

Leonard Woolley's lecture on "The Racial Elements in Sumerian Art History" before the Royal Society of Arts on February 19 (*J. Roy. Soc. Arts*, 84, April 3, 1936) afforded an example of the pregnant inferences to be drawn from study of the geographical distribution of cultural elements to be related to those found at Ur and kindred sites in Mesopotamia in its bearing on the solution of the racial problem in Sumeria. As he pointed out, various theories have been put forward at different times, as knowledge has grown, to interpret evidence of the physical characters of the early population of Sumeria. Sir Leonard himself, by citing specific elements which go to make up the complex of Sumerian art, was able to show that it is a compound of three cultural streams. Of these the Asianic or Iranian goes back at Ur to pre-diluvial times, its most marked characteristics there being the painted pottery, while it extends from Mesopotamia to China; a second is derivative from Anatolia and the third comes from northern Syria. In these three cultural elements he finds, hypothetically, a parallel to the distinction which is drawn in the evidence for three differentiated physical types in the population. In this instance, it is to be admitted, there would appear to be good ground for the view put forward that the brilliant achievement of Sumerian art, in which these cultural streams unite, was due to that cross-fertilization of racial strains, which Sir Leonard maintains lies at the root of all great achievements in the art of a people as a whole. It is to be expected that Sir Leonard's new field of exploration in northern Syria will throw further light on the racial as well as the cultural problem.

Roman Leicester

EXCAVATION of Roman remains at Leicester now in progress has resolved an archaeological doubt of long standing. While instructed opinion has hesitated between identifying the well-known Jewry wall, one of the highest surviving Roman walls in Britain, popularly regarded as a temple of Janas, as a Roman bath building, a basilica or even a town gate, it has now been shown, according to a report in *The Times* of July 4, to be part one of the external walls of the basilica in the forum of Roman Leicester, dating probably from about A.D. 100. A large part of the adjacent site, until recently occupied by a factory, is being cleared by the Corporation for the erection of public baths, and advantage has been taken of the opportunity to carry out these excavations. The base of the Jewry wall has been uncovered to some ten feet below the present surface, giving a total height of existing masonry of more than thirty-five feet. Two arched openings, previously thought to be doorways, are now revealed as windows. Beneath the Jewry wall, timber and masonry are associated with pottery and coins going back to the earliest Roman occupation of Britain. To the west of the wall is emerging a courtyard about 175 ft. wide, flanked by ranges of rooms or shops opening on to the courtyard by porticoes. This is the forum, of which the basilica forms part. Fronting the forum and abutting

centrally on the basilica are the massive foundations of an architectural feature, probably once surmounted by a pediment, which dominated the forum and faced the main entrance. Outside the northern wall of the forum a stretch of cobbled roadway, deeply scored by wheels, has been uncovered. Massive walls and fragments of columns found on the factory site some years ago may now be identified as fragments of the forum and its colonnades. The road on the southern side of the forum is largely covered by St. Nicholas Street, near which is preserved one of the mosaic pavements for which Roman Leicester is famous. The excavations are being carried out by Miss Kathleen Kenyon under a committee, of which the Duke of Rutland is president, in co-operation with the Corporation of Leicester.

Electricity Distribution in Great Britain

THE report of the Committee on Electricity Distribution has now been published (Ministry of Transport. London: H.M. Stationery Office. 2s. net). The chairman was Sir Harry McGowan, and Sir John Snell was a member of the Committee. The evidence, some of which was conflicting, has all been carefully considered, and definite recommendations are given which seem thoroughly justified. The Committee does not suggest nationalization or the setting up of a Distribution Commission. It advises a reduction in the present number of undertakings by amalgamating the smaller and less efficient stations with the larger ones. It is stated that any attempt to carry through a scheme of re-organization on a voluntary basis is bound to fail, and legislation must confer definite and adequate compulsory powers. The schemes of re-organization should make provision for the possibility of ultimate public ownership of all undertakings, including those not at present subject to purchase by the local authorities. It is proposed that no undertakings should be transferred compulsorily under a scheme of re-organization without a prior local investigation. To this end the Electricity Commissioners should be empowered to delimit the country into a number of areas and to appoint for each area a temporary district commissioner, with such technical and financial assistance as may be necessary. The district commissioner would bring under review all electric undertakings in his area. The Electricity Commissioners, after publishing a scheme and considering any representations, should be empowered to approve it and, if agreed, it should become operative at once.

WITH regard to the London and Home Counties Electricity District, which covers an area with a large number of undertakings, some with duplication of powers, many with differing systems and tariffs, and offering very unequal facilities, the criticisms recently made by the public are often justified. A substantial measure of amalgamation and co-ordination is possible and necessary. The present constitution of the London and Home Counties Joint Electricity and Authority should be brought under review. Complete standardization of systems and voltages should be the ultimate objective, but it is