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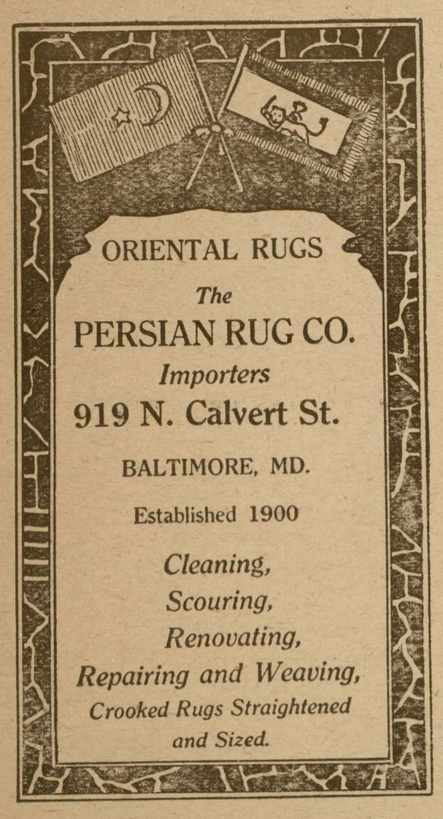

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CAVE-MAN ART UNEARTHED IN FRANCE ---FIND MADE BY SWIM UNDER WATER

Lifelike Engraving Of Reindeer Found, The Animal Upon Which Prehistoric Man Depended Largely For Both Food And Clothing.

France was evidently one of the favorite "stamping grounds" of our prehistoric ancestors. The caves where he dwelt, and where he left evidences of his mode of life and stage of culture, are one by one yielding up their secrets, although none can doubt that many more remain to be found and studied. The fact that one of the most recent finds was made by swimming under water through a rocky passage, about whose other end the swimmer could know nothing ,shows that there is adventure, with the spice of danger, in archeological investigation, no less than in the armed field. We quote first an account translated for The Illustrated London News, from an article by Jean Labadie, of the amazing discoveries of the Abbe Lemozi, a country cure in the Department of Lot, in Southern France. Says the writer:

"In his presbytery at Cabrerets he has formed a veritable museum and laboratory, where in his hands the smallest objects assume an intense interest.

"'What can be done with a pointed flint?' he said to me one day. 'Just look at this stone.' A faint outline, at first barely perceptible, resolved itself on closer inspection into a prehistoric design. The subject was a deer, sketched to the life, a veritable 'snapshot' of the animal licking itself, or merely turning its head.

"'It is the first engraving on pebble found in the Lot,' said the Abbe, 'and one of my finest specimens. It comes from the Murat rock-shelter. Besides this deer, I found engravings of horses and reindeer, and implements of all sorts. The profusion of graving tools, and even some traces of baked red earth, convinced me that a whole colony of professional artists had lived there.'

"In another cave, that of St. Eulalie, the Abbe had discovered a lifelike engraving of a reindeer, the animal on which prehistoric man depended largely both for food and clothing. It took him five hours to break off, with light taps of a hammer, the stalagmite encrustation of many thousands of years. Nothing must be left unexplored. A mere fox-hole may lead to treasures, and that was precisely what happened in the valley of the Sagne, where an ordinary hole under a rock on a hillside was found, when cleared, to lead to an important cavern, the Marcenac grotto, about 150 yards long and adorned with paintings. It was closed at the end by fallen rock, but its paintings indicated that it was an entrance hall to one of those sanctuaries where the primitive folk collected their totemic idols and celebrated their religious rites.

"A strange chance was to reveal this particular sanctuary, whose existence had hitherto been purely conjectural.

"A boy of fourteen, named David, who had learned from the Abbe something of subterranean exploration, having nothing better to do one Thursday in July, 1922, resolved to visit on his own account a certain hole in the ground near a clump of oaks on his father's land. The hole was narrow, but the boy was not very big. An initial ascent of six feet brought him to the edge of a passage sloping at an angle of forty-five degrees into the blackness. Provided with a candle, the boy went along the gallery, which grew larger as he advanced. Presently he reached a kind of landing or platform. Evidently it was the entrance to something bigger still."

Much excited, young David climbed back to the sunlight and told his father, who sent a message to the Abbe. The latter came at once and entered the cave with the boy. The ever-narrowing tunnel suddenly expanded and debouched into a vast hall, with the usual fantastic decorations common to limestone caverns. Several more halls followed. In the following month renewed exploration led to an immense gallery about 125 yards long by 12 broad, on whose walls were about forty pictures, engraved or painted in black and red, representing prehistoric animals — mammoths, bison, horses, and fish. We read further:

"Here and there were ten detached silhouettes of human hands in red ochre. The whole of the work was starred with symbols which were not decorative, and must therefore be more or less hiehoglyphic. There was no sign of any human hearth or implement. On the ground were remains of animal bones and—a still more moving sight—traces of footprints in the hardened clay. On the ceiling, at a height of some twenty-three feet, were engraved interlacing designs.

"With the great hall of paintings are connected two small 'salons.' One is comparatively large and contaians a beautiful engraving of a bear. The other is smaller, and contains engravings, paintings, bones, and fossilized excrement of bear, indicating a prolonged occupation by the animals. What desperate conflicts must have raged in this cavern—fangs against spears! Which remained masters of the field?

"The drawings are not all of the same period. M. Lemozi regards them as a little earlier than the Magdalenian paintings of Eyzies. The Age of the Reindeer is very shadowy, extending over several thousands of years. It is enough to know that it was the first to deserve the title of "civilized."

"According to M. Marcellin Boule, the Paleolithic race immediately preceding (that is, the Neanderthan race) could not properly be called 'Homo sapiens.' They were beginning to make things ,to fashion axes and javelins, but that was hardly enough to merit the name of 'man.' The reindeer-hunter, on the other hand, and especially the Magdalenian, had his religion, his rites, his sanctuaries, his works of art. It is only there that humanity begins. In such places as the Caves of David, therefore, we touch on the true origins of our European race."

Still more recently, other remarkable finds have been made in a cavern at Montespan, Haute Garonne, which are described in the same London paper. Their enormous importance, from an archeological point of view, we are told, resides in the fact that only once before have examples of prehistoric sculpture ever been found, and that the new specimens are believed to date from 25,000 years ago. The previous examples (two figures of bisons) found in the same locality by Count Henri Begouen date from the Magdalenian epoch, about 15,000 years ago, though some authorities have estimated their age likewise at 25,000 years. The interest of the new discovery is also enhanced by the perilous nature of the exploration, which was made by Norbert Casteret, a young archeologist, and involved swimming and diving through a subterranean stream. We read:

"Our special photographer, Mr. Coles, had likewise to work under almost equal difficulties. 'The stream was rising,' he writes, 'so the work had to be done at once. It is now impossible until next year, as there was a storm of rain the next day. Even as it was I had to spend five hours in a bathing-suit, having to go nearly on all-fours part of the way in places which are now full of water.' In a note on a photograph showing a clay bear, M. Casteret says: 'This statue is at the far end of the cavern. The head was never sculptured. In place of it was fixed a real bear's head, which fell off and now lies between the forefeet. One observes on the body a number of marks made by spear-thrusts.' The spear-marks on the bear and other figures are of the highest interest, as throwing light on prehistoric religion .Count Begouen, who is Professor of Anthropology at Touloseu, said after a visit to the cave, as reported in the London Daily Mail, 'The strangest part of it all is that all the animals had apparently been mutilated, especially in the vital parts, by somebody contemporary with the artist who modeled them. This confirms the theory that these caves with models or paintings of animals were primitive witch-doctors' caves. They are all placed in very inaccessible spots, and the animals modeled or depicted are always wounded by axes or arrows. Just like the redskins or the African tribes, these people, who lived 25,000 years ago, must have practiced the use of magic. We can imagine these men in their dark caves, black with soot from their reindeer-oil lamps, and clad in skins. On the eve of a hunting expedition they gathered round the priests of the tribe, and there stabbed and maimed the animals they feared, or those they wished to catch.' "

In a later issue the same paper tells us that M. Casteret risked his life when he first entered the cave, and swam alone through the subterranean stream, 1,300 yards long, than runs right through it beneath a hill. Says the writer:

"He wore bathing attire, and carried a candle and matches enclosed in a rubber case. At several points the streamed formed 'pipes' or water-tunnels. Through these he dived, swimming under water into the unknown, trusting to reach a surface beyond.

"A more daring feat can hardly be imagined. He was rewarded by reaching — far within the cavern—a great gallery 220 yards long, containing numerous works of prehistoric art. The sculptures —figures of animals modeled in clay—included a bear, 3 tigers, 3 horses, and 20 modelings of uncertain character. The rock-engravings comprised 12 horses, 9 bisons, 2 mules, 1 wild goat, 1 deer, 1 reindeer, and many mysterious signs, possibly the first writing of the cave-men. There were also innumerable finger im-

(Continued on Page 4)

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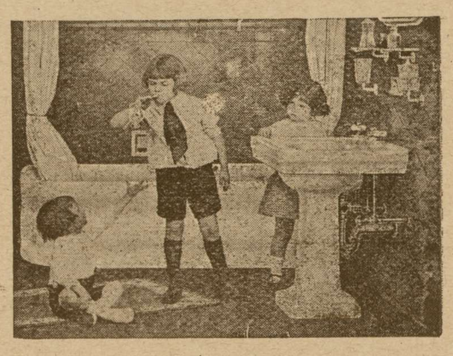

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