

MAN RISES
TO PARNASSUS

By HENRY FAIRFIELD OSBORN

Man Rises to Parnassus

Critical Epochs in the Prehistory of Man

BY

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MCMXXVIII

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
PRINCETON NEW JERSEY

LONDON: HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

COPYRIGHT, 1927, 1928, BY PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
PUBLISHED, DECEMBER 1927
SECOND EDITION, FEBRUARY 1928

PRINTED AT THE PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY, U. S. A.

TO
MY BROTHER
WILLIAM CHURCH OSBORN
in appreciation of his active share
as a Trustee in raising the
standards of Scholarship
and Research
in his
Alma Mater
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

PROLOGUE

Ἰν' ὑπὸ δειράσι νιφοβόλοις Παρνασοῦ κατενάσθη Φοῖβον μέλαθρα.

Where 'neath the snow-beaten ridges of Parnassus were established the courts of Phoebus.—*Euripides*.¹

I*N the spirit of the rise to Parnassus we may direct our inquiry in these lectures especially toward evidence for the spiritual, intellectual and moral, rather than toward the physical, characters of the prehistoric races.*

Hitherto our attention has been directed mainly to the anatomical characters of fossil man because these characters were the first to come to the surface. Indeed, human and comparative anatomy, throughout its long history, dating back to the Greeks, has never enjoyed a series of triumphs greater than the philosophic interpretation of fossilized remains which are too often fragmentary and incomplete. The anatomy of prehistoric man by these very triumphs has won a far larger share of attention than his higher characteristics. We shall in time be in a position to tell with great precision the whole story of the physical ascent of man—the story of his food, of his bodily habits and customs, of his modes of locomotion whether walking or climbing, of his ever increasing capacity for the use of tools, for the chasing of game and for physical and intellectual contests with his fellow-man. In studying all these anatomical attributes—for example, the form, weight, and psychic areas on the surface of the human brain—the point we shall chiefly

¹Professor Edward D. Perry of Columbia University, to whom the author owes this citation, writes October 29, 1926: "The last two words do not actually occur in this position, but they are used just above in the choral ode and are to be understood as the subject of the verb κατενάσθη. Note that in texts of the time of Euripides the name of the mountain was written with only one σ."

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stress is not these anatomical characters per se, but their bearing on our knowledge of the development of the mind and spirit of man.

In other words, the higher philosophical interpretations of crude anatomical and archaeological facts lead up to the higher central theme of these lectures, namely, how man rose to Parnassus.

In my previous lectures and writings since the year 1891 on the absorbing subject of prehistoric man, especially in "Men of the Old Stone Age," I have from the first endeavored to redeem his reputation of being very close to the brutes and of possessing many qualities of character and of mind which we do not like to associate with any of our ancestors, however remote. I do not share the contempt with which many uninformed people regard the higher members of creation which, though they were not actually ancestral, bear many resemblances to ourselves. Prolonged and sympathetic observation reveals many noble traits of character in all the higher members of the mammalian kingdom, near to or remote from ourselves. Among all the social mammals and birds, especially, we observe comradeship, mutual helpfulness, maternal and paternal devotion to the young, the sharing of danger, and willingness to sacrifice life for offspring or for a comrade. Such moral traits, if observed in ourselves, would rank high among the most desirable elements of human character.

Similar noble traits are also widely manifested among primitive human societies and especially among those who have had the least contact with western civilizations. These traits include the safeguarding of the family, protection and careful upbringing of the young, protection of the chastity of women, inculcation of absolute integrity both in word and deed, communal and tribal cooperation for the general welfare,

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reverence for higher supernatural powers, love of decoration, of beauty and of art. Practically none of the primitive races exhibits all these fine traits; some of the primitive races exhibit none of them. In recent anthropology we may refer to several sympathetic observers of primitive peoples, such as Herbert Ward in Africa, William T. Hornaday, William Beebe in the Far East, and especially Robert Lowie, who has treated primitive society, morals, and religion in a masterly manner.

All human races, fossil or living, demand our sympathetic understanding, and we should endeavor to extend this appreciative understanding alike to the existing and to the prehistoric races of man. We need not deny to our Stone Age ancestors moral traits which we observe among primitive peoples today. By prolonged and intensive research we have discovered that the lower Stone Age men are the equals in brain power of some of the primitive existing peoples, and that some of the higher Stone Age men are actually superior to some of the higher existing races.

Thus we are venturing into the new and fascinating but little trodden field of the gradual rise of the higher powers of man. It is true that we cannot progress very far, but it will be admitted that our psychic theme transcends in interest even the greatest triumphs of human and comparative anatomy.

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and

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February 28-March 4, 1927.

Since this volume went to press there has appeared J. Reid Moir's volume, "The Antiquity of Man in East Anglia," in which especially the information regarding the Dawn Man of East Anglia is amplified and the discovery fully described by this original and most able observer. But J. Reid Moir and Sir E. Ray Lankester both differ widely from the present author in respect to the geologic antiquity of the Dawn Man of East Anglia and with respect to comparison of the flint culture of East Anglia and the Cromer Forest Bed with pre-Chellean and Chellean cultures of the River Somme in France (compare Fig. 2). Naturally, these correlations of flint and of geologic horizons are subject to further research, but the present author feels confident that the geologic table on page 24 (Fig. 1), is substantially correct.

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I

THE GREEKS FORESEE
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