

### Pan-African Congress on Prehistory

THE Government of Kenya has agreed that a Pan-African Congress on Prehistory (Archæology) shall be convened in Nairobi, Kenya Colony, during January 11–February 1, 1947. The Congress will be concerned with the prehistory of the African continent, and the discussions will also include relevant subjects, such as those aspects of palæontology which intimately concern prehistory, climatic changes and quaternary geology in relation to prehistory. It is proposed that the Congress should be divided into two parts. The first three and a half days will be devoted to discussions upon problems of a general nature, including the following: terminology for the various pluvial periods and post-pluvial phases of the Pleistocene; terminology for the stone-age cultures in Africa; definitions of the words 'Pliocene' and 'Pleistocene' with the view of reaching an agreed definition throughout the African continent; co-operation in respect of research programmes in prehistory and allied subjects in the various African territories; protection of prehistoric sites and of other sites of connected interest; control of excavations; future of research into prehistory and allied subjects in African territories. The second part of the Congress will be devoted to the reading of papers and to discussions upon discoveries made in the field of prehistory since 1939, and more particularly to such discoveries as have had little publicity outside the territories in which they were made, owing to war-time conditions. Excursions to sites in East Africa are planned to take place both during the days immediately preceding the Congress and also during the week following the Congress. The former is designed to give delegates an opportunity of seeing the principal type sections upon which the pluvial and post-pluvial climatic changes for Kenya were originally based, and also to see some of the more important prehistoric sites in the Rift Valley. During the Congress, there will be an excursion to the Ologesalie prehistoric site, which is being developed as a 'museum on the spot' to illustrate the evolution of the Acheulean culture. It is hoped to obtain special air-travel facilities for delegates to the Congress. All correspondence relating to the Congress should be addressed to Dr. L. S. B. Leakey, Organising Secretary, P.O. Box 658, Nairobi, Kenya.

### Science and Art of Medicine

THE appointment of Sir Lionel Whitby to the regius chair of physic at Cambridge marks, as Sir Lionel himself says in his inaugural lecture ("The Science and Art of Medicine," Cambridge University Press, 1946. 1s. 6d. net), a departure from the traditions of this ancient office, which was founded in 1540. It is, Sir Lionel says, the first time that the chair has been held by a man who is primarily interested in the scientific rather than the clinical aspects of medicine. This may well be "an instinctive recognition of the importance, of the scientific aspects of medicine, not forgetting that science is not all factual and itself contains much art". Medicine, too, he says later on, is both a science and an art. It will, however, never be an exact science, because every person who is ill must be approached differently. "This, the frequently ridiculed bedside manner . . . is an art which is inborn and not acquired." The science of medicine is nevertheless necessary; and one of the attractions of the profession is the personal and individual character of its practice, which

constitutes one of the strongest objections to its nationalization and standardization. To-day, we "do not tend" to produce physicians as skilled and shrewd in diagnosis as those earlier workers who had to rely entirely on their personal observation; and the modern student, with so many scientific checks at his command, will do well to imitate his forbears more closely by "carefully orientating his cases before demanding wholesale laboratory work".

Before the beginning of this century, the medical practitioner was skilful in alleviating symptoms, but knew little or nothing about the causes of disease. From 1890 onwards the treatment of disease in relation to its cause rather than the treatment of its symptoms began to be developed. The beginning was made in immunology with diphtheria antitoxin. Sir Lionel then reviews briefly the immunological work of Ehrlich and his later search for specific remedies which would kill infecting organisms without harming the tissues of the body in which they cause disease. Examples follow of the use of art and imagination in modern chemotherapeutic discovery, with a timely warning against the unbridled use of the sulphonamides. There are no facts in this lecture which will not be familiar to those who have followed recent chemotherapeutic work; but the use which the author makes of the facts which he gives is both charming and remarkable.

### Biologia Generalis

*Biologia Generalis* was founded in 1925 and published in Vienna and New York. Its aim was to provide a place for the publication of papers on general biology in the wide sense, rather than those that fall strictly within the field of either botany or zoology. It included border-line topics like aspects of physical or bio-chemistry that have application to biology or medicine, viruses, genetics, general cytology, the history and philosophy of biology and various other subjects. Messrs. Springer, of Vienna, are now resuming publication of the journal under the editorship of Prof. Ludwig von Bertalanffy. The editor points out that the War very profoundly affected the exchange of scientific knowledge and ideas, and that the biologists of Central Europe in particular have been practically isolated while it lasted. *Biologia Generalis* is the first biological journal to be issued in Austria since the period of reconstruction, and the editor appeals to his colleagues of the outside world for their help and support in re-establishing the international co-operation in biology that existed previously. Articles will be accepted for publication in English, French, German and Italian; the editor's address is Wien 111/40 Weissgärberlande 52.

### British Glaciological Society

IN 1936 the Association for the Study of Snow and Ice was formed, the primary object of which was "to encourage research on, and stimulate interest in, the practical and scientific problems of snow and ice". Since then, the Association has broadened its activities. For example, it is the responsible body for nominating members of the British group of the International Commission of Snow and Glaciers, which is one of the commissions of the International Association of Hydrology in the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics; and it is resuming its annual survey of snowfall in the British Isles. A change in name has now been decided upon, and the Association will be known in future as the British

Glaciological Society. Meetings are held at about three-monthly intervals in London, Cambridge and other places, and the papers with their discussions are printed and circulated in the Society's journal, which among other features contains a useful glaciological bibliography. Membership of the Society is open to all who have scientific, practical or general interest in any aspect of snow and ice study, and is by nomination. Further particulars may be obtained from the Assistant Secretary, British Glaciological Society, *temporary address*, c/o Royal Geographical Society, Kensington Gore, London, S.W.7.

### Scientific Background in China

RECENT reports of the British Council, in describing the work of its Cultural Scientific Office in Chungking, have given some account of the position of science in China, and still more factual accounts have been given by Dr. J. Needham in *Nature* (157, 175; 1946, and 156, 496; 1945). In "Chinese Science" (London: Pilot Press, Ltd., pp. 80), Dr. Needham presents the background and setting in which scientific work is carried out in China, and the vivid contrast of old and new. There is little here to indicate research actually in progress in China or the results so far achieved by Chinese workers; there is much to indicate how important will be the future contribution from workers imbued with such resourcefulness and determination to overcome the handicaps under which they have been compelled to work. Few who read this admirably illustrated little volume can doubt that under the organisation already established, and which Dr. Needham outlines in his preface, Chinese research workers will speedily be making unique contributions in fields of their own, and that urgent as may be China's needs for equipment and supplies, even now the traffic will not be only one way. Four profusely illustrated chapters describe the position of scientific and educational institutions in Szechuan, in the north-west, the south-east and the south-west, and if the emphasis is on the workers and conditions rather than on the work being done, that may well enhance the appeal to the general reader to whom, rather than to the man of science, it is obviously addressed.

### Mechanism of Orogenesis and Volcanic Activity

IN a pamphlet dealing with "The West Indies and the Mountain Uplift Problem" (privately printed by B. T. Ord, Ltd., West Hartlepool, 1945, pp. 25+6 figs.), Dr. C. T. Trechmann presents a short account of the geological structure and history of the West Indies, largely based on his own observations; and having found there a puzzling assemblage of phenomena, such as causes difficulty to geologists from time to time, he expresses his disbelief in the various hypotheses now on trial and offers alternative suggestions. Dr. Trechmann's attempt to account for orogenesis and vulcanism, with special reference to the West Indies, involves the following fallacious or demonstrably untenable ideas: (a) that ocean water at considerable depth penetrating unconsolidated or fragmented conglomerates may induce metasomatism and generate heat by exothermic reactions; (b) that the floor of the Bartlett Trough may be lowered and that gaseous or magmatic and plastic material may be forced inwards and upwards beneath Jamaica and Cuba by the pressure due to four miles of sea water; (c) that the upward tidal pull on emergent land may be cumulative, so inducing a landward

flow of [sub-crustal] magmatizing gases or liquids and thereby still further raising the land and deepening the adjacent sea floor. If Dr. Trechmann were able to visualize the kind of earth that would have resulted from the operation of the above alleged processes, he would find it strikingly at variance with the real earth with which geologists are concerned.

### Analysis of High-Purity Zinc and Zinc Alloys

PHYSICAL methods of analysis, such as by the use of the polarograph or the spectrograph, are particularly suited to the determination of minute quantities of impurities in zinc and its alloys. A panel was appointed in 1941 by the Non-ferrous Industry Committee of the British Standards Institution to consider recommended methods for the polarographic and spectrographic analysis of high purity zinc and zinc alloys for die casting. The panel found in its review of earlier work that, though the spectrograph was used in certain laboratories, neither the details nor the precision of the technique was sufficiently defined to justify the immediate recommendation of a spectrographic method; the use of the polarograph was observed to be even less developed. The panel therefore planned, and had carried out by a number of interested organisations, a considerable amount of experimental work. An account of these investigations has been published under the title "Polarographic and Spectrographic Analysis of High Purity Zinc and Zinc Alloys for Die Casting" (H.M. Stationery Office, 1945). Based on this work, recommended methods have been prepared in order to enable comparative information to be collected. The recommendations of the panel, "Recommended Methods for Polarographic and Spectrographic Analysis of High Purity Zinc and Zinc Alloys for Die Casting" (British Standard 1225; 1945. Pp. 36. 2s. net), are intended to be a guide and not a rigorously binding specification. The methods are effective, but, as the fields of analytical chemistry in which they lie are rapidly expanding, the Committee does not wish to impede development by strict rules. It is intended, therefore, to review the position at an early date in the light of further experience obtained by the use of these methods.

### The National Museum of Wales

THE progressive activity of all departments of the National Museum of Wales is a striking feature of the report for the year 1944-45. Most of the material removed from the public exhibition galleries has now been restored and the reorganisation of certain parts of the collections is near completion. In accordance with the strong educational policy of the Museum, departmental lectures, gallery talks, demonstrations and special exhibitions have been provided throughout the year. The value of these is amply proved by the large attendance of students, teachers, classes of school-children and groups of Service men and women. Of the several public lectures given outside the Museum, mention may be made of a series of three given by the Keeper of the Department of Folk Culture and Industries to teachers at a Ministry of Education course held at Caerleon.

It is of further interest that the director of the Museum, after consultation with the Welsh Department of the Ministry of Education, prepared on behalf of the Council and at the request of the permanent secretary, a memorandum setting out the Museum's suggestions for a schools service. This document comprised: (1) a record and assessment