

Maiden Castle, Dorchester

THE most striking point to emerge from this season's excavations at Maiden Castle, so far as they have gone, is the conclusive evidence confirming Dr. Mortimer Wheeler's inferences as to the importance of the pre-Roman fortress-settlement in Britain. Should further investigation confirm his views as to its prevalence as an organized system, this should have a profound effect on theory as to the origins and form of town life in early and medieval England. The importance of Maiden Castle itself may be gauged from the evidence now being found of the deliberate destruction of the walled system of defences when the inhabitants were removed in Roman times to the newly founded neighbouring city of Dorchester. As investigation proceeds, the character of the prehistoric stone walling, which has now been found incorporated in the ramparts, and of which the existence was previously unsuspected, becomes more and more impressive. These walls were built of limestone from Upwey, some of the blocks weighing as much as five hundredweight. At the eastern entrance a later wall of fine masonry now being uncovered still stands to a height of six courses. Not only is it evident that it overlies earlier prehistoric levels of occupation, but it is also clear that it was designed to form a blocking wall across the prehistoric gateway when the hill-top temple was being built in the century preceding the coming of the Romans. Within the fortress itself, the remains of a substantial structure of wood, standing at the highest point of the camp, is being excavated. This was evidently of considerable size, and was in part constructed of tree-trunks a foot in diameter. Nearby a skeleton was found buried at some depth, an unusual feature in a fortress. The excavations will be continued until the end of the present month, when the three years' investigation which was undertaken by the Society of Antiquaries of London with the co-operation of the Dorset Natural History and Archæological Society will have been completed.

Meare Lake Village

EXCAVATIONS at Meare Lake Village have been resumed by the Somerset Archæological Society under the direction of Dr. Arthur Bulleid, and will continue until at least the middle of September. According to a preliminary report in *The Times* of August 29, the stone walling overlying the timber structure, apparently the foundations of a crannog, found last year in the central part of the eastern half of the village, is being examined further. The eastern margin and the south-eastern and north-eastern portions are now in course of investigation. Work has also been begun on the southern border of the village outside a definite dwelling. Timber and oak piles are being revealed, and in a layer of black earth a number of small finds have been made, which include a La Tène III brooch, a few objects of bronze, an antler weaving comb, a 'pygmy' pottery vessel, and a small Romano-British pot of the type known as 'Cossington' ware.

im Thurn Memorial Lecture, 1936

IN the recent lecture for 1936 on the foundation in memory of the late Sir Everard im Thurn, delivered at Edinburgh, Prof. J. L. Myres directed attention to the effect of changing outlook and development in method of research on the broader philosophic principles, which underlay the work of im Thurn. To the study of primitive peoples he conjoined the application of its results to the practical problem of the approach to the primitive mind in administrative and other affairs. He realized that this problem was but the counterpart of any native's difficulty in understanding European ways. im Thurn, Prof. Myres pointed out, insisted on the significance of 'character' which, whatever the superficial changes in culture, continues to influence native reactions to 'civilization'. This 'civilization' was defined as that in which "the prime motive of human action was the good of others or of one's whole race". As regards 'character' and 'culture' and their interaction, all grades between the individual completely disciplined by 'culture' and the man of genius can be discerned.

SINCE im Thurn's day, advance in scientific method has shown that culture and character alike appear as a composite system, or complex of elements, combined in different peoples in infinitely varying degrees of intensity. In a society in which transitions from one phase of life and society are effected mainly by individuals in isolation, character and initiative stand high, and in that society institutions are relatively unstable. Where, however, the rites of transition are matters of public concern and are performed by whole groups of initiates, behaviour and social structure are stabilized, character is stereotyped, originality suppressed and stagnation ensues. Our knowledge of 'primitive' cultures is mainly derived from such societies. Out of such closed cultures what way of escape is there, Prof. Myres asked. How does what im Thurn defined as civilization emerge as an altruistic prime motive of human action? Prof. Myres illustrated from the history of ancient Egypt, early Greece and elsewhere how in fact such transformations do take place, though they do not preclude the apparition of a dominant individual character as first cause, and they presume elementary freedom to choose the well-being of others, once presented as the prime motive of human action.

Bibliography of Natural History

THE first general meeting of the Society for the Bibliography of Natural History was held in the rooms of the Royal Entomological Society on August 26. The provisional committee set up to establish the Society made a report and submitted draft by-laws which were accepted as the by-laws of the Society. The following officers were elected: President: Dr. C. Davies Sherborn; Treasurer: Mr. Francis Hemming; Secretary: Mr. Francis J. Griffin; and a committee of management set up consisting of Prof. F. Balfour-Browne, Mr. J. R. Norman, Mr. J. Ramsbottom, Dr. T. A. Sprague and Mr. A. Cockburn Townsend. It was announced that