



Men of the Old Stone Age / Their Environment, Life and Art by Henry Fairfield Osborn : (full image Illustrated)

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This volume is the outcome of an ever-memorable tour through the country of the men of the Old Stone Age, guided by three of the distinguished archaeologists of France, to whom the work is gratefully dedicated. This Palæolithic tour[A] of three weeks, accompanied as it was by a constant flow of conversation and discussion, made a very profound impression, namely, of the very early evolution of the spirit of man, of the close relation between early human environment and industry and the development of mind, of the remote antiquity of the human powers of observation, of discovery, and of invention. It appears that men with faculties and powers like our own, but in the infancy of education and tradition, were living in this region of Europe at least 25,000 years ago. Back of these intelligent races were others, also of eastern origin but in earlier stages of mental development, all pointing to the very remote ancestry of man from earlier mental and physical stages.

Another great impression from this region is that it is the oldest centre of human habitation of which we have a complete, unbroken record of continuous residence from a period as remote as 100,000 years corresponding with the dawn of human culture, to the hamlets of the modern peasant of France of A. D. 1915. In contrast, Egyptian, Ægean, and Mesopotamian civilizations appear as of yesterday.

The history of this region and its people has been developed chiefly through the genius of French archaeologists, beginning with Boucher de Perthes. The more recent discoveries, which have come in rapid and almost bewildering succession since the foundation of the Institut de Paléontologie humaine, have been treated in a number of works recently published by some of the experienced archaeologists of England, France, and Germany. I refer especially to the Prehistoric Times of Lord Avebury, to the Ancient Hunters of Professor Sollas, to Der Mensch der Vorzeit of Professor Obermaier, and to Die diluviale Vorzeit Deutschlands of Doctor R. R. Schmidt. Thus, on receiving the invitation from President Wheeler to lecture upon this subject before the University of California, I hesitated from the feeling that it would be difficult to say anything which had not been already as well or better said. On further reflection, however, I accepted the invitation with the purpose of attempting to give this great subject a more strictly historical or chronological treatment than it had previously received within the limits of a popular work in our own language, also to connect the environment, the animal and human life, and the art.

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