

News and Views

Discovery of a Living Crossopterygian Fish

THE discovery of a living crossopterygian fish of the order Actinistia, described and illustrated on p. 455, is an event of outstanding importance. There can be no doubt that Dr. J. L. B. Smith, who is to describe this specimen, is correct in placing it in the family Coelacanthidae, of which it would appear to be a typical member. In some respects, the present specimen seems to bear a closer resemblance to genera of the early Mesozoic era such as *Undina* than to the later coelacanths of the *Macropoma* type from the Upper Cretaceous. The fact that no traces of fossils referable to this family have been found in rocks later than those of the Cretaceous period makes the discovery of a living representative in South African seas even more remarkable. It is stated that the skeleton of the living fish was found to be cartilaginous and the vertebral column apparently tubular. In the fossils the central part of the vertebral column has disappeared, and was probably cartilaginous, but the neural and hæmal spines were ossified. A unique feature of the fossil coelacanths is the ossified air-bladder, which can be seen clearly in many specimens, and it will be of interest to learn whether this character was observed in the living fish. The photograph of the South African fish seems to show paired nostrils just in front of the eye; but this is another feature of which we must await confirmation. Dr. Smith's detailed report will be awaited with great interest by zoologists and palæontologists alike, and it is little short of a tragedy that the unfortunate disposal of the body of the fish after skinning will make this report very far from complete. An article relating to the discovery of this fish by Dr. E. I. White, of the British Museum (Natural History), accompanied by a large photograph, appeared in the *Illustrated London News* of March 11.

Prof. J. L. Myres, O.B.E., F.B.A.

ON October 1 of this year, Prof. John Linton Myres, Wykeham professor of ancient history in the University of Oxford, will retire, and will be succeeded by Mr. Henry Theodore Wade-Gery, fellow of Wadham College, Oxford. Prof. Myres has occupied this chair since its inauguration in 1910, returning to his own University after three years as Gladstone professor of Greek and lecturer in ancient geography in the University of Liverpool—a chair which also he was the first to hold. His tenure of the Wykeham professorship had already expired under the age limit, but was extended for a further period of five years. His appointment to this chair, which his pre-eminence as a research worker and original thinker in the field of the ancient history (or as it would now be termed the pre- and proto-history) and geography of the Mediterranean region had made almost inevitable, was otherwise appropriate in that he was both a Wykehamist and a member of New College.

BEFORE his appointment to the Gladstone chair at Liverpool, Prof. Myres had been a student of the British School of Archaeology at Athens and had held a fellowship at Madgalen College and a studentship at Christchurch, Oxford; and he had travelled widely and excavated in various parts of the Mediterranean, Greece and the Ægean, Cyprus, Crete, northern Africa and Asia Minor—activities which have continued to occupy much of his periods of vacation. Apart from his reputation as archaeologist, geographer, and historian—many of his discoveries and conclusions are classics of reference—Prof. Myres is known throughout the scientific world for his energy and abilities as an organizer. There are few fields in the economy of science in which he has not intervened to the advantage of men of science and their work. It was during his tenure of office as general secretary of the British Association in the years succeeding the Great War that the organization and working methods of that body were reformed and brought up to date, mainly on his initiative, with the co-operation of the late Prof. H. H. Turner and later of Sir Frank Smith, his fellow secretaries. During the War, Prof. Myres served in the Naval Intelligence in the eastern Mediterranean, where he combined the duties of an intelligence officer with more aggressive tactics, modelled, it was said, on the raids of Homeric heroes. For his services he received the O.B.E. and the Order of King George I of Greece.

Early Civilization and Cultural Relations in Cilicia

EXCAVATIONS at Mersin in Cilicia by the Neilson Expedition to the Near East of the University of Liverpool during the present season have more than justified the anticipation of last year that this site would afford evidence of settlement and early cultural development equal in antiquity to, if not surpassing, anything yet recorded in the Mesopotamian region. According to Prof. Garstang's preliminary report on this season's work (*The Times*, March 10), the sixteenth level of excavation has been found to contain the well-preserved remains of a fortified city—a whole group of great buildings laid out with plan and purpose. This level lies twenty feet below the imperial Hittite fortress uncovered last year; and in it chalcolithic deposits lie beneath a stratified series of building levels, in which the culture is related to the early predynastic Mesopotamian cultures of Uruk and Tell Ubaid. The cultural affinity with predynastic Mesopotamia of the sixteenth level itself is demonstrated by evidence of direct contact with the polychrome phase of the still older Tell Halaf culture. Prof. Garstang's approximate dating assigning this cultural level at Mersin to 3600 B.C. is therefore to be regarded as by no means excessively high; while the line of fortifications with its abutting 'married quarters', and the chief's residence, all brick-built and not of stone, it is to be noted, thus constitute the oldest known example of architecture.