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Editorial Notes

IT is the business of ANTIQUITY to call attention to crying needs in the sphere of archaeology all over the world, and particularly in those still quite extensive regions which are under British government. One such need is the training of archaeologists to fill the posts of Directors of Archaeology (or whatever they may be called) in colonial countries. Such posts already exist in some and are likely to be created before long in others. We are thinking especially of the Sudan, Eritrea, Somaliland, Kenya and Nigeria. By reason of the long interlude of war it is by no means easy now to fill such appointments ; the work demands some practical skill in many branches of archaeology—excavation, the conservation of buildings and other ancient monuments, the preservation of antiquities, the management of a museum and all that implies, photography and surveying.

We would suggest that the training of persons to fill such posts should be considered by those Universities which in fact do now supply most of the candidates. It is a task that can be accomplished better at a University than elsewhere ; for although the qualifications (as we have said) are specific, premature specialization is a thing to be avoided at all costs. The general principles of archaeology can be learnt in any field ; some of its greatest exponents (such as Petrie and Evans) did their first archaeological work in England before they went to the East. It is essential for the student to acquire a sense of archaeological values—that, for example, a coin picked up on the surface is inferior in value to one found in a stratified deposit. But one might go even further back, emphasizing the fact that ' new ' countries are only new to us Europeans ; they have had their own history which can only be discovered and recreated by digging and other archaeological techniques, which we can and should teach them. Readers may remember that in a recent number we published an illustration of a party of excavators in Central Asia (June, 1946, Plate II b, opp. p. 93). We selected this from amongst several others submitted because it shows that, under proper direction, primitive peoples can do archaeological work. Not all will respond of course, but some will, and they will become a nucleus for the training of others.

General principles are not easy to teach ; they are learnt half unconsciously, chiefly from personal contact with the teacher. But once learnt they enable the archaeologist to cope with any situation anywhere. For instance, one of the duties of an official

archaeologist abroad is the formulation, in concert with the other authorities, of antiquity regulations, and the granting of permission to excavate. If he has a firm grasp of first principles, he will insist upon the publication, within a short time of their conclusion, of a report on the excavations.

To sum up, those bodies which are concerned with the advancement of knowledge are responsible for the training and provision of students to fill certain posts that already exist. There is no sense in plaguing government departments to create new archaeological posts if we on our side cannot provide properly trained candidates even for those which already exist—and this applies to home appointments as well. The Government, on its side, has certain obligations to perform, and should set about its task in the proper way. Nothing is more surprising and regrettable than the complete absence of any clear-cut policy in archaeological administration abroad displayed by the British Government. The first essential move should of course be the appointment of a properly trained archaeologist to protect the ancient sites and monuments and to save from loss or destruction such remains as are unearthed from time to time. The first demands an adequate staff which must be trained and sent on tours of inspection ; the second demands a museum where remains can be kept and exhibited. It is quite futile to appoint the archaeologist but deny him the tools to do his work, yet this is the usual procedure even in those rare cases where an archaeologist is appointed. In the whole of the British possessions in Africa mentioned above there is not a single properly equipped and endowed museum ! The premises—that archaeology is important—are sometimes admitted ; but the conclusion—that its raw material should be properly looked after and available for study—is always negatived by failure to provide a museum.

The attitude of the British Government (which generally means some official in the Treasury or Colonial Office) towards archaeology (and we might add history as well) is ultimately determined by those seats of higher learning which educate its members ; it is they who set the standards, and these in content are still those of the 18th century. That was a highly civilized period, but many avenues then closed have now opened up. Today in England a person may be regarded as well-educated though he is completely ignorant of the most elementary facts about the origins of man, of civilization, of writing, of the invention of the other useful arts or of the history of his native land before the arrival of Julius Caesar. His knowledge of geography, essential to any understanding of history, ancient or modern, is always rudimentary, and often defective over huge areas of the earth's surface (including those parts for whose welfare he is himself ultimately responsible). He may be completely ignorant of the causes which determine the weather (meteorology), the physical features of the landscape (geology), the evolution of life (palaeontology), the constitution of matter (physics and chemistry) or the structure of the universe (astronomy). By this ignorance (for which not he but his teachers are responsible) he loses much of the interest of life.

That this is not an exaggeration may be seen from what are called—we fear correctly—the ' weekly opinion-making journals ', which devote a section to such things as the Arts, Entertainment and Book-reviews. No doubt the editors know

their public and have to provide them with what they want; it is not, then, the editors who are chiefly to blame, though we think they could do a lot more in the formation of opinion if they were not themselves usually as ignorant about many subjects as their readers are. To judge from the weekly culture-content of a journal such as the *New Statesman and Nation*, a large section of the intelligentsia is exclusively interested in pictures (especially modern ones), broadcasting, gramophone-records and the movies. From the nature of the book-reviews, and those selected for review, it would appear, that history and archaeology are subjects too difficult or too technical for their comprehension.

Things being as they are, we must not expect much improvement until the content of higher education is widened. But one has the impression that more might be done to widen the scope of the non-political parts of the weeklies, were they not in the hands of a narrow literary clique. Needless to say we are not attacking good literature, but merely complaining that much of what is itself (by comparison with some of the rubbish produced) good literature is ignored. It would be invidious to mention living authors, but of those no longer alive we would mention the writings of Haverfield, Macdonald and Collingwood. Everything written by them was a model of form and usually an addition to knowledge. It is a great mistake to suppose that scholars never write well or that ' literary men ' always have some message to deliver to an anxious and expectant world. ' Literary men ' write to make a living, and the more they write the more money they make. Scholars rarely make money by their books. But that which is done for love is generally better done than that which is done for money.

Or take museums. How much enthusiastic, underpaid work is done by museum-curators all over England ? But does one ever hear of it ? Not in the pages of the *New Statesman* at any rate; and that journal professes to be interested in education. How much voluntary educational work of the highest order is done by overworked museum curators, taking parties of school-children round and explaining to them the meaning of the exhibits and how from them we can learn our own history ? In many years I cannot recall a single reference to all this mass of educational work that is going on (and went on during the war) day after day all over the country. It is of far more solid worth than most of the trash that poses as art and literature today. There has recently been some correspondence in the *New Statesman* about the plight of so called ' creative writers '. If they were any good at all they would write because they must, whatever their plight. What happens when the ' literary man ' receives good payment may be gathered from an article in the *New Statesman* (19 April, 1947) on ' Books and Ballyhoo '.

You can sit down and write a poem or a novel with nothing but a pencil and paper; but the scholar, the archaeologist and the historian need much more than this. They cannot work or write without books and museums, and to advance knowledge archaeologists must also excavate, and historians must have photostats of manuscripts. It is they who need money, not for themselves but in order that they may do their work at all. It is they and not these literary gents who need support.