

YESTERDAY, AND THE DAY BEFORE.

BY RAYMOND A. SCHWEGLER.

THE past ten years have seen a wonderful increase of interest in antiquity. Men are beginning to realize more and more, that in order to know the things that are, it is of primary importance to know the things that have been, for after all there is no such thing as "a new age", since the present is immeasurably old, a composite of all human experience, a patchwork of broken fragments that have survived the tumult of the centuries. Our institutions are heir-looms, hoary with age, battered by use, patched by Necessity, and fitted to the girth of Expediency. An understanding of them presupposes an understanding of all the long vista of human struggles and achievements and defeats.

There is no more eloquent testimony to the worth of all human effort than the mass of remains that have come down to the present time from all the ages of the past. Though Time may have succeeded only too well in destroying much that was vital in the life of the past, yet has he left much that throws a flood of light on the history of humanity. A Pompein school-boy loiters on the way from school, and with a purloined piece of chalk writes doggerel on a garden wall. The boy, his tasks done, goes on down the long road that leads to oblivion. But only yesterday a workman dug up the ashes which Vesuvius had laid over that garden wall, and there, in faded red that verse stands, scrawled with an untrained hand, addressed to an audience two thousand years away.

Step by step the threshold of humanity has been driven back to its origin. Sixty years ago, Greece and Rome and Judea alone stood clear on the horizon of history. Carthage had been, but plowboys plodded their way over ground that covered the site of once famous temples and palaces. Egypt was still the old Nile-fed land, but her pyramids were sand-covered, her sphinxes silent, her temples crumbling and unknown, save to a few, who asked in vain the meaning of the colossal pillars, and endless pictures and unnumbered inscriptions on wall and rock and statue. The Euphrates still crept

lazily southward from its Armenian birthplace, by the low green hills that covered all that was left of Babylon, once the mistress of the world, and by Borsippa, and Erida, and Lachish, and Ur, and Nippur, till it sank into the Persian gulf. In the same way to the eastward the Tigris swept down with its old "arrow-speed" by Nineveh, and Calah, and Asshur. The mongrel Turk-Arabian built his hut of bricks that proud Nebuchadnezzar made for the city wall, and stamped with his name and title, as a memorial to the present day. The school-boys of Bagdad played hide-and-seek on ground where once the martial tramp of Assyria pledged the conquest of the earth. But Assyria was dead, and Parthia had fallen, and Nineveh—that row of green hills across the river formed its nameless tomb. And death lives there, green slimy death that floated on long canals that once were alive with the commerce of the world; death in compact with the tax-gatherer ruled the land, and turned the granary of the ancient world into a dreary waste of sand.

But sixty years have wrought a change. Slowly at first, but then more rapidly men began to realize that the world of the past, though it had died, yet lived, and that though its direct and audible voice had been long silent, it might still be heard, if only the questions were put in the right place. The consequence is, that cities that have slumbered beneath the dust of their own decay for ages beyond the memory of man are again being written on the catalogue of human effort; races that have perished long since are being brought to the light; civilizations undreamt of are slowly reappearing on the horizon, and the beginnings of mankind have been pressed back to a time the remoteness of which not even the most daring imaginations may fully realize. Pick and shovel, devotion, courage and perseverance are the implements that have resurrected the past, and are still at the work. Nowhere can there be found a more fascinating field for the young worker than here, and in no field, thanks to Nature's tender hand is the material for research so abundant, or the hope of success so certain.

Work is now being carried on in all parts of the earth. Italy is giving up her buried secrets; Carthage has laid bare

her foundations, and from imperishable mosaics has been read the original of the story of Dido; the Nile has been questioned, and the silent sand-desert, and both have spoken, and are still speaking, rock, and tomb and temple, speaking of an age that staggers belief, and carries civilized human life on the banks of the Nile back 7000 years and more. The green mounds of Mesopotamia have been approached, a few of them—and from them has spoken an age that antedates the civilization of the Nile, and reveals almost the fountain head of human religion and science. No one knows what the next day may bring forth, for as yet a mere handful of the monuments has been examined. Within a few months the history of one of the most complex systems of writing ever devised by man has been carried back to 3800 years before Christ, while other discoveries at Borsippa and Babylon and elsewhere point to another system of which it was the outgrowth, back, far away in that dim borderland where knowledge turns to an uncertain gray, and sinks away into ignorance. From the site of Nippur alone, seat of an empire that was at the height of its power when Babylon was but a village on the banks of the Euphrates, there have been taken since 1877 over 15,000 clay tablets covered with inscriptions that were old when Moses lay among the rushes on the Nile. They now rest in the museum of the University of Pennsylvania, awaiting translation. From other cities similar finds are reported, and the end is not yet. The great museums of Europe hold enormous stores of similar material as yet unworked, not because of inability to translate, but because of the paucity of workers. Thanks to the great tri-lingual rock inscription at Behistun, to the tombs and monuments at Persepolis, and to the libraries found at Nineveh and Khorsabad, the language of Babylon and Assyria has been relearned, until it is today possible to read a tablet written 5,700 years ago with as much certainty and accuracy as one would read a page of Shakespeare or of Chaucer. In Egypt also, wonderful progress has been made. After the mastery of the hieroglyphic writing by Champollion, the world took a new interest in the pyramids and temples that line the banks of the Nile for hundreds of miles like some vast outdoor museum. Discovery after discovery was heralded, until since

1882, when the Egyptian Exploration began its work, twelve large volumes have been given to the world, and only within a year or two, at Denderah and Philæ were found the remains of the remotest times yet discovered in Egypt, a line of kings that preceded the hitherto "legendary" First Dynasty, and carries Egyptian history back into the heart of the fifth millennium before Christ.

But archaeology is busy not only in Africa, and Asia, and Europe. She is tracing the footsteps of man in the islands of the Pacific, where, on the Carolines, and other scattered groups of islands, have been found long-abandoned structures that point to an all but extinct race of people, that once inhabited either all the endless groups of islands, or perhaps some vast continent that sank, and carried with it its vast burden of life, giving rise, perhaps, to the world-wide story of the deluge. In America, too, the work is being diligently carried on. In Mexico, in the state of Oaxaca (Wahaca), the ancient realm of the Zapotecs is even now the scene of extensive operations. The ruins of the ancient capital, Mitla, have been excavated, and the first reports have been given to the world of a civilization that had all but vanished when the Nahuatlts or Aztecs first came from their "Seven Caves" in search of their promised home. The city of Mexico also has within the last two years furnished a wonderful harvest of archaeological material. In the course of the work of laying down an extensive system of sewerage, and also in the process of laying the foundations for a new building near the cathedral, stone implements and other objects were found in great numbers. The work of first intention was immediately suspended, and the search for further objects was pushed, until it became clear that the spot was the site of the great temple of the city, which was destroyed at the time of the conquest. The cathedral was built on the site of the heathen temple. Again, further south, in Yucatan, the ancient realm of the Mayas, and still further south in Central America, the city of Copan and others have been studied, and each in its turn is furnishing its quota of light on that most interesting of all subjects, the history of the human race.

Slowly but surely, from Lake Titicaca to the mound-

country of Ohio, from the Niger to the Red Sea, from Marseilles to Rome and the Caspian, and from the Black Sea to the Indus, the pick and the spade are wringing from the graves of by-gone generations an account of their kind and their time. The truth is coming out: humanity is one, thought is a common heritage, hope has a common end, and life is a ceaseless struggle to escape from the grave. There is yet much to learn. Many a page of the great book has not yet been read, and some have been but partially or incorrectly read, but time will bring to light the lost fragments, and tireless insistence will solve the riddles, and men will know the past, and, perhaps, reflected from it as from a mirror, the day that is yet to come.