

PRIMITIVE RELIGIOUS ART.¹

WE have on several occasions directed attention to works by American ethnologists dealing with investigations on the meanings of the designs and patterns of aboriginal decorative art. This fruitful and interesting field of inquiry is by no means exhausted, and two papers on the subject have recently been published by the American Museum of Natural History which merit the careful attention of students. Dr. Clark Wissler has made a valuable study of the decorative art of the Sioux Indians which is a model of clear and concise expression and of adequate illustration. As he truly states, the investigation becomes psychological, because it is necessary to know what ideas the artists have of their designs, and what motives lead to their execution. The assumption that all primitive decorative designs are executed with consciousness that they symbolise some definite object or relation in nature is fairly supported by the facts so far accessible, but does it follow that these symbolic designs were produced by a gradual transition from the realistic representation? That some of them were so produced has been satisfactorily demonstrated; but is this the law of growth for decorative art? It appears, among the American Indians, that the more abstract the idea, the simpler and more geometric the design. On the other hand, it is obvious that a vigorous conventionalisation of representative forms must tend to reduce them all to a few simple geometric designs. In such an event, confusion as to the symbolic aspect of similar designs must arise in the minds of the artists, necessitating re-interpretation or creation of new symbols. Thus any given interpretation need have no certain relation to the origin of the design itself; indeed, the association of the symbol and the idea can be shown in some cases to be quite secondary. Amongst the Sioux there are two main kinds of decorative art—realistic painting and conventional bead- or quill-work; the former is done by the men and the latter by the women, and there is every reason for assuming that the pictographic mode is on the whole the older. One sex has often appropriated the designs used by the other to express divergent ideas, and thus we see how even within the same tribe two or more modes of expressing symbolic motives may make simultaneous use of the same graphic designs.

In a short paper of fifty pages on the decorative art of the Huichol Indians of Mexico, Dr. C. Lumholtz has managed to crowd some 350 figures, so that we have abundant material for study. All these designs, he says, are expressions of religious ideas that pervade the entire existence of these people; in other words, they are permanent prayers. Girdles and ribbons, inasmuch as they are considered as rain serpents, are in themselves prayers for rain and for the results of rain, namely, good crops, health, and life. All the designs on pouches, shirts, skirts, and so forth express prayers for some material benefit, or for protection against evil, or adoration of some deity. Thus the magic double water-gourd, even in its most conventionalised form, means a prayer for water, the source of all life and health. Animals like the puma, jaguar, eagle, &c., express prayers for protection, as well as adoration for the deity to which the creatures belong. The little white flower, *totò*, which grows in the wet, corn-producing season, is at once a symbol and a prayer for corn, and in all sorts of forms it is to be found woven in their costumes. Flowers play, and always have played, an important part in the religion of these Indians; with them flowers, like the plumes of birds, are prayers for rain and life. Dr. Lumholtz doubts if there is such a thing as ornamentation solely for decorative purposes among the Huichol, or, for that matter, among any primitive people. Prof. Boas points out that on the whole the style of decoration of ceremonial objects differs considerably from that of the ornamental parts of garments. The former are crude and pictographic, with slight tendency to conventionalism, while the latter are regular, well executed, and strongly conventionalised, and the general character

¹ "Decorative Art of the Sioux Indians." By Clark Wissler. *Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.*, vol. xviii., pp. 231-278. (New York, 1904.)

"Decorative Art of the Huichol Indians." By Carl Lumholtz. *Mem. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.* Whole series, vol. iii. Anthropology, vol. ii. part iii. (New York, 1904.)

of these designs much resembles that of similar designs found in other parts of Mexico and in Central and South America. These textile designs, which are of great variety and beauty, acquire much more interest from the suggestive interpretation of their symbolism which Dr. Lumholtz has afforded us.

The American Museum of Natural History is to be congratulated on possessing collections about which so much valuable information has been obtained, and students are to be congratulated on having these riches made accessible to them by means of such beautifully illustrated memoirs.

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UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATIONAL INTELLIGENCE.

OXFORD.—An examination for a geographical scholarship will be held on October 12 next. Candidates, who must have taken honours in one of the final schools of the university, should send their names to the reader in geography, Old Ashmolean Museum, by, at latest, October 2. The value of the scholarship is 60*l.*

Dr. J. Ritchie, reader in pathology, has been constituted professor of pathology so long as he holds the readership in question.

At the recent congregation of the University of Leeds a fellowship of the value of 100*l.* was awarded to Mr. Joseph Marshall, of the Victoria University School of Chemistry.

PROF. STEPHEN M. DIXON, holder of the chair of civil engineering in the Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, has been appointed to the new professorship of civil engineering in the University of Birmingham.

It was mentioned by the principal of King's College, London, at the recent distribution of prizes and certificates to the successful students that Prof. W. G. Adams, F.R.S., is about to resign his chair after forty-two years' work in the college.

THE Rogers prize of 100*l.* of the University of London has this year been awarded to Dr. B. J. Collingwood for his essay on "Anæsthetics, their Physiological and Clinical Action." The essay submitted by Dr. A. G. Levy was highly commended, and an honorarium of 50*l.* was awarded him.

A MOVEMENT is now in progress for providing the North Wales University College with new buildings at an estimated cost of 175,000*l.*, of which 30,000*l.* has been already promised. The site has been given by the corporation, which has presented the deed of gift to Lord Kenyon, president of the college. The president has expressed the hope that the rest of Wales will follow the liberality shown at Bangor, and that there will be no more need for the best professors of the college to leave Bangor for more lucrative positions in other parts of the United Kingdom.

ACCORDING to the *Electrician*, a committee of the Liverpool City Council, instructed by the Finance Committee to report as to how far the educational methods employed at the Liverpool University were in the interests of the city and met its requirements, have reported that they are satisfied that the University is doing its best to ensure that its students shall enter into the business of life with their intellectual powers fully developed by providing the students with a wide range of duty and sound methods of instruction, and they have therefore recommended that the sum of 10,000*l.* should be granted during the present year upon the same conditions under which a similar grant was made for the first time last year. The report of the finance committee has come before the City Council and has been approved. Of the amount in question, 1000*l.* is devoted to scholarships for Liverpool men.

COPIES have been received of the *Johns Hopkins University Circular* containing the programme of courses for the session 1905-06, and of the Yearbook of the Armour Institute of Technology, Chicago, for 1905-06. The Johns Hopkins University will begin its thirtieth year of instruction next October. The work will be carried on