

# Antiquity

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### Editorial Notes

A RECENT remark (which it would be unkind to quote) revealed to the writer the fact that the average Englishman is quite incapable of understanding the outlook of the average scientific research-worker. By the 'average Englishman' is meant the person usually described as 'well educated'; and by the 'average scientific research-worker' is meant the person whose main pursuit (whether amateur or professional) is the advancement of knowledge. The subject is worth considering because it is, in the writer's opinion, closely connected with the nature of intellectual activity itself. Of this there seem to be two kinds. The one is passive, receptive, and consists in absorbing knowledge which has already been assimilated by others, such as a foreign language or the parts of a machine. Memorizing plays a large part in such learning (though of course a good memory is invaluable in all intellectual work). The other form of intellectual activity is active and creative, and consists in the discovery of new facts and the fusing of facts (both new and old) into a new synthesis.



The latter activity is the mainspring of human progress, indeed it is one of the chief things which distinguishes human from animal societies. Without discovery we should never have achieved the Age of Stone or advanced beyond it. Is it then at all strange that those whose primary allegiance is given to the advancement of knowledge should find no room for other loyalties of a lower order? and is it not natural that

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they should be obsessed by an enthusiasm that can override obstructions, apathy or even ridicule? Unfortunately human society is not yet organized as such ; there exist organizations devoted to the good of humanity as a whole, but they fail to achieve as much as they might because the productive forces of society are directed towards other ends. For example, it would obviously be for the good of humanity as a whole to decrease the amount of mere drudgery in industry, and it would be perfectly easy, technically, to do so ; but human society is still grouped into mutually competing units, each with its own survival as the *summum bonum*, and the good of humanity as a whole is a purely secondary consideration, if it is considered at all. Nowhere, outside the unorganized ranks of scientific workers (and not always there) is this the primary governing motive of conduct.



At this stage a voice from the back seats will be heard asking, What has this got to do with archaeology? It has this to do with it—that archaeology is that branch of science which is concerned with the past activities of *man as a species* in different regions of the earth, not with the early history of certain ephemeral modern groups of human society. To take an example, if a new fossil human skull is discovered, we archaeologists are interested, even excited, to discover what new light it may throw upon the evolution of man ; but the discovery itself is presented to the public as the 'oldest Londoner' or the 'oldest Sussex man'. London and Sussex mean much more to the readers of the British press than does the evolution of man, about which our educational system has little to say. But it is to the whole world, present and future (and not to the people of Sussex, London or England merely), that the archaeologist who found the skull will consciously address his report.



That does not imply that ephemeral political units may not often determine the sphere of work. Obviously the home region, whether it be village, province or kingdom, will be for many the chosen sphere, especially when that kingdom happens to be an island. Yet even so the exceptions prove that the real urge springs from a deeper source. The leading authority on English place-names is not an Englishman but a Swede. It was a German (not a Turk) who discovered Troy and

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through his excavations laid the foundations of modern methods. It was an Englishman (happily still with us) who laid bare a completely forgotten Mediterranean civilization in Crete. And it was a Frenchman who recently reconstructed the outlines of Roman Syria—practically without excavation.



This brings us to another misconception—the idea that no one can claim to be an archaeologist unless he devotes most of his time to excavation. It is a misconception that is widely held, as the present writer knows. Now no serious archaeologist would ever dream of depreciating the value of excavation, which is the chief instrument of research in his field of activities. It is one of which everyone who claims to be called a fully-fledged archaeologist must have some practical experience. But it is incorrect to imagine that it is the only one. To give a rough parallel, it would be just as erroneous to regard the general practitioner as not fully qualified because he does not spend the greater part of his time conducting operations. To say nothing of museum-work, distribution-maps or photography, there is an immense field in archaeology for mere observation and record. Much of this is quite independent of excavation. None but a pedant would claim that it is never possible to recognize as such a Roman camp or road, a long barrow or a medieval castle-mound without excavating it first; nor in fact is such a claim seriously made. Moreover, there are many monuments, such as sculptured stones and crosses, which cannot from their nature be excavated. But all these can be discovered by the trained eye, their positions plotted exactly on a map, and photographic records of their features made. This done, we may proceed to study their distribution and from it draw valuable conclusions. Or we may study their style and execution (as in the case of crosses) and learn about the art of the people who made them. Work like this is discovery and there is unlimited scope for it everywhere.



Here a reminder may be given of the valuable photographic survey of pre-Norman sculpture now being carried out by the British Museum. Instructions for the guidance of those wishing to cooperate have been printed in *ANTIQUITY* (1936, x, 3) and it must suffice now to give the address to which those anxious to help should write (Mr T. D. Kendrick or Dr Ernst Kitzinger, British Museum). An exhibition of

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some of the photographs already sent in was held recently at the British Museum ; and this alone was evidence in proof of the contention put forward above. Excavation, we repeat, is paramount and of central importance, but there are other branches of activity no less enthralling when once the taste is acquired.



The main subject of these Notes has been the relation between the average Englishman and the average research-worker. It was claimed that the one is generally blind to the outlook of the other. On a previous occasion it was suggested that the Universities were themselves not wholeheartedly interested in research ; and as an example the neglect of papyri and inscribed tablets was taken. Out of those remarks arose a desultory correspondence in a University magazine, followed by a private correspondence between the writer and a member of a University Press. The examples were chosen, not, as seemed to be thought, because the writer had some personal predilection for papyri or cuneiform tablets ; but because these objects (with others that could have been mentioned, such as inscriptions on stone) are unquestionably of primary importance in the reconstruction of history, particularly of economic history. The writer still stands by the opinion expressed in the major premise—that the leading Universities are not whole-heartedly interested in research ; nor is he convinced by the facts brought forward that the study of papyri and inscribed tablets is not still comparatively neglected by the University of Oxford (and elsewhere). But it seems that, in citing the example of American Universities he was misled by a personal impression. Neither here nor there does it appear to be regarded as the primary duty of the University as such to encourage research by publishing the results at its own charge. Many of the research volumes which issue from the University Presses, and which the world at large puts down to the credit of the University, are really paid for by other bodies. We do not think it is necessary to say any more.