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## CURRENT SCIENCE—50 YEARS AGO

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Vol. II      FEBRUARY 1934      p. 280

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### The Earthquake in North India.

We associate ourselves with the numerous agencies which have appealed for assistance to relieve the sufferings of our fellow-men in the earthquake-stricken districts of Bihar and Nepal.

The results of the scientific investigations initiated by Dr. L. L. Fermor will, we have no doubt, extend our knowledge of the geological conditions of the Sub-Himalayan regions and perhaps may even provide the people with the means of forecasting these baleful phenomena with some measure of certainty. In these regions which are obviously in the zone of weakness and strain, implied by the severe crumpling of the rock beds in the elevation of the Himalayas, within very recent times, and where the rocks have, therefore, not yet attained stability or quiescence, subcrustal dislocations must be frequent, resulting in more or less disastrous earthquakes always attended by appalling destruction of life and property. The fertility of the Indo-Gangetic alluvial plain has at all times attracted large masses of population who have built in this geologically unstable region, some of the richest cities in the East, little dreaming that their opulence and magnificence practically rest on a powder magazine within a few miles of their foundations.

The recent earthquake is far more intense than the tremors which occurred in 1833 in the same area and is nearly as ruinous as the one which overwhelmed Assam on June 12th, 1897. Earthquakes, floods, famines and cyclones have become numerous and frequent within recent years and the restoration of flourishing and populous cities which rendered de-

funct by these catastrophies must be beyond the resources of a single nation. It occurs to us that the League of Nations should devise proposals for setting up an international organisation with the financial support of all countries of the world, to supplement the efforts of private philanthropy in dealing with the cataclysms over which man has no control and against which he has no means of providing protection. We do not believe that our proposal is impracticable for, in our judgment the moral significance of our civilisation must fail if it does not promote an increasing recognition of brotherhood among nations both in times of distress and prosperity, irrespective of their geographical situation and other differences. The League of Nations from its exalted position in the international life is competent to formulate and design schemes for fostering the unity of the different races now divided by narrow parochial interests and no misfortune should occur to any one of them without evoking spontaneous sympathy in the hearts of others. We can conceive of no cause or religion more sacred to humanity than provision of relief for the destitute and suffering and an earthquake is certainly that touch of Nature which ought to make the whole world kin.

### Loch Ness Monster.

The belief in the existence of weird creatures is a survival of the dark ages in which the credibility of the people outstripped their understanding and imposed no restriction on the acceptance of exaggerated accounts of fire-snorting dragons and outlandish monsters. If now and then reports of the occurrence of such strange animals arrive, it is because there are still people whose mind is not sufficiently enlightened to discern and discriminate. Judged by the reports of this modern monster, he is obviously an enormous reptile whose compatriots ceased to exist towards the beginning of the Tertiary period of the Earth's history, for they had reached a complexity of organisation which rendered them incapable of adapting themselves to the new conditions of environment introduced by this period. Those which still possessed that power of adaptation survived as in the case of *Sphenodon* and it is impossible to conceive of a gigantic *Pythonomorph* capable of adjusting itself to the new altered conditions of existence or escaping from the more agile enemies. A stray animal, even if it were prehistoric, by

which popular writers mean of times before man began to chronicle public events, cannot continue to live indefinitely but must imply the existence of his family and tribe hidden somewhere in the still unexplored regions. Such haunts will not remain long concealed from the scientists, sportsmen, explorers and cinema directors and the only value of the

reported occurrence of a monster in Loch Ness is to provide a subject for excited talk in social circles. The scientist wants the evidence of the animal itself, dead or alive, and after dissection would be able to pronounce his verdict as regards the monster's age, pedigree, relationship and value. The monster may prove a commonplace seal or whale.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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### INDIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCE, BANGALORE

The following have been elected as Fellows of the Academy during 1983.

1. Dr. C. R. Bhatia, Biology and Agriculture Division, BARC, Bombay 400 085, 2. Prof. B. M. Deb, Department of Chemistry, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay 400 076, 3. Mr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, Director, Defence Research and Development Laboratory, Hyderabad 500 028, 4. Dr. K. K. Kannan, Neutron Physics Division, BARC, Bombay 400 085, 5. Dr. S. Kedharnath, Director, Kerala Forest Research Institute, Peechi 680 653, 6. Prof. V. Krishnan, Department of Inorganic and Physical Chemistry, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore 560 012, 7. Prof. H. S. Mani, Department of Physics, Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur 208 016, 8. Prof. S. S. Merh, Department of Geology, M. S. University of Baroda, Baroda 390 002, 9. Prof. H. S. Mukunda, Department of Aerospace Engineering, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore 560 012, 10. Prof. Biswaranjan Nag, Calcutta University, Calcutta 700 009, 11. Dr. V. Nanjundiah, Molecular Biology Unit, T.I.F.R., Bombay 400 005, 12. Prof. V. S. Narasimham, T.I.F.R., Bombay 400 005, 13. Prof. G. Padmanaban, Department of Biochemistry, Indian

Institute of Science, Bangalore 560 012, 14. Prof. G. B. Parulkar, Department of Cardiovascular Surgery, Seth G. S. Medical College, K. E. M. Hospital, Bombay 400 012, 15. Prof. Gopal Prasad, School of Mathematics, T.I.F.R., Bombay 400 005, 16. Prof. P. L. Sachdev, Department of Applied Mathematics, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore 560 012, 17. Dr. P. K. Sen Sharma, Director, Forest Research Institute and Colleges, Dehra Dun 248 006, 18. Mr. D. R. Sikka, Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune 411 005, 19. Prof. G. Srinivasan, Raman Research Institute, Bangalore 560 080, 20. Dr. A. Venkoba Rao, Institute of Psychiatry, Madurai Medical College and Government Rajaji Hospital, Madurai 650 020.

The following have been elected as Honorary Fellows of the Academy during 1983.

1. Prof. F. C. Frank, Department of Physics, University of Bristol, H. H. Wills Physics Laboratory, Tyndall Avenue, Bristol BS9 3PL, UK. 2. Prof. G. Pontecorvo, Imperial Cancer Research Fund Laboratories, London, WC2A 3PX, UK. 3. Prof. G. W. Series, Honorary Research Fellow, Clarendon Laboratory, Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3PV, UK.

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### INSA S. H. ZAHEER MEDAL

Dr L. K. Doraiswamy, Director, National

Chemical Laboratories, Pune, has been awarded the S. H. Zaheer Medal for 1983.

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