

Antiquity

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Editorial Notes

WHEN, last September, we asked our readers to contribute towards the UR EXCAVATIONS, we little guessed what wonderful discoveries were about to be made. In the present number we are able to give the first full published account of them, specially written for ANTIQUITY by Mr Woolley himself; and an appreciation, by Dr Hall, Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum, of the general position reached at Ur. Mr Woolley's five years' previous work had shown that here on one site were combined great excavating skill and a remote and almost unknown phase of civilization—the oldest phase revealed anywhere. Now there has been added the glamour of buried treasure. For once a great find of gold and silver objects has also great scientific value. Until Mr Woolley found the foundation-tablet of A-anni-padda in 1923 at Tell el Obeid [al 'Ubaid], 4 miles from Ur, it was permissible to regard the first dynasty of Ur as legendary. Now such a view is impossible. The existence of Mes-anni-padda, the first king of the first dynasty, was made still more certain by the discovery of the seal of his wife, Nin-dumu-nin. But the latest finds go back even behind the first dynasty, which we now know to have been preceded by a line of kings and queens hitherto unknown and unmentioned in any of the king-lists. Fortunately the names of some are given by inscriptions. Who were King A-bar-gi and Queen Sub-ad whose graves were already

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forgotten 5000 years ago? That they were no mere tribal chiefs is proved by the sumptuous possessions they hoped to take with them into another world—the gold jewelry and semi-precious stones, the gold and silver vases, the beautiful inlaid harp, the bullock waggons, the slaughtered soldiers and attendants. That their subjects had advanced far along the road of culture is proved by these objects, some of them requiring much technical skill, by their use of the true arch, by their art. All these things belong to the period 3500–3100 B.C.—we give the possible range—and even then we are plainly far removed from the beginnings!



The British Museum and the Museum of the University of Philadelphia are to be congratulated upon the marvellous success of their joint undertaking. Seldom has 'digging for knowledge' been so amply recompensed. Virtue is, of course, its own reward; but the reward is not always thus gilded. The practical effect, moreover, is considerable. Archaeological research depends ultimately upon public support when it involves the expenditure of much money. Had Mr Woolley found no gold at all and no objects of any intrinsic or spectacular value, he would nevertheless have made an epoch-making discovery; but it would have remained unknown to all but a few specialists. Apart from such secondary—but important—considerations, gold objects have a real superiority over those of silver and copper and some other materials, for gold is incorruptible; it does not oxidize or tarnish and *objets d'art* made of it look today as new as on the day they were made. Hence the extraordinary freshness of the animal figurines (plate II), of the leaves and flowers of Queen Šub-ad's cape (plate I), and of the inscribed name of Mes-kalam-dug (plate VI, 2). The same good fortune preserves for us, though less perfectly, the inlaid designs of limestone and shell.

It is clear from Mr Woolley's allusions (*e.g.* on pages 11–12) that he still has in store a rich treasure of art, without taking into account what the next few weeks' digging may reveal. The silver boats, the waggons, the head-pieces, the harp, the jewelry and inlay-work are still undescribed, and we must wait in patience. Discoveries such as these throw upon the excavator an immense burden of labour and responsibility. No one should miss the annual exhibition at the British Museum this summer. It should be worth travelling from the ends of the earth to see.

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One of the best ways of conjuring up the past is to go there for a holiday. No time-machine is required for the journey. Within a thousand miles of London there are people still living a life as primitive as that of our prehistoric ancestors. The Berbers of the Aures Mountains are not of course connected with us, nor is life in North Africa today the exact counterpart of life in pre-Roman Britain. But there is much in common, as readers of Captain Hilton-Simpson's article in our last number will have learnt. In order to see something of this life at first hand, if only as a tourist, the Editor spent his Christmas holiday in the Aures district, away from roads, travelling on a mule. It was a strange experience; one felt as if one was living in a past age. One ate good whole-meal bread, made from flour ground on hand-mills (see *ANTIQUITY*, i, plate 7 facing page 400) that might have been found at Rotherley or Glastonbury. One fed with wooden spoons from a common hand-made earthen bowl that might have come from All Cannings Cross; and one slept in early Iron Age quarters! The illusion—for a British archaeologist—was the more complete in that much of the pottery used is of the 'finger-tip' type (see *Antiquaries' Journal*, ii, 1922, page 29), characteristic of the late Bronze and early Iron Ages. (In answer to an enquiry it was stated that the 'finger-tip' indentations are applied, to raised ribs of clay or to the lip, with the finger-tips *or* with a pointed stick indifferently). Some of the smaller, globular pots are used for cooking or steaming food in; the larger serve also as chimney-pots, the bottoms being knocked out. In one modern cemetery nearly every grave had one of these small bowls lying on it.



It was a pleasant surprise to come accidentally upon the old quern-maker portrayed in plate 7, referred to above, squatting in the same spot, chipping away at a quern exactly as he appears in the picture, taken before the war. One never tired of watching the craftsmen at work and admiring their extraordinary skill. (To them this interest was inexplicable, so accustomed are they to the sight). With no tool but an adze (mounted in a short handle, just like our Iron Age ones, but flanged, not socketed) the village blacksmith shapes the simple parts of the wooden plough and then fits to it the iron shoe he has just forged. Every blow falls where it is meant.

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The villages are almost entirely self-supporting. From sheep to rug, bag or carpet—from cultivation-plot to table—every process is carried out, and nearly every tool is made, at home. Almost the only imports are salt and occasional luxuries of European origin—a table-cloth or chair, an iron kettle or glass tumbler, a bottle of aniseed. Individuality and good manners still survive and count, but there is no art. Life indeed is hard and unattractive, especially for the women who carry the water and gather fuel. Indeed the winter visitor sees one side only; the resident sees the other, when summer brings heat, dust and flies. The simple life may be all right from outside, but those who practice it of necessity usually hold strong views about it.



The comedy of GLOZEL (first exposed in ANTIQUITY) would have ended in a shout of laughter had not the daily press—with one or two exceptions—been completely hoodwinked. Between 4 November and 8 November the International Commission carried out investigations at Glozel. Objects were found—amongst them being an ‘inscribed’ clay tablet; and so the reporters concluded that all was well. To them a find is a find, no matter how it is made, or what the stratification. This favourable impression was naturally strengthened by the daily bulletins with which Dr Morlet fed them and which, for lack of more solid food, they hungrily devoured through the bars of the enclosure. No authoritative pronouncements were made, the members of the Commission having very properly agreed to maintain silence. On 23 November *The Times* published an article by the Editor of ANTIQUITY headed ‘A Sceptic on Glozel’. The *Paris Daily Mail*, however, assuming that ‘what I say three times is true’, provided its readers with the following choice news-items:—‘The genuine nature of the finds, whatever their date, is now beyond dispute, and is accepted by all the members of the Commission’ (8 November); ‘The Commission’s report which will be issued shortly’—it was issued six weeks later—‘will, I understand, declare the absolute authenticity of the finds and the complete absence of fraud, but will not venture a final and definite decision as to their date’ (14 November);

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' the majority of the members of the Commission, it is understood, are quite satisfied that the finds are absolutely genuine, and scout the suggestion of trickery ' (20 December). Actually of course the Commission reported unanimously that (with a few insignificant exceptions mostly to do with the glass factory) the finds were not ancient. On 7 January, *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* published a damning letter from Sir Arthur Evans, who made a special visit to Glozel ; he expressed surprise that such obvious fakes should have deceived anyone. In the middle of January was published the report of M. Champion, technical assistant at the S. Germain Museum, of which M. Reinach is still the Director. Charged with the minute examination of the objects themselves, M. Champion reported that they were forgeries, and that files and other iron tools had been used in their manufacture (*Revue Anthropologique*, 1928, nos. 1-3, E. Nourry, 62 Rue des Ecoles, Paris). These triple blows have demolished Glozel ; after a short but gay life it is dead. On the field of battle lie the corpses of several learned reputations.



With the sequel in the law-courts we are not here concerned. We are told that one of the cases has been got up merely as a newspaper stunt, offers having been made to pay the expenses of *both* parties ! Readers who wish to read more about this silly business will find an excellent and witty summary in our contemporary the *London Mercury* (January 1928, pp. 229-33), which has not, like the *Mercure de France*, been deceived, and which has throughout maintained a critical attitude, as one would have expected. The Commission's report is published as a supplement of the *Revue Anthropologique*, 1927, nos. 10-12 ; M. Champion's is in the following number. In the current number of *L'Anthropologie* (vol. xxxvii, 1927, pp. 575-94), is a documented history of the affair ; and M. Vayson de Pradenne contributes an amusing little article, ' La deuxième affaire Glozel ', to *L'Opinion*, Saturday, 28 January. With the exception of the first, not one of these publications gives ANTIQUITY the credit for leading the attack on Glozel ; but French archaeology begins and ends at home, and we may safely leave our neighbours to clear up the mess that has been made. We shall not refer again to Glozel—unless greatly provoked.

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We regret to inform our readers that VOLUME ONE of ANTIQUITY is now out of print. The Editor will gladly buy back at cost price (five shillings each) any copies of numbers 2 (June) and 3 (September) which readers may be willing to dispose of. Copies of numbers 1 (March) and 4 (December) can still be supplied. The price of the bound volume, if it becomes available again, will be two guineas; there is already a long waiting-list.



SUBSCRIPTIONS for the year 1928 are now due and an early renewal by means of the form enclosed with this number will be appreciated.



In the underline of Vol. i, plate 7 facing page 400, for 'Menaar' read 'Beni Fera', and on page 433, six lines from bottom, for the figures in brackets substitute 450-600 A.D.