

Antiquity

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Editorial Notes

THE first number of ANTIQUITY has been welcomed with very lively interest, and an enthusiasm which is most gratifying. It is difficult to express our appreciation without using language which might seem insincere or stereotyped, but it is evident that the aims of our REVIEW meet with general approval. We wish once and for all to thank those who (in all parts of the World) by their support have helped to launch ANTIQUITY ; those who have made it known to their friends ; and those who have so kindly written to express their satisfaction with the first number. So numerous were these letters that it was impossible even to acknowledge them individually, and we take this opportunity of doing so generally. They have been an inspiration to continue, and to improve.



Many useful suggestions have been made ; whenever possible we shall act upon them. We have, for example, been promised an article on recent discoveries of classic statuary which will be written by Professor Beasley, of Oxford. An attempt will also be made to give a chronological table of the prehistoric periods, in correlation with the earliest dynasties of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Both these subjects were mentioned by readers. We welcome such suggestions, and so

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far as possible will endeavour to carry them into effect, for it is part of the Editor's job to plague his friends with requests and reminders until a coveted manuscript is actually in his hands.



Chronology is a matter of fundamental importance. Until a reliable chronology has been established, orderly knowledge of the past cannot be said to exist. It may be relative or absolute. A relative chronology may be determined by the excavation of a well stratified site, showing changing forms of pottery and implements. But it cannot become absolute, that is, dated in years, until it can be connected with the civilizations of Egypt or Mesopotamia or, in later times, of Greece and Rome. All attempts to give a date in years to the prehistoric periods of Europe are based ultimately upon Egypt or Mesopotamia. The dating of the Minoan periods of Crete is based upon Egypt ; it has been made possible only by the discovery in each country of imported objects which can be dated. Back to 2000 B.C. all authorities accept the same chronological system for Egypt, and the reign of most of the kings is known to within a year or two. Before that date, however, two systems are in use, that of the German school led by Dr Edouard Meyer (called the Shorter Chronology) and that of Sir Flinders Petrie (called the Longer Chronology).



The chronology of Mesopotamia is more difficult. Lists of rulers, with the length of their reigns, exist on cuneiform tablets ; but there were many city states, each with its own dynasty, and some were contemporary. A new method of enquiry (first used by Father Kugler) is at this moment being followed up by Professor Fotheringham, of Oxford ; it is based upon astronomical observations of the planet Venus, made about 2000 B.C. From this line of research a very definite fixed chronology may be expected. By means of " dead reckoning " backwards, the actual years during which the earlier kings reigned may be determined ; but of course such reckoning becomes less reliable the further back it is carried. The latest results attained have been published by Dr Langdon in the Oxford Editions of Cuneiform texts, vol. II (Oxford University Press, 1923).

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As everyone knows, remarkable new discoveries have been made at Kish and Ur by the British and American expeditions excavating there. New vistas have been opened up into the remote past, and valuable chronological evidence obtained. Here lies buried the oldest civilization in the World. Mesopotamia was an ancient country even in the days of Abraham, and we inherit many of its achievements. Dr H. R. Hall, who, before he succeeded Sir Ernest Budge at the British Museum, conducted excavations himself at 'Ubayd, has promised to review these results in a forthcoming number.



We hope to receive in time for the September number an account of the most recent excavations in the Indus Valley, where Sir John Marshall has discovered inscriptions in an unknown language with Sumerian affinities. This will be based upon a report which Sir John himself has kindly promised to send and which will be published in India about the same time. Dr Einar Gjerstad has promised news about his forthcoming excavations in Cyprus. The next number will also contain several good examples of air-photographs to illustrate a paper by Dr Cecil Curwen on ancient British agriculture. Such illustrations are used in this issue for the article by Flight-Lieutenant Maitland on ancient forts and stone walls in Arabia.



Signor Mussolini deserves the gratitude of the whole civilized world for his magnificent schemes of excavation. The "treasure-ships" of Nemi are to be recovered, Herculaneum is to be excavated, and the heart of Ancient Rome itself laid bare. The expense is to be borne by the Italian Government. Nothing but good can come of public-spirited work like this. If we may make a suggestion it would be that an illustrated report on the results of each undertaking should be published, say annually, in a special journal created for the purpose. Such summary publication would cost nothing, for it would have an enormous sale; it would be free from all taint of sensationalism; and it would be more rapid and more effective than publication in inaccessible learned transactions, which might be reserved for fuller and more detailed studies.

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It may perhaps be thought ungracious to expect more, when so much is promised ; but we cannot refrain from remarking that there is a great field for archaeological air-photography in Italy and Tripoli. So far as we know but little has been done in this direction as yet in either country. Vertical photographs of ancient ruins in Tripoli would surely be possible ; and it would seem that, if the water is clear enough, the submerged ruins in the Bay of Naples would reward photography from above. In comparison with the other projects such undertakings would cost practically nothing. They could probably be taken by naval and military airmen in the ordinary routine of practice.



The disfigurement of rural England proceeds apace. Those who are too ignorant or too stupid to discover for themselves " local features of interest," such as John Bunyan's cottage and the " interesting old church " at Elstow, are to have their attention called to them by " artistic and very effective Road Signs in the finest Stoved Enamel." It is anticipated that one effect will be to make motoring in England " even more popular than it is to-day "—amongst motorists presumably, and inn-keepers. It is to be observed that nothing is said about calling attention to " local features of interest " which lie remote from villages—and hotels ; for which we are duly grateful. The local authorities who are to compose and purchase these road-signs may have knotty problems to solve. Supposing their church is old but not particularly interesting ? (The converse will seldom occur). Supposing the feature of greatest interest stands in private grounds ? We know of several which are hidden in gardens and cannot be seen without trespass. Will Stonehenge be advertised at Amesbury and will it be called a " Druidical Temple " or an " interesting old church " ? What is to be done when the monument is not in the village, but the village in the monument, as at Avebury ? A rich crop of " Roman " camps, " Danish " battlefields and " Druid's Altars " may be expected. There is unconscious humour in the claim that a road sign directing attention to an ancient monument which may well have lasted for 4000 years, " should last in the open for at least ten years." The honours are shared between the *Daily Mail*, The Royal Automobile Club, and Mr E. J. Burrow, whose name and address appear on each sign.