

The Merseyside Naturalists' Association is shortly publishing its new book on the birds of west Lancashire and west Cheshire; the Blackburn Naturalists' Field Club reported a record attendance, averaging two hundred, at its indoor evening meetings last winter, and the recent summer meeting of the North-East Lancashire Naturalists' Union at Darwen was very well attended. The Thunder Census Organization is carrying on its work and has just issued its fifth annual report from Langley Terrace, Oakes, Huddersfield, and particulars of trees struck by lightning are being collected. The Liverpool Botanical Society is continuing its field work for the publication of its "Flora of South Lancashire" and the North of England Zoological Society, Chester, has made its monthly journal the organ for reporting the activities of other zoological collections since the *Animal and Zoo Magazine* of the London Society suspended publication, and London, Dudley and Maidstone Zoos contribute to the June issue.

Medicine in Saint-Simon's "Mémoires"

IN a recent paper on this subject (*Proc. Roy. Soc. Med.*, 34, Sect. Hist. Med. 31; 1941) Dr. J. D. Rolleston claims that this work, which covered twenty-one years of the reign of Louis XIV and eight years of the Regency, contained many passages of medical interest, though they had received little attention from medical historians. They could be classified under the headings of prevalent diseases, portraits of contemporary doctors and miscellaneous topics. Small-pox was by far the most frequent of all the diseases mentioned by Saint-Simon, and its prevalence among royal personages and courtiers was a striking proof of the efficacy of Jenner's discovery, as since that time the disease was almost unknown among the upper classes in whom conscientious objectors were rare. Among chronic infections described in the "Mémoires" syphilis undoubtedly held the first place and claimed several courtiers of both sexes among its victims. Many cases of lung disease, probably of a tuberculous nature, are also mentioned. As might be expected owing to their indulgence in highly nitrogenous diet, large consumption of alcohol and lack of exercise, a great number of courtiers as well as Louis XIV suffered from gout. Several examples of nervous and mental diseases as well as alcoholism and cancer are also alluded to by Saint-Simon. Of the thirteen surgical operations mentioned five were for stone in the bladder and four for fistula *in ano*, a complaint which, after the operation on Louis XIV, became as fashionable as appendicitis did more than two centuries later after the operation on Edward VII.

The "Mémoires" also contain brief indications of three diseases—achondroplasia, spondylitis deformans and hæmophilia—long before they were described in scientific medicine. As regards his attitude towards the medical profession, Saint-Simon, like many other distinguished laymen before and since his time, did not appear to have a liking for doctors, as is shown by the frequency with which he declared that they had not understood the nature of the disease which they were treating. On the other hand, he was unsparing in his eulogies of individual doctors, such

as Fagon, Louis XIV's physician, Mareschal, his surgeon, and Hyghens, the king of Spain's physician who attended Saint-Simon during his attack of small-pox. The miscellaneous topics of medical interest mentioned in the "Mémoires" include longevity, sexology, spas, poisoning, post mortem examinations and the illnesses of Louis XIV.

History of Endocrinology

IN a recent paper on this subject read before the Section of the History of Medicine of the Royal Society of Medicine (*Proc. Roy. Soc. Med.*, 34, 303; 1941) Dr. A. P. Cawadias said that three periods could be distinguished in the historical development of endocrinology. The first was the descriptive period, the second was one of analytic endocrinology and the third or contemporary period was that of synthetic endocrinology. The first description of endocrine diseases was given long before there was any accurate knowledge of endocrine physiology, being found in the writings of Hippocrates, who studied hypo-orchidism and climacteric hypo-ovarium. Only after some advance was made in the knowledge of glandular physiology, however, were endocrine diseases introduced into nosography. The earliest of these was hypothyroidism, studied by T. Curling in 1850 and later by C. H. Fagge in 1871 and Sir William Gull in 1873. Hypo-adrenalism was described by Addison in 1855, when endocrine nosography first made a real start. A notable advance in the history of endocrine diseases was made by the introduction of endocrinotherapy. This began with Brown-Séquard in 1889, reached a notable peak with the introduction of thyroid organotherapy by G. R. Murray in 1890, and developed intensively in recent years, outstanding events being the introduction of insulinotherapy by Banting in 1921, of the various sex hormones and of cortin.

The Wyperfeld (Mallee) National Park

THE Mallee National Park in Victoria, known as "Wyperfeld", an account of which appeared in *NATURE* of August 12, 1939, p. 272, has received a substantial addition of 51,840 acres, owing to the far-sighted action of the acting premier of Victoria, Mr. Lind. This makes a total area of 138,700 acres. The land added, known locally as the "Desert", is useless for purposes of production, but contains the mound builder, known as the 'lowan', and is a feeding-ground for birds. The Park is situated in the most arid part of the State with a capricious rainfall of 9 in. and great evaporation. In spite of this dryness it is well stocked with birds of the cockatoo and parrot family, also lowans and emus. It also contains a number of black-faced kangaroo. There is at present only one well in the area, and exactly where these animals get the necessary water is not known. The trough at the well is used by some of the birds and by bees, but so far the kangaroos have not been seen to use it. A somewhat similar problem of water supply can be seen in the Egyptian Desert bordering on the Mediterranean which, whereas it is lifeless in the day-time, is stocked with jerboas and various reptiles at night.