

News and Views

Robert Hooke's Diary

THE tercentenary of the birth of Robert Hooke, Gresham professor of astronomy, surveyor to the City of London and curator of experiments to the Royal Society, occurs on July 18 of this year. Hooke appears to have kept a continuous diary for the greater part of his life; and parts of his daily journal have been found in three different libraries. The importance of the first part was realised by Dr. Jean Pelseneer of Brussels, who directed the attention of the Royal Society to its existence in 1928; with the permission of the authorities of the Guildhall Library, Mr. H. W. Robinson made extracts, some of which were published by Dr. Pelseneer in *Isis* (February 1931). Afterwards, Mr. Robinson discovered another and later part of the diary in the British Museum, where for more than a hundred and sixty years it had been catalogued as the diary of James Petiver. The Guildhall portion of Hooke's diary is the most important, and is full of interest from all points of view. It records meetings of the Royal Society of which no minutes occur; elections of which there are no official records extant; details of his work as architect, surveyor and contractor; his daily visits to the coffee-houses and taverns, where he joined in the discourses and gossip of the city men; details of his private life, his income, his purchase of books and necessaries of life.

By the courtesy of the Library Committee of the Guildhall, the part of Hooke's diary in the Guildhall Library can now be published. For many years Mr. H. W. Robinson and Mr. W. Adams have been carefully transcribing the diary, and it will be published, together with a short life of Hooke, by midsummer. The work of printing and publishing has been entrusted to Messrs. Taylor and Francis, who have undertaken to produce the book with the aid of a subsidy from the Royal Society. Of more than passing interest is the fact that the house occupied by Messrs. Taylor and Francis is supposed to have been built during the period of the diary, and most probably by Sir Christopher Wren and Robert Hooke. It may be remembered that Dr. R. T. Gunther has already published three volumes of Hooke's works in his series of books on "Early Science in Oxford".

Tribal Justice in Australia

A PERTINENT example of the practical bearing of the results of anthropological investigation is afforded by the defence set up in a trial for murder of two aborigines from Alice Springs, South Australia. The facts of the case are set out in a dispatch from the Adelaide correspondent of *The Times* in the issue of February 15. The defence rested on a plea of tribal justice. It has been put forward that the two accused were acting in accordance with custom and under the instructions of the elders of the tribe in putting to death a man who had revealed ceremonial secrets

to a woman. Failure to comply, it was stated, would have entailed death. As might be expected, anthropologists have not failed in the endeavour to bring the aboriginal point of view before the court. Expert witnesses, however, were not heard; but their special knowledge was placed at the service of the defence. Ever since Spencer and Gillen first recorded, nearly forty years ago, the special reverence of the natives of Alice Springs for everything pertaining to tribal ceremonial, anthropologists would have been prepared to expect death as the logical consequence of so grave a threat to tribal safety as the breaking of taboo involved in the disclosure of ceremonial objects or procedure to a woman. It is, at the very least, the equivalent of a combination of high treason and sacrilege in a civilised community. As recent trials in Africa have shown, a court rooted in European law is not prepared to admit that in such cases tribal justice may demand and exact the supreme penalty, in the manner in which in a civilised society a traitor who discloses State secrets may be imprisoned for life or condemned to death. Those who carry out the sentence of the tribe must, in accordance with the laws of the country, be adjudged guilty of murder, even though the extreme penalty may not eventually be imposed.

Organisation of Agriculture in Australia

DIFFICULT circumstances in the agricultural industries of Australia are giving rise to much-needed co-operation between Commonwealth and States. In December last a conference of ministers at Canberra determined to establish an Australian Agricultural Council, to provide for continuous consultation among the Governments on economic aspects of agriculture, the members to be the Federal Minister for Commerce, the Minister-in-Charge of Development and Scientific Research and the State ministers concerned. This body will be supported by a permanent technical committee which is identical in personnel with the former Standing Committee on Agriculture of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, but which will now have greatly increased responsibilities. Its members are the six permanent heads of the State Departments of Agriculture, the three executive members of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, the Secretary of the Department of Commerce and the Director-General of Health. Besides its duties on the side of agricultural economics, this committee is charged with (i) securing co-operation and co-ordination in agricultural research throughout the Commonwealth; (ii) advising Commonwealth and State Governments, directly or through the new Council, on matters pertaining to the initiation and development of research on agricultural problems; and (iii) securing co-operation between Commonwealth and States, and between the States themselves in all quarantine measures relating to pests and diseases of plants and animals, and advising Governments thereon.