

Reviews of Books

THE IRISH STONE AGE, by Hallam L. Movius, Ph.D. Cambridge University Press. Price, 30s.

For many years we have been accustomed in archaeological literature to studies of special areas and above all of special periods in prehistoric time. Such studies have, however, been seriously lacking as far as Ireland is concerned. Coffey's *Bronze Age* was heretofore the only work we possessed dealing specifically with one phase of culture in Ireland, and the result has been a lack of clarity and of detail with regard to Irish archaeology: no period or aspect of the subject can be adequately treated of in a general work.

Hence it is with a feeling of profound gratitude that we welcome Dr. Movius' book from the press. It is most comprehensive, and is clearly the product of one who has studied his material intensively and at length, *in situ*, and in museums here and abroad. Dr. Movius was peculiarly fitted to undertake the task he set himself. He was Assistant Director of the Harvard Archaeological Mission to Ireland from its inception in 1932 until 1936, during which time he spent long summer seasons excavating in the field. He has for many years devoted himself exclusively to the study of flint artefacts, perhaps the most difficult branch of human anthropology, and has had expert advice on the geological problems involved. He has also worked in the closest collaboration with Irish and British experts on the period.

We thus expect a fine book, and are certainly not disappointed. The treatment, while of a highly technical nature, is so arranged as to be readily followed by the intelligent layman. A chapter on the chronology of northern Europe deals in detail with the methods of dating, and this is followed by two chapters dealing with late-glacial and early post-glacial chronology in Britain and Ireland. We are here given full particulars of the geological changes which have played so important a part in determining man's early environment, and the correlations with areas more intensely studied are adequately surveyed.

Against this larger canvas depicting the European and geological background of the period, the cultures of Stone Age Ireland are exhaustively described. Dr. Movius deals satisfactorily with the alleged Palaeolithic remains from Co. Sligo, and reasserts his statements discrediting a Palaeolithic dating for Kilgreany man.

The rest of the book deals with the Stone Age in Ireland from the point of view of a reasoned chronology, based in the main on observed stratigraphical sequences. This part of the work depends on Dr. Movius' own excavations in the north-east of the country, excavations which have once for all laid the foundations for a proper understanding of the Stone Age cultures of the country.

Dr. Movius' book has the great scientific merit of being thought-provoking and stimulating to further research. It cannot be taken at all complacently, and as it is a pioneer endeavour one keeps asking oneself many questions, most of which are answered satisfactorily. There are some, however, which a new edition of the book may answer. We would like to know why the author thinks that the Campignian culture and the earliest megaliths appeared simultaneously in the country. In fact, it is more likely that megaliths were introduced into a country in which an agricultural economy of ultimate Campignian ancestry had been long established. Again we believe that Dr. Movius is too hasty in his rejection of the northern affinities of the large stone axes from the Bann, and his statement that the largest of the axes (formerly Stewart Collection and now in the National Museum) is unlocated is erroneous. It comes from the diatomite at Portglenone. We must strongly disagree with Dr. Movius in his giving permanency to the old-established idea of a "Sandhill Culture," which he says is "basically Stone Age." There is no doubt that the sandhills were used from the earliest times through the ages and well into the mediaeval period. But there is no evidence to suggest that the finds from them represent anything more than the results of seasonal occupation. The culture thus represented is that of the contemporary culture of their immediate hinterland. Of themselves, they indicate a culture as little as the large stone axes from the Bann indicate a Riverford Culture.

In this book Dr. Movius is of necessity limited to the materials with which his excavations in the north made him familiar. He is thus mainly concerned with flint artefacts, and the possibility that other materials might have been used elsewhere does not appear to have been contemplated. We now know, however, that chert and limestone were both used, and two Bann flakes, of limestone, have been found as far from the Bann as Mahanagh, Co. Leitrim, and Lough Gur, Co. Limerick.

These, however, are all matters of detail, which do not affect the general excellence of Dr. Movius' book. Other matters might be mentioned, such as our dislike of the term "Larnian," where "Mesolithic" would be preferable; and the neglect of the southern and eastern occurrences of Neolithic pottery. But we mention these points only in the hope that they may help in the further elucidation of the problems connected with the Stone Age in Ireland and which Dr. Movius has so brilliantly investigated.

J. R.

THE HEFFERNANS AND THEIR TIMES. By Major Patrick Heffernan, M.D., London. James Clarke & Co. pp.xi. 89. Price 10s. 6d.

This work represents an addition to the study of Irish family history of a type which has fortunately become more common in recent times. The author, a retired officer of the Indian Medical Services, has used his leisure to collect and collate from various sources references to his 'clan.' He does not of course bring to his work extensive experience in historical research or presentation and by the stricter canons of criticism it suffers thereby. But he has amassed a great quantity of interesting and useful information about a family which would be famous in Irish history if only for its 'Liam Dall,' in treating of whom the author is at his best. His extracts from such sources as the Elizabeth Fiants and the Books of Survey and Distribution are very full and enlightening and his local knowledge of the place names enables him to work them in a manner which no one else could do. He also makes excellent use of the Inquisitions and in later times his notes on members of the family who won fame abroad are of much interest. The whole is to be commended as an earnest and extensive effort to rescue from the past and present in a connected narrative the story of a well known Irish family, and provides an additional example to the few already before us of the valuable use to which a cultured man of leisure can put his spare time. Some words of criticism there must be. As has happened in the like case before, the author cannot refrain from using an author's privilege to comment by way of obiter dicta on past and present Irish politics and politicians. One always feels that this is a pity, and it takes somewhat from the appeal of the book to an historian. Chapters V. and XII., for instance, add nothing to the history of the Heffernans and raise many controversial issues. The author also falls—almost of necessity—into some of the minor errors of inexperience. His excursions into the troubled and almost uncharted sea of Irish genealogy are blissfully unconscious of danger: Archbishop Miler Magrath is made a Dominican: and there are other minor slips of the same nature. The references, whether by way of footnote or in the text, are incomplete and of little practical use. All these things, however, can be forgiven to an earnest worker, who has laboured diligently and with profit in one of the largely untilled fields of Irish historical research.

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