

well known, this practice has rather a remarkable distribution. In the ancient world it apparently remained limited to Egypt, though extending to some extent to the Canary Islands. In later times it was practised in the Torres Straits, and developed in two widely separate regions in the Americas—in Peru and the neighbouring territories and among the Gulf populations of Alaska, more particularly in the Aleutian Islands. Mummification, however, may be of two kinds: the natural, due to lack of moisture in climatic conditions; and the artificial, in which initially the internal organs are removed.

It will be remembered that the late Sir Grafton Elliot Smith was first stimulated to formulate his theories of the origin and diffusion of culture in and from Egypt by the identities in method in preparing the body for mummification in ancient Egypt and the Torres Straits—identities which he maintained were of such a highly technical character as virtually to preclude an independent origin. Dr. Hrdlička, without more direct reference to the controversial issue, points out that it is not known how the practice started in America. Origin in and transmission from Peru to Alaska seems far-fetched, but so too does the reverse process. It is difficult, however, to connect either region with Egypt. Yet such a connexion is not impossible; but until Siberia is more fully explored, the problem must be regarded as at present incapable of solution. In the meantime, it is noted that while the Egyptians embalmed the body and then bandaged it, the Americans used air-drying, stuffed it with moss or grass and dressed it in its best clothes.

Recent Earthquakes Recorded at Kew

TEN relatively large earthquakes have been recorded at Kew Observatory during the period February 2–March 16. The one which gave rise to the greatest amplitudes was that received on March 1, compressional at 3h. 57m. 22s. G.M.T., the epicentre being near Larissa in Greece (*NATURE*, March 8, p. 292). The S wave arrived at 4h. 1m. 4s. G.M.T., L_Q at 4h. 2.5m., and L_R at 4h. 3m. There were three maxima, the first being the greatest, and having an amplitude of 150μ . The estimated epicentral distance from Kew was 2220 km., all calculations and readings being provisional. Three earthquakes were recorded on March 16. The first, at 7h. 54m. 17s. was probably from an epicentre 8480 km. distant, whilst the second at 16h. 38m. 52s. was most likely from an epicentre 1770 km. distant and may have been the shock reported to have been felt at Trapani and Palermo in Sicily. It gave rise to amplitudes of 35μ at Kew. The third shock, at 18h. 52m. 9s. beginning with a dilatational pulse, may have been an aftershock of the Palermo shock, though at Kew exact reading of the seismogram was difficult owing to confusion caused by microseisms.

Earthquake near New Guinea

THE United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, in co-operation with Science Service and the Jesuit Seismological Association, has made a preliminary

determination of the epicentre of the earthquake of January 13, 1941. From reports received from the seismographic stations at Honolulu, St. Louis, Manila, Pasadena, Sitka, Logan, Chicago, Fordham, Philadelphia, Lincoln and College (Alaska), the epicentre appeared to be at latitude 3° S., longitude 144° E., which is in the Pacific Ocean north-west of Cape Girgir in New Guinea and almost due west of the Purdy Islands of the Admiralty Islands group. The depth of focus is estimated to have been near 100 km., which is not unexpected since the epicentre lies in a belt well known for the prevalence of deep focus earthquakes in the past. The initial time of the shock was probably 16h. 27.7m. G.M.T.

Periodicities in Solar Variation

REFERRING to the account of his paper on "Periodicities in Solar Variation reflected in Weather" published in *NATURE* of October 26, 1940, p. 564, Dr. C. G. Abbot writes that, in the tabular matter in column 1, 24.9 months should read $25\frac{1}{3}$ months, which later studies indicate to be preferable. It is also stated that the exact periods are given as the result of scattered solar observations made prior to 1920. This is incorrect. These values come from evidences of the solar periods in the *temperature* and *rainfall* records of Copenhagen, Vienna, and New Haven, 1800–1932. Further evidence will be given in a paper soon to be published in *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections*.

Announcements

THE American Philosophical Society has made a gift of 10,000 dollars to the Royal Society "for the aid of science in Britain". This generous gift, from the oldest scientific society in the United States, is a welcome gesture marking the spirit of friendship between the men of science of the two countries, and emphasizing the determination of American scientific workers to aid their colleagues in Great Britain to carry on the pursuit of knowledge.

A DISCUSSION on "Vegetables as Food" has been arranged by the Nutrition Panel of the Food Group of the Society of Chemical Industry, to take place at the British Medical Association House, Tavistock Square, London, W.C.1, on April 9. The papers to be presented will deal with the chemical composition of vegetable foods, the planning of vegetable production, and the effects on nutritive value of cooking, canning, drying and other forms of preservation.

THE Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents states in the current number of *Safety Training* that there has been for some time a continued alarming increase in road accidents in children, despite all efforts of teachers, education authorities and parents. The increase has been attributed to absence from schools and the slackening of discipline in the early war months, and also to change of environment from city to rural life.