

Antiquity

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Editorial Notes

IT is a good thing to take stock from time to time, to look back over a period of years and see what has been accomplished and how, and then to look forward in the hope of profiting by experience. We may ask, what have been the outstanding events in archaeology during the last few years? But no sooner is the question put, even in this objective form, than difficulties at once arise. What is 'outstanding'? Are not many 'outstanding' events of lesser value than others to which such an epithet is not applied? The key-word is 'value'. What standard of valuation is to be used and who is to use it, the scientist or the general public?



Every writer of appeals for money for excavations and amenities knows that the real purpose, as he conceives it, of the appeal is not usually the one to stress. Every excavator knows that tessellated pavements bring in more gate-money than a really instructive section of a rampart; and the press follows in the wake of public taste. It is almost impossible to raise money for an undertaking of real scientific value except upon some irrelevant grounds that have a popular appeal. Excavators in classical countries and in Palestine know this well. But if one wants support for an air-survey, an archaeological survey, an international map, or to excavate in some unknown land, one has to fall back on appeals to other than traditional sentiments and the results are discouraging. Purses open freely where patriotic or other traditional emotions are concerned, or when the acquisitive instinct is

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aroused ; so these rather than the real motives are alleged. But the archaeologist distinguishes quite clearly between appeal-value and scientific worth.



The ultimate standard of value in archaeology is one of relevance to the history of man. That is our subject, divided up though it must be into compartments, to keep it manageable. That which advances our knowledge of human history is relevant, has a value proportionate to the quality or quantity of the new knowledge. Judged by this standard we assign great value to discoveries throwing light on the physical evolution of man and on the beginnings of our present declining traditional culture, and to new methods of research which further such discoveries. We attach high value, for instance, to the remains of Pekin man at Choukoutien and his primitive bone tools (for which see the next number of ANTIQUITY) and to recent discoveries in Iraq (for which see the last). We attach less importance to showy finds, and more to some of these than to others. (Dr Reisner's Harvard Expedition's discovery of the tomb of Queen Hetep-heres, for example, was richer in new knowledge than the sensational tomb of Tutankhamen).



The truth is that the man of science applies one standard of values and the general public another. The general public applies the standards of the traditional civilization which moulds it from the cradle to the General News Bulletin ; but Science has created its own set of values which are not traditional but rational. Science looks at the past from the point of view of humanity ; *homo sum ; humani nihil a me alienum puto*. Science is the rock upon which the next civilization will be built. Other modern cultures are not universal ; they are split into national and class divisions, and they cannot therefore afford, even if they would, to apply universal standards. Moreover, they dislike them intensely, especially in certain countries. It may not always be so, but at present it is true to say of Science that correct judgments of value can only be passed by those who reject and ignore the standards of the majority in their own countries.



We have already mentioned parenthetically some of the most outstanding recent events. In method or technique the universality, the non-national character of archaeology is particularly plain. England

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has contributed air-photography and excavational technique (both at home and abroad); Scandinavia has, in addition to excavational technique and publication, made many brilliant additions such as geochronology, pollen-analysis, and the study of fossil dunes and old sea- and lake-levels; dendrochronology was invented in America, the home of the giant trees, but has not yet been found applicable elsewhere, for lack of material; and there are many minor improvements of technique that could be mentioned.



In our own country one of the most striking recent advances is to be seen in the better organization of archaeology. Science has been described as organized knowledge; and when it is necessary (as above) in recording advances of method to mention techniques derived from botany and geology (and of course zoology), obviously coordination is required. The isolated specialist, though useful to others, is no longer in the van of progress. The lead has been taken by those who can exploit his knowledge for the general good. Perhaps 'exploit' is not quite the right word, however, for the specialist himself, who is also a man of science, is generally most anxious to place his knowledge and skill at the disposal of others. He too is a willing cooperator in the advancement of knowledge.



An outstanding example of successful cooperation is to be seen in the recent rejuvenation of the PREHISTORIC SOCIETY. Formed before the war on a limited (East Anglian) basis, this Society now covers the whole country; and the resultant phenomenal rise in membership amply justifies the broader scope. A glance over recent issues of the Society's Proceedings shows how extensive is the field covered. One of the most valuable features are the Notes on Excavations during the preceding year, covering the whole of Great Britain and Ireland, contributed by representative correspondents. These tell us what is going on, and it is to be noted that there seems to have been more going on in England since 1934 than in the whole of the rest of the area put together, and more in Northern Ireland than in the Irish Free State. The format of the 'Proceedings' has been changed, very much for the better; two stout numbers appear each year. In the last issue the Editor's notes deserve more than a passing mention; under the title of 'Current Prehistory' are fifteen pages dealing with such subjects as the date of the separation of Britain from the Continent

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(placed in the 'latter part of the Boreal period'), the lesson of the Köln-Lindenthal excavations (see also ANTIQUITY, 1935, IX, 89-93), the bad side of Russian archaeology, and observations on China, Malaya and Australasia.

Equally alive are the articles. Professor Childe's Presidential Address ('Proceedings', 1935, 1-15) is as stimulating and original as one would expect, and deals with a subject that will be ventilated in the next number of ANTIQUITY. Dr Grahame Clark's description of the Timber Monument at Arminghall, which he and others excavated in 1935, is not only an account of the excavation of that monument, but also a corpus of plans of cognate monuments elsewhere. Evidence of cooperation, both amongst archaeological specialists and with specialists in other studies, is evident throughout every number. A combined attack has been made by six persons on the submerged land-surface of the Essex coasts, with excellent results for the Bronze Age; while Mr Philip Ulyott enlivens the Ice Age with a study of flat-worms—valuable allies who have hitherto remained in obscurity. Mr Grimes writes an account, which is both critical and constructive, of the Megalithic Monuments of Wales. Long barrows are represented by articles from Mr C. W. Phillips (Hon. Secretary) at Royston; Lieut.-Colonel C. D. Drew and Mr Stuart Piggott on Thickthorn Down, Dorset. (In passing we should mention Mr Phillips' masterly account in *Archaeologia* of the Giants' Hills long barrow which he excavated in 1933 and 1934). The article by Messrs King and Oakley on the Pleistocene succession in the Lower Thames Valley is a useful piece of synthesis for which we have long been waiting.

The predominant share of certain contributors is evident. That is a sign of vitality, and fortunate is the Society which can command such voluntary resources of skill and enthusiasm. The PREHISTORIC SOCIETY deserves every support; those who join it can be assured of getting good value.

Those of our Readers who have not yet made use of the subscription form and envelope placed in the December number will no doubt do so at their earliest convenience (posting to 24 Parkend Road, Gloucester). Such consideration saves much trouble.