

wider outlook, or of the ordinary citizen so as to give the scientific background which he needs for his everyday life in the modern world. Sir William Bragg's address should give a welcome impulse to such efforts if only by reminding scientific workers that the pursuit of their own special studies can

only achieve continued success if they themselves regain contact with the world's affairs and the stimulus, not merely of a wider point of view, but also of that vision of service to the community, from which the true spirit of science can never be divorced.

Archæological Expedition to Northern Syria

SINCE the passing of the new Antiquities Law in Iraq, that country has been regarded by British archæologists as virtually closed, and outside Palestine Britain has done little in the archæological exploration of the Near East. It is gratifying, therefore, to learn that an expedition under Sir Leonard Woolley, organised by the British Museum (Bloomsbury), has just left to excavate in Northern Syria.

The interruption of British archæological activities in Mesopotamia came at a peculiarly inopportune moment. While the work of exploration at Kish and Ur had either drawn or was drawing to a close, work on other sites seemed to be on the eve of discoveries of far-reaching import. This was especially to be noted in the excavation by the British School of Archæology in Iraq under Mr. M. E. L. Mallowan at Arpachiyah in the north. When considered in relation with the results obtained on sites under examination by the School of Oriental Studies of the University of Chicago, where work has continued, these investigations were not only adding to knowledge of the relation of the cultures of north and south within Mesopotamia itself in ever-increasing precision of detail, but also evidence was accumulating, which bade fair to enlarge the conception of the extent and character of international relation and influence from India to the Mediterranean in the early world.

The highly significant results achieved by French archæologists at Ras Shamra in Northern Syria point in a like direction at a later period. They confirm argument on general grounds that the Syrian sea-board, like the desert border towns of Damascus and Dura of later date, was an important point of convergence from hinterland and sea of peoples and trade from east and west—a point where races and creeds and cultures of diverse origin, Sumerian, Hittite, Syrian, Mediterranean and Egyptian, with Phœnicians later, all met to leave the record of their contact and association in buildings, sacred and profane, in

art and material equipment, and in tablets inscribed in the languages commonly used. Nor is it probable that Ras Shamra exhausts or even monopolises the archæological and historical interest of the region. As the result of a preliminary archæological reconnaissance made last year, Sir Flinders Petrie has arrived at the conclusion that the country affords a large number of sites which would richly repay investigation. This is no more than might be expected.

The exploration upon which the British Museum expedition is now about to enter is in a sense experimental and exploratory; but two sites have been selected for preliminary examination, which on topographical grounds alone might be expected to yield data of importance in their bearing upon the major objective of investigation which, it is stated, is "to throw light on the origin of civilisation in Europe by tracing possible connexions between the art of early Crete and that of the mainland".

Of the two sites, one is a harbour lying to the north of Ras Shamra—one of the very few on the coast of northern Syria serving inter-communication between the Mediterranean and the interior by easy passes through the Ammanus range. It lies at the mouth of the River Orontes. Here possibly evidence of direct relations with Crete may be obtained. The second is in the great Amu plain, between Antioch and Aleppo, and commands the caravan route to Aleppo and the Euphrates. It is thought that it should serve to illustrate better than the former site the development of native culture and its reaction to the Cretan, while the upper strata may produce Hittite sculpture and inscriptions and even possibly inscriptions in the early Phœnician script, such as were found at Ras Shamra, throwing new light on Semitic religion and Old Testament history.

The cost of the expedition will be met by contributions from friends of the British Museum and from the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.