

Antiquity

A Quarterly Review of Archaeology

VOL. VIII No. 30

JUNE 1934

Editorial Notes

THE outstanding event of the year is the publication of the second volume—actually two large books—of 'Ur Excavations'.* The world is thus given the substantive report on an epoch-making event within six years of its occurrence. Fairly full annual reports have already appeared in THE ANTIQUARIES JOURNAL and in the PENNSYLVANIA UNIVERSITY MUSEUM JOURNAL. Dr Woolley thus succeeds in striking the happy mean between undue haste and excessive delay. Having no hungry hoards demanding annual appeasement, he is under no compulsion to settle his whole account each year; but neither does he indefinitely postpone the settlement of his debt. All scholars will agree that he has discharged it in full in the present instance; and they will be especially grateful to the Carnegie Corporation for that help which puts these sumptuous volumes within the reach of the students for whom they are intended. Examples have occurred—Mohenjo-daro, Serindia and to some extent even Knossos—where the final accounts of equally important work have been published at prices far beyond the average intelligent purse.

* *Ur Excavations*, vol. II: *The Royal Cemetery*, by C. L. Woolley; in two parts, text (604 pages) and plates (274). Published for the Trustees of the British Museum, and of the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, by the aid of a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York; and printed in Great Britain at the University Press, Oxford. Price four guineas (the price was three guineas before April).



AT ST. ABB'S HEAD. (*See p. 202*)
Ph. O. G. S. Crawford

facing p. 129

ANTIQUITY

Of the contents of the volumes we need say little. They describe the excavation of the tombs in the Royal Cemetery which yielded such rich grave-goods and so many priceless (if not always to our eyes beautiful) works of art. Both specialist and general reader will be well content with the fare provided. Dr Woolley's narrative is always lucid and often enthralling; nor need any layman hesitate to read it. He has developed his own technique of excavation and conservation; and his collaboration with expert artificers at the British Museum has produced startling results, as the illustrations show. As a minor point of criticism we note a difference in quality between the indoor photographs (of objects) and those of the excavations themselves which, though good and doubtless taken under extreme difficulties of light and dust, might sometimes be better.



British archaeologists have every reason to be proud of their post-war record at home and abroad; and everyone will congratulate Dr and Mrs Woolley on the successful conclusion of one episode in a great joint undertaking. The honours are divided between England, America, Syria and Iraq, each contributing after his kind.



This number of *ANTIQUITY* contains a list of Books Received. Such is the accepted method of acknowledging books which cannot be reviewed; but we feel impelled to add some words in extenuation. Obviously there is not room to review at length every book received. Yet the output of books, periodicals and 'separata' grows greater, and many of them are good and even readable. Occasional massacres are inevitable, and on such occasions both justice and expediency have to be considered. The interests of readers and authors demand that reviews shall be published as quickly as possible, accumulations have to be got rid of somehow, or we remain perpetually in arrears. We hope that those whose books are only thus briefly acknowledged—or may even have been altogether overlooked—will appreciate our difficulties and make allowances. We do our single-handed best, but the labour is onerous and unremitting.

EDITORIAL NOTES

We would take this opportunity of thanking those reviewers who have helped us so generously in the past, and continue to do so. It is not an easy task, we know, to review a book. For one thing the conscientious reviewer has to read the book first ; whereas, if he is merely writing an article or (as in this instance) thinking aloud, he can take up his pen at once and go ahead. Then again, there are many books which do not lend themselves to verbiage ; either they are so good that there is little or nothing to criticize, or they are too bad for words. It is always possible, and generally desirable, to give some sort of resumé of the contents, but this takes time. The reader wants certain concrete information :—Is this a good (*i.e.* dependable) book ? Is it written well, or in jargon ? Can I, a mere layman, understand what it is all about ? and (last but not least) How much is it and where can I buy it ?



The last items are of great practical importance, and we make every effort to inform our readers of them. (We have sometimes written specially to the publishers to enquire the price). It seems incredible that anyone should be so foolish as to send a book to an editor for review—or indeed send it out at all—without giving his own address and the price of the book ; yet this is often done, the worst offenders being foreign publishers, museums and learned societies. How on earth they expect the public to buy their goods when they withhold this essential information it is difficult to imagine.



The publishers' habit of giving no address except ' Paris ' or ' Berlin ', for example, has no sense. They may assume, for business purposes, that they are so well known that nothing else is needed, but this attitude serves no useful purpose and is simply a great inconvenience to all concerned. It is difficult, however, to think of any adequate explanation for the omission of the price, except in the case of very expensive books. It is surely a matter of common knowledge that books *are* sold, not given away by publishers ; so why be shy of saying for how much ? The price does not fluctuate unless the currency

ANTIQUITY

does ; and even then the rate of change in the book-trade is slow, and lags. It is the rarest thing to find a book with the price printed on it. We give it up.



Failure to state year of publication (on title-page, even if also elsewhere) ought to be a penal offence. It is perhaps less common than the others mentioned, and is now mainly confined to elementary textbooks which become out of date soon after publication (when not so already). Apart from bibliographical requirements it is important to know the date because that tells us at what stage in the history of the subject, and in what cultural environment, it was composed. For the same reason the best people always try to give dates in their footnote references to books and articles, the paragon in this respect being Rice Holmes's *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar* (Oxford, 1907). All subject bibliographies should give dates, even if they have to be supplied from internal or other evidence, or are only approximate.



Finally we here and now broadcast an appeal to those few reviewers who, having promised, have so far failed to reply to all enquiries about their progress—including also some writers of articles who have not responded. The sending out of reminders is an unnecessary waste of our time which might be used to better advantage.