

At the bottom of a large refuse-pit, some nine feet deep, a considerable deposit was found, which has been submitted to careful examination. The vegetable products discovered therein by Mr. Clement Reid, and here exhibited, are of much interest to botanists. They include stones of four different kinds of plums, and the seeds of the coriander, creeping buttercup, lesser spearwort, lesser stitchwort, blackberry, chickweed, hemlock, tormentil, white briony, deadly nightshade, black horehound, elder, stinging nettle, self-heal, spurry, knotgrass, dock, and sedge.

In another case are exhibited the remains of a silver refinery, arranged by Mr. W. Gowland, F.S.A. Miniature hearths have been formed to illustrate the process as practised at Silchester, and the nature of the work is also happily manifested by a native drawing of Japanese silver-refining as still practised after a primitive fashion. Several fragments of metal are shown from which the silver was extracted.

Another object which attracts attention is the fine head of a statue of Jupiter, though now much defaced. An iron handle has been roughly welded into the top of the head. This was done some time ago by a Silchester farmer, who thought this heavy stone would be useful as a weight for his cheese-press. Since local cheese-making was abandoned Jupiter's head has been put to the still more humiliating use of serving as a prop to the farmyard gates.

There are many other features of interest in this year's exhibition which we have not space to enumerate. It should certainly be visited by all who are intelligent enough to desire to grasp the idea of what imperial Rome did for these isles when they were one of her most distant provinces.

THE PALACE ARCHIVES OF CNOSSUS: A NEW SERIES IN HIEROGLYPHIC CHARACTERS.

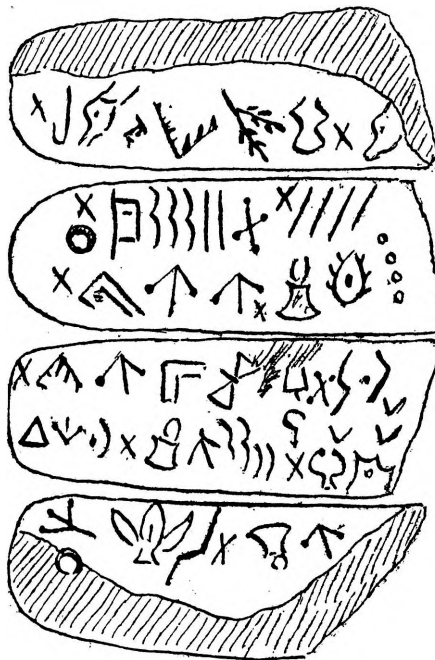
Site of Cnossus, near Candia, Crete, June 8, 1900.

THE last week of excavation in the Palace of Cnossus has produced a discovery equal to that of the Mycenaean archives described in my previous letter. The inscriptions above referred to, of which more than a thousand have now come to light, are written in a linear and highly developed script with only occasional resort to more pictorial forms. But, as a previous study of the seal-stones of Eastern Crete had already made clear to me, there existed in the island from a very remote period another form of writing, of a pictographic kind, and in its general aspect recalling Egyptian hieroglyphics. Hitherto these characters had been only known to me from seals, mostly of prism-like form of three or four sides, and the evidence was naturally limited, though the methodical recurrence of groups of signs in the same collocation sufficiently showed that one had here to do with a kind of writing and not with a mere aimless parody of Egyptian or Hittite forms. But if any doubt still exists on the subject it must be set at rest for ever by the evidence now supplied from "the Palace of Minos."

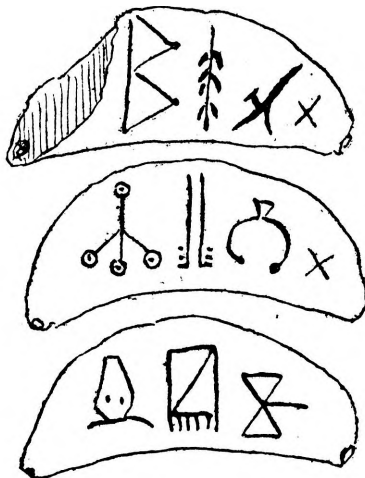
At the northern end of a long corridor of the building giving access to a succession of magazines, themselves of extraordinary interest, was opened a narrow oblong chamber, which contained a deposit of clay tablets of altogether different forms from those exhibiting the linear script, and inscribed with a hieroglyphic type of writing identical with that of the prism seals. The tablets themselves in this case take a variety of shapes. Some are short four-sided bars of clay, perforated at one end; in one case a three-sided example of the same type occurred. Others take a form recalling that of a scallop shell with a hole bored through at the point answering to the valve. Others, again, are of crescent shape, roughly triangular in section, so that they present three surfaces, and perforated along their major axis. This last class is of special interest

from the fact that in most cases they also contain on one side two or more seal impressions, generally made by prism seals of the kind already referred to, and engraved with groups of "pictographic" signs belonging to the same system as the inscriptions engraved on the tablets themselves.

Although the word "pictographic" or "hieroglyphic" may be used to distinguish these tablets from the linear class, it must be understood that they also contain a proportion of signs as purely linear as any of the other category. It is also a noteworthy fact that the written forms assume in many cases a much more alphabetic character than their glyptic equivalents as seen on the seal-stones. We see, in fact, before us a distinct step in the evolution of writing out of mere pictorial signs. As in the linear class, the presence of numerals is clearly marked. The following examples (one taken from a four-sided bar, though incomplete, the other from a three-sided crescent "label") will give a fair idea of the inscriptions of the present class:—



Very interesting questions suggest themselves as to the exact relation of this Cretan hieroglyphic script to the linear class, to which the great mass of the inscriptions found in the Cnossian palace belong. Here, at least, the



tablets of hieroglyphic type appear as a purely isolated phenomenon, and are practically confined to a single deposit. On the other hand, the pictographic seals with which this latter form of script is connected are, as far as my own experience goes, almost wholly confined

to the eastern or Dictæan provinces of Crete and are most abundant in the easternmost region of all—that of Siteis, the centre of which was the great Eteocretan stronghold of Præsos. It therefore looks as if the particular chamber of the palace in which this new class of tablets was discovered contained records of tribute or other matters relating to the Mycenaean cities of Eastern Crete, which very probably stood in a subject relation to the city of Minos. The men who inscribed these records were the ancestors of the true Eteocretan stock of that region, who, as is known from the Præsan inscription, preserved their language to at least the end of the sixth century B.C. The prism seals themselves are of types that go back on Cretan soil to a period long antecedent to that of the Mycenaean civilization, and, as I have elsewhere shown from evidence at that time far less complete than it is now, the conventionalized pictographical or hieroglyphic script of Crete was largely developed out of earlier forms traceable on the more primitive seal-stones of the island. Everything, in short, tends to show that this form of script was that in use among the ancient indigenous stock of Crete—the true Eteocretans of the Odyssey.

The coexistence, then, among the archives of the Palace of Cnossus of this autochthonous system with another of independent character must be regarded as a strong piece of evidence that the dominant Mycenaean race in Cnossus belonged to another stock than the Eteocretan. The linear system of the true "Minoan" archives has indeed certain points of correspondence with the East-Cretan, and a certain proportion of signs are practically identical. But it stands on a far higher level of development, and is probably "Mycenaean" in a far wider sense than the other.

There are indications that the deposit of tablets belonging to the indigenous hieroglyphic class dates from the latest days of the palace and the close of the Mycenaean period, which at Cnossus was marked by an overwhelming catastrophe and a subsequent complete abandonment of the palace site. Some of the impressions of seals of non-pictographic character found with these tablets show curious and hitherto unknown developments of Mycenaean style, also illustrated by some of the frescoes, of which an unparalleled series has now come to light. The style is less bold, somewhat decadent, but in many respects curiously modern. Among the seal impressions found in the chamber of the pictographic tablets some present for the first time male heads, apparently intended for portraits—an entirely new departure in Mycenaean art.

The last part of my this season's work in the Palace of Cnossus has been also signalized by the discovery of the largest deposit of tablets of the ordinary linear type yet brought to light. They appear to have been contained in a gypsum chest, and near to the fragments of this were found the remains of a life-size figure of a bull of painted *gesso duro*. The head is perfect, and is unquestionably the finest plastic work of Mycenaean age that has come down to our times. The clay seals found with this deposit of tablets also point to the best period of art. One represents a ship, another two walking oxen on an intaglio larger than any known example, which may well have been a royal signet. The seal impressions, like those found with the coffers containing the former deposits of tablets, are, for the most part, signed and countersigned with incised characters in the Mycenaean script. Several of the tablets here found are of larger size than any yet brought to light, and may be described as small octavo. Nothing strikes one in some of these so much as the elegance of the letter-forms, which has hardly been excelled by any form of later writing.

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