing fifty-two nations, has succeeded in arranging for an International Week against Cancer on November 23-30, which it is hoped will take place simultaneously in fifty countries. In connexion with the celebrations, an international commemoration of the discovery of radium, electrons, X-rays and Hertzian waves will take place on November 23 at the Sorbonne, and a number of papers have been promised by distinguished scientific workers, including O. Hahn (Berlin-Dahlem), G. Hevesy (Copenhagen), G. P. Thomson (London), M. von Laue (Berlin), A. Sommerfeld (Munich), J. Errera (Brussels), F. Carter-Wood (New York), J. D. Bernal (London), H. Stubbe (Berlin-Dahlem), A. Bouwers (Eindhoven) and L. Marton (Brussels), in addition to French men of science. Further particulars of the meeting can be obtained from the secretary-general of the Semaine Internationale contre le Cancer, 18 rue Soufflot, Paris (V).

### Czechoslovakia's Future

DR. GERALD DRUCE, who was the first English graduate of the Charles University of Prague after the Great War, writes as follows: Relief that war has been averted is shared by the peoples of all nations. Thanks to the uses that would be made of accumulated scientific knowledge and skill, a world war to-day would be of such intensity and so ruthless that there would be no victory for the victors, whilst the vanquished might well suffer extinction. Mankind has been mercifully spared this fate, but at the expense of a cultured and highly respected, if small, nation. The Czechoslovaks have accepted proposals made "without and against them", the economic and cultural consequences of which cannot be foreseen. The territory ceded at once includes the whole of the Ore Mountains, so that the mineral wealth of north-west Bohemia will no longer be available for the metallurgical and engineering establishments of Pilsen and Prague. The pitchblende mines of Jáchymov (St. Joachimsthal), together with the radium institute so largely developed by the Czechoslovak Ministry of Health, have also been lost. In this area, too, the Aussig chemical concern has most of its plant and research stations. The economic losses, of which the above are but examples, will necessitate curtailment of expenditure upon scientific and educational work in the residual State. Hitherto, the Czechoslovak Ministry of Education has generously supported the universities and other scientific and educational establishments, but it cannot continue on the same scale that has hitherto been possible. From the maps published in the Press, it appears that Brno (Brünn), the capital of

Moravia, is included in one of the areas where a plebiscite is to be held. Should this city, with its university erected after the War and named after President Masaryk, and its technical colleges and museum, be transferred to Germany, it may well be asked how the republic is to continue. The future of the German University of Prague (the only one provided for a minority in Europe) is also a matter for concern. Will the Czechs feel justified in expending money upon it whilst their own establishments languish? Whatever happens, it is highly probable that serious academic research, such as the world has become accustomed to associate with Prague and its ancient university, will be impeded for a long time to come.

#### The Physical Society

WHEN the Physical Society of London was founded in March 1874, a paper "On the New Contact-Theory of the Galvanic Cell" was read by J. A. Fleming (now Sir Ambrose Fleming). Since then, sixty-four years have elapsed, yet this veteran physicist and engineer is still taking part in scientific work. It is therefore with particular interest that we see the announcement in the Society's programme that he is to give an address on January 13 next, on "Physics and Physicists of the Eighteen-Seventies". Other noteworthy meetings included in the programme are: the twenty-third Guthrie Lecture by Prof. A. V. Hill, on the transformation of energy and the mechanical work of muscles (Nov. 11); a discussion on electro-acoustics, to be opened by Dr. C. V. Drysdale (Dec. 9); discourse by Dr. J. D. Cockcroft on the cyclotron and its applications (Jan. 3); discourse by C. S. Wright on geophysical research in Polar regions (Jan. 4); joint meeting with the Royal Astronomical Society for a discussion on the expanding universe, to be opened by Prof. G. F. J. Temple and Dr. G. C. McVittie (Jan. 27); the Thomas Young oration by Brigadier M. N. MacLeod on some recent developments in British surveying instruments (March 24); and joint meeting with the Chemical and Royal Meteorological Societies, for a discussion on chemical and physical investigations of the upper atmosphere, to be opened by Prof. F. A. Paneth (May 4). The president of the Society this year is Prof. Allan Ferguson; and it is evident from the programme that he desires the meetings to be of wide interest and not confined to the communication of technical papers which are better presented by title for publication in the *Proceedings* than read.

#### Roman Villa in Yorkshire

REMAINS of a Roman villa have been brought to light, contrary to anticipation, at Well, a village of the Dales in the North Riding of Yorkshire. Although the site was known to be Roman, it was thought to be too far north to be likely to provide evidence of occupation of any considerable interest. As the result of a week of excavation, however, the walls of bath buildings, which had been connected with a villa, and the floor of the cold water plunge bath have been brought to light. The floor has a tessellated pavement with plaster moulding, and the walls are

plaster-lined. There is evidence that the walls had been twice rebuilt, once after a fire. A piece of 'Hunteliffe' pottery indicates that occupation had been so recent as the last quarter of the fourth century. Other pieces of pottery and a coin have been found. Excavation is now being directed to a search for the hot bath room and the walls of the main buildings of the villa, which it is hoped to discover nearby. In view of the geographical situation of the villa, this find is likely to prove of no little interest as an indication of the relation of civil settlement and military occupation, more especially at so late a date. The excavation is being carried out under the supervision of Mr. Gilliard Beer and Mr. Kitson Clark of Leeds, both members of the Roman Antiquities Committee of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society. It is stated in a report on the excavation, which appeared in *The Times* of September 28, that owing to lack of funds it will not be possible to continue the work of excavation beyond the middle of October. It would, indeed, be unfortunate if what may prove an important investigation in its bearing on a critical period should have to be abandoned before completion.

#### Houses of Viking Age in Eire

PROVISION for archaeological exploration and research continues to be made as part of the measures for the relief of unemployment put into operation by the Government of Eire. In the systematic plan of archaeological investigation which it has been possible to frame as a result of the resources, financial and other, made available in this manner, the exploration of the forts, which form such an important class of Irish antiquities, naturally take a prominent place. An account of the results obtained in an examination of one such site on Lough Gur, Co. Limerick, of which the excavation was carried out under the supervision of Prof. S. P. O'Riordain in the present season, is given by a correspondent of *The Times* in the issue of October 3. These results are of special interest as the excavation of the fort brought to light evidence of the character of the house in Ireland in, it would appear from the associated finds, the period of the Vikings about A.D. 800-1000. Both inside the fort and outside its walls were the remains of several houses built of stone. One of them, outside the southern rampart, was a long rectangular structure, built in such a way that the face of the wall of the fort formed a wall of the house. The houses outside the wall to the north were provided with yards. Although of different types, all were of stone. They were paved, and in some of the rooms were hearths. In one building the roof had been supported by timber posts, for which the holes were found. A large number of objects for everyday use, of iron, bronze, stone, and bone were found, which serve to date the site as of the Viking period. A coin has been identified as an imitation, or copy, of a coin of Constantine, such as continued to be made in Britain long after the Roman period. A hoard of Viking silver would appear to have belonged to a metal worker, and included silver bracelets which had been broken up preparatory to being melted down.