

director left Leeds in April, spending three months in Australia, three weeks in New Zealand and four weeks in the United States and Canada, returning in October. The Australian Government in 1945 passed the Wool Use Promotion Act, which made available a sum of £600,000 for the promotion of the wool industries and for research in that field (see *Nature*, July 13, p. 70). In New Zealand the question of internal co-ordination and external collaboration was in the forefront, and a considerable increase in research both on the production and manufacture of wool is confidently expected in both countries.

Referring to the financial position of the Association and negotiations still in progress for a statutory levy, the report notes the recommendation of the British Wool Federation that the whole of the levy for research should be calculated on imported wool as avoiding questions of equitable distribution arising.

10/2

## THE ANCIENT OIKOUMENE AS AN HISTORIC CULTURE AGGREGATE

IN his Huxley Lecture for 1945 before the Royal Anthropological Institute, the eminent American anthropologist, Dr. A. L. Kroeber, put forward an interesting hypothesis concerning the origin and diffusion of the more important cultures (*The Institute*, 2s. 6d.). The Greek word *oikoumenē*, 'the inhabited', referred to what they thought of as the whole habitable world—that from the Pillars of Hercules to what the Indians called the Seres—a belief which is naturally no longer tenable. But the fact remains that this tract does still correspond to a great historic unit, and if the term is shifted to mean the range of man's most developed cultures, then we have a convenient designation for a set of related happenings and products of significance to both historian and ethnologist.

There is an interesting sequence, for example, in the history of sculpture. In its early stages there was prolonged, but intermittent, activity for two millennia around the eastern Mediterranean from Egypt to Mesopotamia. About 600 B.C. this collapsed, and Greek sculpture replaced it to the west and Persian to the east; after a period of great artistic productivity again the centres shifted, one to the east, the other westward to Rome, and so on. It is a point worthy of note that each new focus was peripheral; that is, the seed flourished on new and fertile soil, not on that which was played out.

In another and different sphere, that of culture, the Islamic growth affords food for thought. This religion shows great unity and uniformity in spite of its vast spread, possessing as it does a universal church and a universal language, both written and spoken in the form of Arabic. It sprang into being, in the person of Mohammed, among the downtrodden Arabs of the Near East who had had imposed upon them presumably uncongenial civilizations from Greece and Iran, and it gave its adherents the opportunity to throw off the Hellenic, Sassanian and Christian yokes. The impetus carried Islam from Iran and Iraq through Syria and Egypt to Spain, and eastward to India and the East Indies, and the secret of its success lies probably in the fact that it reduced and simplified culture, bringing it within the grasp of the overworked and worn out 'heart area' of an older civilization.

So, too, with other cultures, both material and ceremonial, which seem to have started in this same area and spread north, south, east and west, with, of course, modifications to suit the varied conditions. In fact, the *oikoumenē* may be defined as a great wealth of culture growth, areally extensive and rich in content. Within this web new cultural materials have tended to spread from end to end with more or less rapidity. Our *oikoumenē*, like that of the ancients, has its limits; Europe and Asia and the main portion of Africa lie within it, though its relations with the farthest portion, South Africa, have been irregular and retarded. Australia may be omitted from it, but Oceania in general shows impacts of its culture. Taken as a whole, American culture has developed independently of *oikoumenē*, its own 'heart' being in the tract from Central Mexico to Peru. Northern North America has obviously received impacts from Asia, but these have not influenced the main culture stream.

K. RISHBETH

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, September 17—Thursday, September 19

SOCIETY FOR APPLIED METEOROLOGY (at the University, Glasgow).—Annual General Meeting and Paper Reading Conference.

Wednesday, September 18

SOCIETY OF DYERS AND COLOURISTS, MIDLANDS SECTION (in the Board Room, Elite Cinema, Parliament Street, Nottingham), at 7 p.m.—Mr. L. C. Mitchell: "Dyeing of Milanese and Locknit, with special reference to Cellulose Acetate".

## APPOINTMENTS VACANT

APPLICATIONS are invited for the following appointments on or before the dates mentioned:

ASSISTANT LECTURER IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS—The Registrar, University College, Hull (September 20).

ASSISTANT SECRETARIES (2) IN CHEMISTRY (Organic, Inorganic or Physical)—The Registrar, University College, Hull (September 21).

ASSISTANT LECTURER IN ZOOLOGY—The Secretary, King's College, Strand, London, W.C.2 (September 23).

SENIOR AND JUNIOR DEPTHMANS in the Scientific Adviser's Division of the Ministry of Food—The Ministry of Labour and National Service, Technical and Scientific Register, Room 572, York House, Kingsway, London, W.C.2, quoting F.4631 (September 27).

LECTURER IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY, Leeds College of Technology—The Director of Education, Education Offices, Leeds 1 (September 28).

LECTURER IN ENGINEERING—The Secretary, The University, Aberdeen (September 28).

RESEARCH ASSISTANT for work on flow of fluids in porous materials, with particular reference to land drainage—The Secretary, School of Agriculture, Cambridge (September 30).

DIRECTOR OF SAFETY IN MINES RESEARCH—The Ministry of Labour and National Service, Technical and Scientific Register, Room 572, York House, Kingsway, London, W.C.2, quoting C.513 (September 30).

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH for the conduct of research on all aspects of prevention and extinction of fire, the safety of life in fire and mitigation of damage—The Civil Service Commission, 6 Burlington Gardens, London, W.1, quoting No. 1620 (September 30).

MYCOLOGIST at the Tea Research Institute of Ceylon, St. Coombs, Talawakelle—The Secretary, Ceylon Association in London, King William Street House, Arthur Street, London, E.C.4 (September 30).

LECTURER IN MATHEMATICS in the United College, St. Andrews—The Secretary, The University, St. Andrews (September 30).

CHAIR OF FUEL TECHNOLOGY—The Registrar, The University, Sheffield (October 1).

DIRECTOR OF METEOROLOGY, Government of Burma—The High Commissioner for India, General Department, India House, Aldwych, London, W.C.2 (October 3).

TEACHER (full-time) OF STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING at the Brixton School of Building, Ferndale Road, London, S.W.4—The Education Officer (T.1), County Hall, Westminster Bridge, London, S.E.1 (October 5).

LECTURERS IN MATHEMATICS, PHYSICS, BOTANY and GEOLOGY, at the Victoria University College, Wellington, New Zealand—The Secretary, Universities Bureau of the British Empire, 24 Gordon Square, London, W.C.1 (October 18).

LECTURER IN PHYSICS at the Wolverhampton and Staffordshire Technical College—The Clerk to the Governors, Education Offices, North Street, Wolverhampton.

METEOROLOGISTS for service in the Sudan—The Sudan Agent in London, Wellington House, Buckingham Gate, London, S.W.1, quoting 'Meteorologist'.

LABORATORY TECHNICIAN for the Veterinary Department, Government of Nigeria—The Crown Agents for the Colonies, 4 Millbank, London, S.W.1, quoting M.N.16836.