

has always been that all officers must enter the "General Duties Branch", and devote their time to a complete training in flying for, at least, many years of their time as junior officers. Later they can express a wish to take up specialization in technical work, but they are still required to maintain proficiency in flying. Thus the process of becoming a technical specialist is a slow one, and in a service in which the retiring age is, possibly necessarily, set fairly early, as flying is primarily a young man's job, the officer choosing these branches always finds himself at a disadvantage, either for promotion within the service, or in respect of his ability to obtain employment in the technical side of aviation upon retirement. Also the break in continuity of training and accumulation of experience is usually considered to be unwise, and many young engineers, both from the universities and works apprenticeships, have undoubtedly been deterred from entering the Royal Air Force by this reason.

IN spite of the enthusiastic membership of the university air squadrons the number of technical graduates offering themselves for University Commissions in the Royal Air Force has always been relatively small. The new branch should remove these disadvantages. Entrants for commissions are now offered direct entry into technical work, without having to spend several years in acquiring proficiency in flying. They are to be recruited from university graduates in engineering or natural science, and student apprentices from works who have acquired theoretical knowledge up to a university degree standard. The retiring age limit may well now be extended, as the work is not that in which the younger man necessarily excels, in fact the older man would be superior by reason of his accumulated experience. Prospects of promotion should also now be greater as there must be senior administrative posts within the new department.

#### Further Archaeological Excavation in Syria

SIR LEONARD WOOLLEY'S third season of excavation on the ancient site of Allalakh at Atchana near Antioch, as anticipated, has enlarged and added further detail to the picture of a great meeting place of the civilizations of East and West at an entrance gate to western Asia; but at its close it held out promise of an even greater field of discovery still to be explored. Of this a glimpse may be afforded when the numerous cuneiform inscriptions retrieved in the season just past have been submitted to inspection. Sir Leonard in his preliminary report (*The Times*, August 2 and 3) opened with an account of the further excavation of the earlier palace, which preceded that of the fifteenth-century Hittite king, Nig-me-pa. This earlier building, cannot, Sir Leonard thinks, be much later than the time of Hammurabi, and he assigns it tentatively to the eighteenth century B.C. The structural features, which point to its use in part for administrative and business purposes, in part as a royal residence, convey the impression of a sense of dignity and propriety, com-

binated with an unusual appreciation of space and air, particularly noticeable in the arrangement of the upper residential chambers, with a loggia giving an extensive view over the city, and an approach by newel stairs, of which the first two flights are nearly perfectly preserved. It was, however, from a private house of the fifteenth century that the much desired further evidence was obtained of the contact with Crete, for which mainly the excavation of Atchana was undertaken. This now took the form of a fresco, which is exactly similar to a scheme of decoration found at Knossos, and a 12-wick lamp in red porphyry in the form of the capital of a column, which at Knossos would be hailed, Sir Leonard says, as a typical, but unusually fine, example of Minoan art.

It was, however, towards the close of the season's work that the most striking discovery was made, which, as Sir Leonard says, "goes far to complete the picture of the ancient city of Allalakh". This was a temple, which throws light upon the religion of the people, and gives examples of their major arts. Though the clearance of this part of the site has only just begun, it is already evident that here are the superimposed remains of at least four temples, of which the latest may date to about 1200 B.C. and the earliest to the fifteenth century. They had been richly adorned with sculpture. Although as yet it has not been possible for Sir Leonard to give more than the most summary of accounts, the record of finds is amazing in both number and interest. Among the more arresting finds are the remarkable sculptured lions, the bronze spearhead, deemed to be a cult object, and most remarkable of all, the hidden statue of a king or god in white limestone with its fifty lines of cuneiform inscription, of which the decipherment will be awaited with keenest anticipation. Such a mass of evidence of the character of Hittite art, and of so early a date—at least of 1200 B.C. and possibly even of the fifteenth century—is indeed an unexpected, but more than welcome find.

#### Excavations at Ezion-Geber

RECENT excavation at Tell el-Kheleifi on the Gulf of Aqabah, Sinai, by the American School of Oriental Research at Jerusalem, not only has confirmed the indications of the importance of this site in early times as a meeting place of a number of trade routes, afforded by investigations in 1938, but also has revealed that it was the centre of an extensive industry for the smelting and refining of copper and iron from the mines of the adjacent Arabah. The site has been identified with the great port of King Solomon, Ezion-Geber "which is by Elath on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom". No longer, however, does it stand by the sea. The prevailing northerly winds have brought sand to silt up the head of the gulf, so that the shore is now half a mile away. The importance of the city as a commercial centre was indicated in the first season's excavation by a number of finds, of which the most important is held to be a large broken jar, on which