Antiquity

VOL. XXIV No. 93 MARCH 1950

Editorial Notes

MANY new readers will form their first opinions (we hope favourable) of ANTIQUITY from the present number. While we are content that it should be so, we think it reasonable to point out certain things which can hardly be apparent from the contents of any single number. Some have already been hinted at in the widely distributed leaflet by means of which we increase our circulation. But there is no room there for more than the briefest and most blatant trumpetings. ANTIQUITY represents a point of view which is not otherwise articulate except in the somewhat technical articles published by learned societies—and not always there. It reports the progress of discovery and invention everywhere, and says in effect to its readers : ' These things are important and will interest you ; they are not merely the sport of specialists. What these people are doing is to unearth the basic facts of life in past ages ; in these pages you can get some idea of how they do it and how it should be done, even if you can't always master the technical processes involved. We archaeologists depend on your support and in return we try to keep you up-to-date about what is going on '.

How far do the contents of this number justify such claims ? Take Major Williams-Hunt's article on Siamese earthworks. Some may say they are not interested in Siam or its history, and the writer of these notes was one such. But he is interested in earthworks, and when he was shown an air-photo of one in Siam that looked just like Badbury Rings in Dorset, he began to change his opinion. Here was a group of people who had solved the problem of home defence in the same way as our own ancestors. The facts are completely new ; no such earthworks had ever been recorded or even suspected in Siam until these air-photos revealed them, and even now no one has been to examine any single one of them on the ground. The facts are also important because they relate to a basic human need, defence. And finally their revelation, by air-photography, is a good example of ' how they do it '. Even therefore if Siamese history leaves you cold, you may still find something of interest in this article.

What is the point of view which ANTIQUITY represents ? In terms of individuals, it represents the generation which between the wars built modern archaeology on the foundations laid by Haverfield and before him by Pitt-Rivers. In terms of culture—for archaeology and anthropology themselves are of course culture-traits—ANTIQUITY

looks at the world past and present in the sort of way that Tylor and Morgan would probably have looked at it, had they been alive today. This is not the place for a sermon on anthropology ; but we do want our readers, especially the new ones, to grasp the fact that this matter of points of view is of vital and fundamental importance, not only with regard to history and the past but in the things of everyday life. We can best illustrate ours by an example of the opposite.

A writer in the *Times Literary Supplement* (November 6, 1948), reviewing a book on New Zealand, selects as ' outstanding ' a chapter on literature and the arts there. The author (says the reviewer) regards the ' basic culture of New Zealand ' as ' still predominantly that which was brought over from Victorian England, and says that the greater sense of nationhood which developed during the depression among younger writers . . . has not changed markedly the attitude of the general public. He gives a warning against trying to force the growth of a national cultural consciousness '. The scene suggested here—of young writers in Victorian surroundings developing a ' sense of nationhood ' during the depression, and being disappointed because everyone ignored them—has a quaint charm of its own ; one can almost see the horsehair sofas and texts on the walls. But the arrogance of it ! To imagine that ' national cultural consciousness ' is created at all (much less ' forced ') by writers young or old ! We prefer to think that it is the dog that wags the tail. But this idea, that facts can be altered by words, that talking or writing at large can control or even change the culture of nations, this idea is still dominant in the world at large. It is implicit in such missionary work as consists only in preaching a gospel, though the history of all missions confutes it. (Missionaries often produce results by the example of their lives).

ANTIQUITY belongs to the school of Darwin, Tylor, Morgan and Pitt-Rivers, and regards art and literature as elements of culture to be studied as such, not as determinants thereof. We believe that this point of view can be clarified and made acceptable, and this not by preaching (and these notes must *ipso facto* be included) but by the advancement and diffusion of knowledge. We believe that all the facts of human history vindicate it. We also believe that some facts are more important than others and that we can recognize them. In archaeology—and in all other branches of science—we regard the invention of a new technique as (in outstanding examples) more important than many discoveries regarded as sensational. The discovery of a means of dating wood and other organic substances by the Carbon 14 method (as it is to be called) is regarded as far more important than that of the Hebrew Scrolls. That principle is recognized in modern affairs ; the invention of broadcasting by radio is obviously of more importance than, say, the foundation of a daily newspaper. We believe in complete liberty of expression for all views and detest all inquisitions, red or black.

We think it is partly because ANTIQUITY has always represented this point of view that it is not only alive—in two senses—today, but increasing its circulation. Some readers might be surprised if they knew how closely their reactions were watched. It is they who keep us going, and it is very good for us to be thus kept on our toes. It is good for us to have competitors. Our aim is to double our circulation without lowering our

standard. We might perhaps get a large circulation by abandoning all standards and becoming a mere picture paper for brainless people; but there could be no satisfaction (to the editor or his partner) in conducting such a paper, and we most certainly do not for a moment envisage it. We are doing very well at present and want nothing but the means to do better—and that will come as our circulation rises. Meanwhile, as this is the beginning of a new year, may we be excused for calling attention to the paper slip enclosed in the copies of those who have not already paid? Prompt payment is an enormous help; and payment by Banker's Order, which can begin any time, is a great saving of bother to all concerned.

Publishers and authors must want to sell the books they produce, but they often themselves make this unnecessarily difficult. We receive many books—far more than we have room to review or even mention; and some of the best are published by archaeological societies. But two of the latest received had no indication anywhere of their price, and one of them gave no clue to the society's whereabouts, not even the address of the editor or secretary. How on earth can those responsible expect the public to buy their books if this essential information is withheld? We can hardly believe that such societies object to selling their special publications or *separata* (when these are made available for purchase) to non-members; for, apart from the immediate returns, that must surely help to recruit new members. Commercial publishers in this country and America usually state the price, though sometimes not on the book itself (as they should) but on an enclosed slip, being wiser in this respect than the children of light. We have observed that coyness in printing the price in the books themselves increases with the price. (The besetting sin of the commercial publisher is to omit the date or conceal it in small print behind the title-page—which is its proper place.) The information which an interested reader may be expected to want is the address to which he or his bookseller should write (1) to obtain a copy (2) to become a member, and the cost of each. Even when this information is given, it is often buried in an elaborate list of the society's officers, and he is not helped in deciding whether he should write to the editor at his private address (when given, sometimes only in the list of members in another fascicule) or to the society's headquarters, or to its secretary or to the printer. By this failure to observe the elementary rules of business, learned societies impose unnecessary handicaps upon themselves.

Mr Collins writes:—It is kind of you to devote so much space to our Blewburton excavations. Your admirable summary, however, contains one slip to which attention should be called: in your last paragraph but one you attribute the burial in the ditch to Iron Age A. If this were so it would upset the otherwise established sequence of pre-earthwork A2 followed by post-earthwork AB. In fact, the pot found with the burial shows B influence in its profile and in its incipient bead-rim. The adze is of the type found on sites such as Hunsbury and Glastonbury, where B influence is very strong.

The Editor wishes to thank all those readers who have written to congratulate him on the honour conferred on him by the King. He hopes to be able to write and thank each person individually; but as he left England for the Sudan almost immediately afterwards, many such letters could not be answered before his departure.