

# THE AMERICAN SCHOOL OF PREHISTORIC RESEARCH

By GEORGE GRANT MACCURDY

THE American School of Prehistoric Research is, as the name indicates, primarily a school. It differs from all other schools in having no local habitation except mailing addresses (one domestic and one foreign); it is therefore preeminently a school of travel. Its field is the Old World, for it is to the Old World we must turn in seeking the solution of the problems bearing on human origins.

The School of Prehistoric Research is primarily a summer school, since a school of travel functions better in summer than in winter. After the close of the summer term, however, students who have the time can continue their work at any Old World university center which may come the nearest to offering the required facilities. The School is now five years old and at the end of each of the five summer terms one or more students have remained in Europe for the winter term.

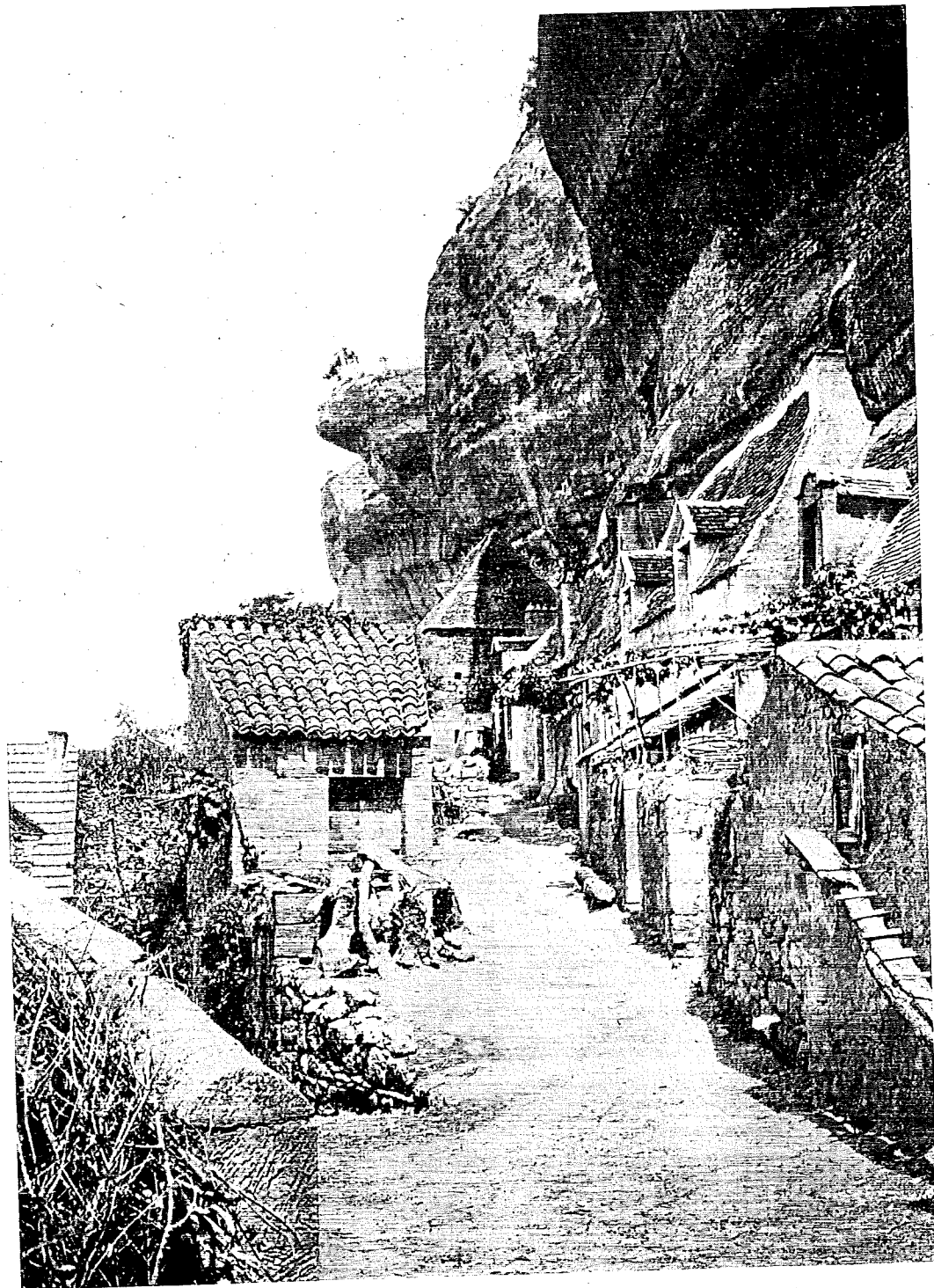
The School is one of the five affiliated with the Archaeological Institute of America, the others being the School of Classical Studies at Athens, American Academy at Rome, the Schools of Oriental Research and the School of American Research at Santa Fe. It has also a working agreement with the Archaeological Society of Washington whereby the School has the exclusive right to excavate a rock shelter on which the Society holds a lease. The Society also guarantees a certain sum annually to meet the cost of hiring laborers in connection with the excavations; by virtue of this agreement the Society receives half

of the specimens from the site in question.

The School has no endowment, the requirements of the annual budget having thus far been met by its friends. The most urgent need is an adequate endowment which will enable those in charge to take advantage of the opportunities for Old World prehistoric research as they arise. Immediate use could easily be made of the income from \$500,000.00.

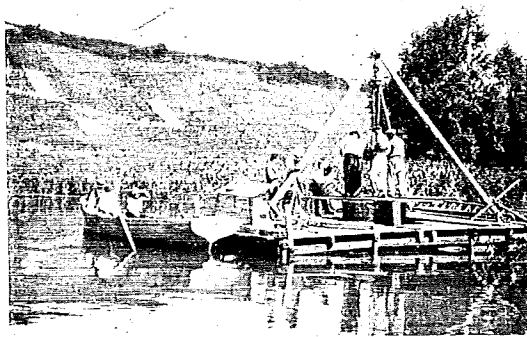
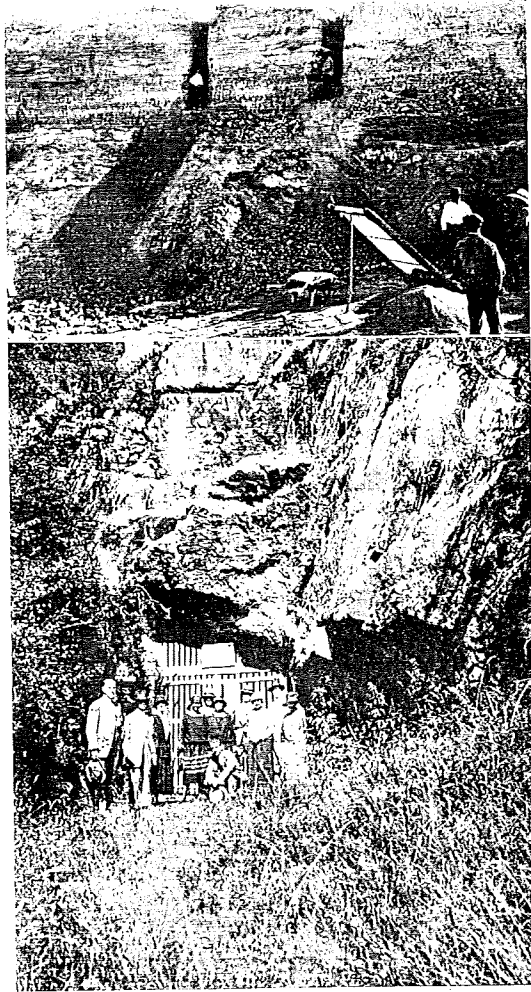
Evidence bearing on human origins is more eagerly sought for now than ever before. The School was founded for the express purpose of adding to our knowledge along these lines and of making that knowledge more easily and widely available. It can best perform this double service by stressing both its educational and its research functions, and is already making its influence felt in both these directions.

There is a Chinese proverb to the effect that a picture is worth 10,000 words; if so, then the original is worth more than many pictures of it. In like manner is a field course worth more than one in a lecture room. Our summer course performs a service for students which cannot be had in any other way. In the first place there is opportunity to inspect relic-bearing deposits and to remove with one's own hands the specimens found; students are thus able to examine the very foundations on which the science of prehistory rests. There are also open to them (for inspection only) many prepared sections of relic-bearing deposits which are the next best things



ROCK SHELTERS AT LES EYZIES, ON THE VÈZÈRE, OBSTRUCTED BY  
MODERN HOUSES

## ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY



1. PARADOR DEL SOL GRAVEL AND SAND PIT IN THE MANZANARES VALLEY NEAR MADRID. IMPLEMENTS OF THE CHELLEAN EPOCH ARE BEING FOUND HERE.
2. ONE OF THE TWO ENTRANCES TO THE GREAT CAVERN OF ISTURITZ IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY.
3. CORTAILLOD, A BRONZE-AGE PILE-VILLAGE ON LAKE NEUCHATEL. MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN SCHOOL ASSISTING IN THE SUB-AQUEOUS EXCAVATIONS.

to actual digging. In some cases there is a local museum in connection with these prepared sections, where a whole series of specimens from each of the levels is displayed.

Turning to the great museums there are open to us the accumulated riches of the past hundred years bearing on human origins. It is all very interesting to read about *Pithecanthropus*, the Heidelberg and Ehringsdorf jaws, the Piltdown remains, the Neanderthal skeleton and the Rhodesian skull, but it is immeasurably better to see and even to handle them.

Again there is hardly an original example of cave-art that is not accessible to us either in the caves themselves or in museums, which can be seen in the course of the summer. The importance of actually seeing the originals was well brought out during the past summer—especially on three occasions. At the British Museum I was preparing for some talks to the students later and was going over the examples of cave-art. These I had seen many times before, but on a more careful inspection of a celebrated figure of a mammoth ornamenting a dart-thrower of reindeer-horn (discovered at Bruniquel in southern France many years ago), it suddenly dawned on me that this specimen had never been properly illustrated nor fully understood by those who had published it. The two other occasions were our visits to the cavern of Niaux in the Pyrenees and to that of Altamira in northern Spain. Niaux was the first cavern with mural art that the students had seen. All expressed surprise at the wonderful execution of the drawings. One of them remarked: "I had until now doubted the authenticity of Paleolithic mural art, but Niaux has dispelled even the



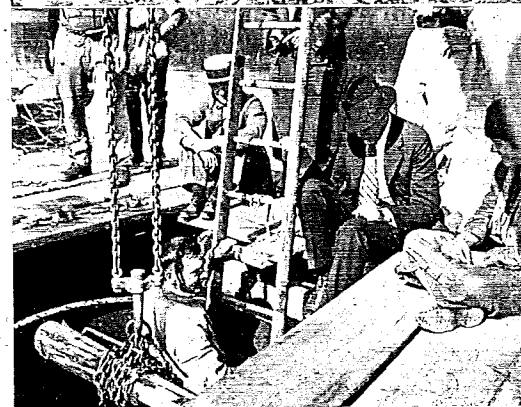
## ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY

shadow of a doubt." At Altamira the students were unanimous in declaring that the wonderful reproductions in color by the Abbé Breuil of the ceiling frescoes, instead of being overdone, had not even done justice to the skill of the Paleolithic artist's mastery of form and color.

One of the great assets of the School is the opportunity to meet foreign specialists and to hear them tell of their own discoveries. Thus of the eighty-eight conferences given during the past summer, fifty-eight were by forty-two different foreign specialists. The members of the School, therefore, had the benefit of an international faculty consisting of forty-three members, including the director. It is safe to say that no other institution possessing neither buildings nor endowment has a faculty of this size and one that is so truly international in character.

The summer term opened in London on June 25th and closed in Brussels on September 25th. While the School is intended primarily for students who are interested professionally in pre-history, provision is also made to assist amateurs. Thus the fifteen students during the past summer were about equally divided between the two classes. The program was so arranged as to touch upon every phase of pre-history and to include six countries: England, France, Spain, Switzerland, Germany and Belgium. The group visited forty-four museums and seventy-seven prehistoric sites. Many of these sites have been set aside as national monuments and are left in such a manner as to continue to tell their story to future generations.

Those, in addition to the Director, who gave special conferences to the School were: Professor G. Elliot Smith,



Photographs by G. G. MacCurdy.

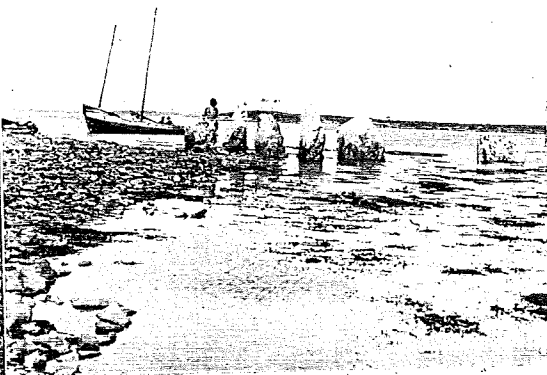
1. TUMULUS OF THE EARLY IRON AGE OR HALLSTATT EPOCH; NEAR UNDERSINGEN (WÜRTTEMBERG).
2. KOLLERSUMPF, NEAR ZUG, SWITZERLAND, BRONZE AGE IV. EXPLORED BY HERR SPEAK.
3. DIGGING FOR BRONZE AGE RELICS UNDER SIX FEET OF WATER—PROTECTED BY A STEEL CYLINDER AT CORTAILLOD ON LAKE NEUCHÂTEL.

Sir William M. Flinders Petrie, Professor C. F. M. Sonntag, Mr. Hicks, Professors M. C. Burkitt and A. C.

## ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY



DOLMEN OF MANE BRAS NEAR CARNAC, WITH PIERRE CHAUDE OVER THE ENTRANCE; THE MAIDEN WHO SLIDES DOWN THE PIERRE CHAUDE WILL NOT LACK FOR A LOVER. LATE NEOLITHIC PERIOD.



ER LANIC (MORBIHAN); A CIRCLE OF MENHIRS (CROMLECH) PARTIALLY SUBMERGED AT HIGH TIDE. LATE NEOLITHIC PERIOD.

Haddon, C. Daryll Forde, Reginald A. Smith and Mr. Kendrick, Dr. Bather, Messrs. Hopwood and Barlow, Mr. and Mrs. B. H. Cunningham, Guy Maynard and Fred Snare in England; the Abbés H. Breuil and A. and J. Bouyssonie, François Daleau, E. Passemard, D. Peyrony, Z. Le Rouzic, J. Cazedessus, and M. Massat in France; Professor Hugo Obermaier and E. Huguet del Villa in Spain; Professor O. Tschumi, Dr. Paul Vouga, Dr. D. Viollier and M. Blanc, Dr. Emil Baechler and Hans Bessler in Switzerland; Professor R. R. Schmidt, Drs. Kraft and Schroller, and Professor Sobotta in Germany; Baron A. de Loë, Professor Jean Capart, Professor Jean Servais, J. Hamal-Nandrin, and Dr. Rutot in Belgium; and two of our own students, Mr. F. W. Aldrich and Dr. A. Irving Hallowell.

We Americans are so far removed geographically from the ground out of which the relics are being dug that it is very easy for us to be ignorant of their existence as well as their sig-

nificance. It is this ignorance perhaps as much as prejudice which has recently risen like a cloud to darken the path of scientific progress in America.

Whatever may be the political ills of the Old World, trials of science teachers is no longer one of them. One of the reasons for this difference between Europe and the United States is explained by our geographic isolation. The Atlantic Ocean on the one side and the Pacific on the other separate us from the tangible evidence bearing on the great antiquity of man. So far as our present knowledge goes, the New World might be swallowed up by these two oceans without the loss of any of the essential evidence bearing on the origin and development of man both physically and culturally. First hand contact with this evidence can be had only by a trip to the Old World; over there it is already a familiar story to legislators and their constituents. Our people are not less intelligent; they need only a fair chance, which

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can be had by overcoming our geographic handicap. The Tennessee law, which gave rise to the Scopes trial at Dayton last summer, affords abundant proof of the need of just such service as the American School of Prehistoric Research is giving.

Perhaps even more important than contact with foreign specialists is the opportunity to dig. Thanks to the Archaeological Society of Washington, the students have this rare privilege at a leased site—the rock shelter of Castel Merle near Saint-Léon-sur-Vézère (Dordogne). They dug here for nearly four weeks, continuing the work begun during the summer of 1924.\* A trench was cut at right angles to the rock ledge from the foot of the talus slope all the way up to the overhanging rock, revealing evidence of two relic-bearing horizons: a lower belonging to the Mousterian Epoch and an upper referable to the Aurignacian.

More specimens were found than during the season of 1924; this is especially true of the lower horizon where the so-called scraper-type of flint implement predominates. Next in point of numbers come the hammerstones of quartzite. It should be recalled that the Mousterian or Neanderthal race had not progressed beyond the secondary stage of tool-making. The only bone implements from this level are rather large fragments of animal bones with abrasion patches, indicating that they had seen service as chopping-blocks or had been used in retouching the edges of flint knives and scrapers.

In addition, the students dug by invitation for shorter periods in the celebrated cavern of Altamira, Spain, where one of the students, Mr. F. W. Aldrich, found a piece of amber in

deposits of the Upper Paleolithic Period. Altamira is one of the five stations in Europe where Paleolithic amber has been found, the other four being Aurensan and Isturitz in France and Kostelik and Zitny in Czechoslovakia. At Cortaillod and Auvergnier on Lake Neuchâtel and at Kollersumpf on Lake Zug, they had experience in pile- and moor-village exploration covering the Neolithic Period as well as the Bronze Age. They also dug for a while in a Swiss Bronze-Age site on land, an English Paleolithic gravel pit, and in Belgian village sites and workshops representing two phases of the Neolithic Period.

Actual contact with excavation of Iron-Age culture being carried on by others was had at two localities. The National Museum in Zurich uncovered for our special benefit two tumuli of the early Iron Age known as the Hallstatt Epoch, at a site near Ossingen. The other was a chance occasion; while on an excursion with Professor Tschumi of Bern, we came upon three workmen who, in digging a trench for a sewer, had just uncovered two skeletons—one of an adult female, the other of a child. It was our good fortune to be able to assist Professor Tschumi in the removal of the bones and the objects buried with them, including fifteen bronze brooches, two bracelets of yellow glass, several large amber beads, and a bone point. The bronze brooches were of a type which made it possible to refer the burials to the second half of the Iron Age known as the Epoch of La Tène (about 300 B. C.).

Keeping abreast of and in actual touch with the latest prehistoric discoveries is one of the rare opportunities afforded by the School, and it might not be amiss to mention a few which

\* ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY, XIX, March, 1925.

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came to our notice and which we are at liberty to mention.

*France.*—P. Dubalen and Dr. E. Passemar, the explorer of the cavern of Isturitz, have just found on the left bank of the Adour in the section known as La Chalosse (Landes), added evidence in support of the claim for a Pleistocene industry antedating the Chellean Epoch. The industry is referred to as Pre-Chellean. The deposits in which the very old crude implements are found rest on yellow sands of the Lower Pliocene. Above the pebbly layer containing the crude implements, there is a relic-bearing deposit with three artifact levels: Chellean, Acheulian, and Mousterian respectively. The whole is capped by



THE ROCK SHELTER OF CASTEL-MERLE NEAR ST. LÉON-SUR-VÉZÈRE (DORDOGNE), SHOWING THE TRENCH CUT BY THE AMERICAN SCHOOL IN 1925

vegetal earth with objects dating from the Neolithic and later. Most of the implements from the Pre-Chellean horizon are fashioned from Senonian (Cretaceous) flint nodules or large flakes of the same flint; a few, however, are from quartzite pebbles.

The Dordogne continues to yield rare examples of Paleolithic art. Two fine figures in relief on stone of the wild ox (*Bos primigenius*) have just been published by Capitan and Pey-

rony. The legs and ventral portion of one figure are hid behind the body of the other, of which the observer has an unobstructed view. In other words, the artist has deftly rendered the profile of two oxen standing side by side as they would appear to a beholder in a more elevated position. The loose stone on which these figures are carved was found in the floor deposits of the rock shelter known as "Fourneau du Diable" in the commune of Bourdeilles; it has been removed to the Musée du Château at Les Eyzies. The figures have been referred to a late phase of the Solutrean Epoch.

*Switzerland.*—Since 1923 Baechler has explored Wildenmannlisloch, a cavern in the canton of St. Gall on the northern slopes of the Kurfürsten at an elevation of 1600 meters (5253 feet) above the sea. Culturally and chronologically, as well as geographically, Wildenmannlisloch links Wildkirchli with Drachenloch. It lies some 20 kilometers (12.5 miles) southwesterly from the Ebenalp (Wildkirchli) from which it can be reached by way of the Rotsteinpass, and some 30 kilometers (18.75 miles) northwesterly from Drachenloch. The stone and bone industry as well as the fauna resemble the fauna and industry from Wildkirchli and Drachenloch. These remains are found at two successive occupation levels which are intercalated between two glacial deposits of clay—Riss below and Würm above.

One of the finds at Wildenmannlisloch may serve to throw light on how man first came to be an artist. There is now a good deal of cumulative evidence pointing to the influence of fortuitous resemblances in nature to animal forms as bearing on primitive man's nascent artistic bent. Once detected, natural effigies would be gathered and treasured, and means



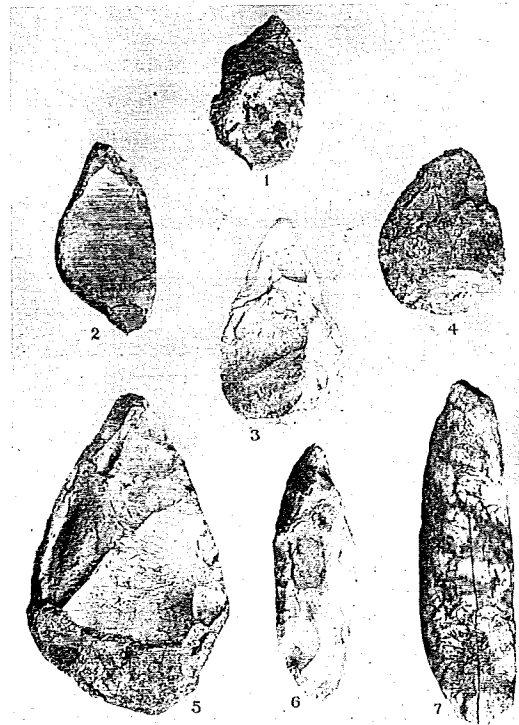
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would eventually be found to supplement and improve on nature's haphazard creations, as in the case of the mammoth from Unter Wisternitz. The specimen in question from Wildenmannsloch consists of a piece of lower jaw of the cave-bear which bears a striking resemblance to a human head and body; the concavity of the socket that held the canine forms the neck and chin. The piece bears evidence of a considerable amount of wear, as if it had been carried as a fetish.

In 1924 Professor O. Tschumi discovered at Moosbühl near Bern an important loess station with Magdalenian hearths at a depth of 40 centimeters (15.7 inches). This level has yielded a typical industry including combination scratcher-gravers, blades with back worked down, small nuclei (all of flint), and bone points. Above the Magdalenian level, Tschumi found vestiges of both a Neolithic and a Roman occupation. Moosbühl lies close to the line representing the maximum extension of the Würm glaciation and is nearer to the heart of the Alps than any other Magdalenian station yet discovered; it probably belongs to the closing phase of the Magdalenian, coincident with a much restricted area of Alpine Würm glaciation.

*Czechoslovakia.*—One of the outstanding Paleolithic discoveries of the past summer is that reported by Dr. K. Absolon. It is a great loess station on the northern slope of Palavske Mountain near the village of Dolni Vistonic (Unter Wisternitz). The site is near the southern frontier of Czechoslovakia, about midway between Brünn and Vienna. It is said to cover a considerable area and to be rich in relics of the Aurignacian Epoch. The most important specimen is an indurated clay figurine representing the human

female and belonging to the so-called Venus type. The Dolni Venus of clay is a cross between the Willendorf Venus of stone found some twenty years ago in the Danube valley only a short distance to the west, and the Lespugue Venus of ivory found in 1922 in southern France (Haute-Garonne). Other



IMPLEMENTS FROM CASTEL-MERLE  
1-6: Saw, scraper, cleavers and a slug, all of flint.  
No. 7 is a bone compressor.

clay figures at Dolni Vistonic include that of a human hip and leg, and a bear; there is also the figure of a young mammoth carved out of a so-called loess *poupée* or concretion. The four legs stand out free from the body; the stump of the broken trunk had been polished by use. The *poupées* of the recent loess are always small, so that this figure of the mammoth measures only 2.6 centimeters (1 inch) by 2.1 centimeters high.



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