Prehistoric Human Life

THE OLD STONE AGE. By Marjorie and C. H. B. Quennell. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

THERE is no more fascinating field of study than that of prehistoric times and the life of men during their earliest gropings toward civilization. There is so much room for quite legitimate speculation, for argumentation and deductions and inferences from the comparatively few facts of which we are absolutely sure. It was a natural consequence that the pure romancers, the makers of the fiction of adventure, should have fallen avidly upon this field, and some of them have produced not merely readable stories but stories of some value as guesses at what men and women were up to in the Stone Ages. But for the most part the writers of fiction have overdone it, reaching misleading, sometimes absurd, results. It is better to approach it more soberly in treating it for popular consumption. That is the point at which such a book as this comes in, most acceptably.

The authors—an artist and an architect, neither professing to be an authority in the science—have managed to keep pretty safely within bounds. They are not imagining their facts, nor are they guilty of the common error of making their prehistoric folk far too sophisticated. The book is aimed at the youthful reader, or the non-technical student, and is admirably fluent, simple in its terminology, but always soundly founded upon good authority. It is also especially valuable in its preliminary explanations, dealing with the "A B C of archæology," giving a great deal of essential introduction, much of which is too often taken for granted in such popular works.

They are also careful to be frank about points that are still unsettled, sometimes giving the various theories, sometimes merely stating the one most prevalent at the moment. For example, scientists are far from being agreed as to the cause or causes of the several Ice Ages; the book contents itself with a lucid explanation of the variations of the earth's inclination of the equator to the orbit, &c. The chief thing, after all, is the demonstration that there certainly were these periodic epochs of glaciation. The account of that centrally important fact, and the explanation of how the glaciers worked, is unusually good.

The chief aim of the book is to find out, as well as we can, how the men of the Old Stone Age must have lived, basing our conclusions primarily upon the actual relics they have left behind for our scrutiny. "It will not do," they say, "to jump to conclusions. Shall we judge him by his work? If we try to find out how he lived, the tools he used, and the things that he made with them, then in the end we shall have a picture in our minds." The book is very successful in building up such a picture. The long series of flint and bone implements, from the much disputed eoliths down to the "tremendous revelations of Magdalenian art," are rapidly passed in review, explained, amply illustrated, and then deductions are made from them as to what their owners and makers must have been like.

The authors also, however, venture, rather boldly, into the making of comparisons between the Old Stone Age men and the lowest types of modern savages, the now vanished Tasmanian, the Australian, and the Tierra del Fuegians. There is always a dangerous possibility of error in this procedure, though it is an entirely legitimate one. On the whole the uses made of it in this book, are justified. But there remain a good many unknown factors that may, some day, upset such inferences as the spade unearths further evidence.

Here and there, too, the writers are just a bit loose in their phrasing, as in the statement that "Pithecanthropus was a *link* between gibbon and man," which is unfortunate in giving the impression that the gibbon and the Java humanoid creature are in the direct line of human descent instead of being somewhat remote collateral relatives. It will hardly do, in common parlance, to call either a "link." But such slips are few, and rarely of importance. The book as a whole is sound.

Naturally the most fascinating section of all is that dealing with the marvels of art of the Magdalenian period: the astounding drawings in color found in certain caves in Spain and southern France. They offer a problem as yet wholly unsolved, since after a blaze of splendor along about the middle of the Stone Age, they vanish, and no further trace has yet been found of the people who made them. It must be remembered all the time, in considering these drawings, that nothing in any way comparable turns up again until we reach the Ægean civilization and the beginnings of the great, naturalistic Greek art. It is highly misleading to compare these cave paintings with the work of any known modern primitive peoples, such as the American Indians. All savages draw pictures, but they do not draw them like that, nor did any civilized people, Egyptian, Semitic or Chinese, ever attain just that manner—not until the Greek genius emerges. The most intriguing suggestion yet made is that put forth tentatively by Salomon Reinach, some years ago, that these artistic folk followed the reindeer to the north and northeast as the ice cap retreated, and that, therefore, it is not impossible that excavation and research in central Europe or even Asia may some day reveal them again. It is hard to think that they were wholly exterminated.

The chief aim of this excellent book is indicated in a summary:

It was the tools of prehistoric man which made possible the beginnings of so many other things. The harpoon must have been used from some sort of boat or canoe. The huts have developed into our houses; the perforated wolf's fangs or cowrie shells, strung together as a necklet, and the hollow base of a mammoth's tusk sawn off as a bracelet led the way for all other people who wanted to make themselves beautiful. But needles made fine sewing and embroidery possible. . . .

It is well to remember that the peoples of the earliest Stone Age were men and women, essentially like ourselves, physically, and possibly with a brain capacity nearly as great as ours. What they lacked was experience and acquired knowledge. We need feel no kinship to the Trinil ape-man, but assuredly the artists of Altamira are venerable members of our own family. The more we can learn about them the better. This book makes an excellent introduction to the study.

A bark raft.

Australian hut.

Mousterian cave dwellers.

The Literature of Meyerling's Mystery

Continued from Page Seven.

buried. "Rudolph lay honored in state," writes Countess Larisch, "Marie Vatsera was buried like a dog, her uncles who knelt by the grave were only allowed to pray for a few seconds beside it, for the policemen tapped them on the shoulder and told them they must not linger." The grave was overgrown with wild grass and flowers when last I saw it and the little grave stone crumbling, but there could still be read the inscription chiseled on it:

"We grow up as a flower and are cut off."

The Vatsera palace at Vienna was closed overnight. Marie's uncles, the Baltazzis, disappeared as if by magic. The second morning after the Meyerling tragedy two women landed from an Austrian boat at Venice. They were Marie's mother and sister, Hanna. The places which had known them knew them no more.

SUNDRY ACCOUNTS

¶ "A rich and meaty feast. Short stories which range from stark tragedy to broad farce. At least three will live long after Cobb has gone."—Robert Davis, New York *Herald*.

By Irvin S. Cobb

At All Bookshops $2.00

DORAN BOOKS

Immortality and the Modern Mind

By KIRSOPP LAKE

of Harvard University

This is the Ingersoll Lecture for 1922, delivered on May 8th. Starting from the absorption in work characteristic of our age, Professor Lake builds up a virile conception of Immortality of Life as distinct from perpetuation of individuality—a point of view that will appeal strongly to those who can accept neither the traditional doctrine nor the experimentations of Psychical Research.

$1.00 a copy at all bookshops.

Harvard University Press

24 Randall Hall, Cambridge, Mass.
522 Fifth Avenue, New York City

Barbara Justice

By **DIANA PATRICK**

Author of "The Wider Way" and "Islands of Desire"

$2.00 *at any bookstore*

E. W. OSBORN in *The World* writes:

"The adventures of Diana Patrick's latest heroine are many and are frequently incredible. Always they are interesting. At times they are thrilling. . . . By their intriguing character we know Miss Patrick for a wise author in her generation. . . . The story, like Barbara herself, is colorful, full of life and movement. . . . She establishes herself firmly among our favored heroines of romance for the season, and we shall be surprised if the book of her fails of a choice place among the favorite love stories of the coming vacation days."

E. P. DUTTON & CO., Publishers, Fifth Ave., New York