

Antiquity

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Editorial Notes

ANTIQUITY will attempt to summarize and criticize the work of those who are recreating the past. Archaeology is a branch of science which achieves its results by means of excavation, field-work and comparative studies ; it is founded upon the observation and record of facts. Today the accumulated riches of years lie to our hand, and the time is ripe for interpretation and synthesis. We are emerging from the archaic stage, and we are able at last to see single facts in their relation to an organic whole—the history of Man. Simplification supervenes, and the outline of the past becomes intelligible. Here and there attempts are made to summarize a period or interpret a group of facts ; but they seldom reach the general public, and remain buried in obscure publications. ANTIQUITY will publish creative work of this character.



The Editor has secured the willing support of specialists who will contribute popular but authoritative accounts of their own researches. Knowledge thus acquired is alive, for it is derived at first hand from things, not merely compiled from books. Each article will be but a tiny facet of the whole ; for our field is the Earth, our range in time a million years or so, our subject the human race.

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We shall keep our readers informed about important discoveries made and books published ; and we shall warn them of mare's nests. Many so-called discoveries are nothing but newspaper "stunts"; many best-sellers are written by quacks. The public is humbugged, but it is nobody's business to expose the fraud. Such books are ignored by the learned world. Reviewers in literary papers are therefore tolerant, if not favourable, for they hear no word of dissent ; there is a demand for stuff like this, and the case goes by default. Every page may contain gross errors and wild guesses which pass unchallenged. The antidote is to create a sound and informed body of opinion, and to make it articulate.



Epoch-making work, however, is being done throughout the world ; and we cannot devote much space merely to destructive criticism. It will be more profitable to appraise the good than to decry the bad. Let us briefly survey the field. In England we are beginning at last to learn something about the Neolithic period. Villages have been discovered near Abingdon and on Windmill Hill (see p. 104). We can even begin to classify the pottery of the period—though twenty years ago not a single type was recognized. We are now, therefore, no longer dependent upon the scanty sherds that may be found in Long Barrows. At the moment interest is centred in this period.



Abroad, by far the most important discoveries are those of Sir John Marshall in India (see p. 113), which rival the classic finds of Rawlinson, Schliemann and Evans. A new civilization is revealed, with writing and all the appurtenances of an advanced culture. In Egypt Dr Reisner has found the Tomb of the mother of Cheops, the builder of the Great Pyramid, which was built between 2900 and 2800 B.C. according to Breasted's chronology. It is intact and unplundered, but has suffered more than Tutankhamen's at the hands of time. Objects of the 3rd and 4th Dynasties are so rare that a find of this kind is of supreme importance, nor could the work of clearance be in better hands than Dr Reisner's. China is at last yielding up the secrets of her past. Palaeolithic and neolithic remains have been found there ; Dr Franz will describe these. An American expedition is setting out to explore the Niger bend—a most promising region ; practically nothing is known of its

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archaeology. South Africa is rapidly solving her own palaeolithic riddles, which are closely connected with the main problem of man's ancestry. Central Asia may yield sensational evidence of the same kind when the American expedition, so ably organized and led by Dr Roy Chapman Andrews, can take the field again. A determined effort is being made by the British Museum to explore the vast ruins of Lubaantun in British Honduras. Mediterranean lands are attracting less attention than they did twenty years ago. But there will be a revival of interest if Herculaneum and the Hippodrome at Constantinople are really to be excavated. Both may yield masterpieces of classical art. Syria and Palestine are beginning to return a rich harvest to British, French and American excavators. In Babylonia, the excavation of Kish and Ur is proceeding, and the roots of civilization are being uncovered.



Excavation remains the most valuable instrument of discovery we possess. It may be supplemented by field-work and air-photography. The uses of air-photography are only beginning to be properly appreciated, and they are many. Air-photographs reveal lost or unsuspected remains, such as "Woodhenge" and the Stonehenge Avenue; they show the excavator where to dig for walls, ditches, or pit-dwellings; they reduce a tangle of earthworks to order and may prove their relative ages; they are invaluable to the lecturer and writer to illustrate his thesis. In this last respect their uses will be apparent to readers of the present number. We intend to use air-photographs, whenever possible, for the purpose of illustrating articles, and, reversing the process, to select some of the best available photographs for use with explanatory text and diagrams. Amongst the most startling are some taken in Iraq which, for the most part, are unpublished.



We shall not confine ourselves too rigidly within the conventional limits of archaeology. The past often lives on in the present. We cannot see the men who built and defended the hill-top settlements of Wessex; but we can learn much from living people who inhabit similar sites to-day in Algeria. From such, and from traditional accounts of Maori forts we learn, by comparison, to understand the dumb language of prehistoric earthworks. Thus to see the past in the

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light of the present is to give it life and substance ; this is the old anthropological method of Tylor and Pitt-Rivers and it has too long been neglected by archaeologists. Some familiarity with the habits and outlook of primitive communities is essential. In fact, your 'savage' is himself the ideal archaeologist and excavator ; for he is familiar with primitive appliances, and can often explain the use of objects which baffle the 'expert.' We have seen such a one answer a question by producing, from his own village, a modern appliance—in this instance a kind of hoe—which was used for the same purpose as, and obviously evolved from one, the one he had dug up.



Never before has so much been known about the past ; never has the desire of knowledge been greater. If the world is our playground, it is also our audience. We employ methods of research undreamt of before ; we call in the aviator, the photographer, the chemist, the astronomer, the botanist, to assist us. What is to be the end of it all ? What new idea is to emerge from all this vast accumulation of facts and give them coherence ? Has it already emerged ? We shall return to this, the most important subject of all.



The universal interest in the past is perfectly natural. It is the interest in life itself. There was a time when archaeology was voted a dull subject, fit only for dry-as-dusts ; yet it was not the subject that was dull, but its exponents. Those days are over. If proof were needed it might be found in the welcome with which our preliminary appeal has been received in all parts of the world. We shall do our utmost to justify the good wishes of our correspondents ; we have a policy and shall carry it out. We ask only for time to accomplish it. It is barely a year since the idea of founding ANTIQUITY occurred to us, and our contributors are all busy men. But we have made an excellent start and future progress is assured. To those who have made this possible we tender our most hearty thanks.