

CIVILIZATION CAME FROM AFRICA, NOT ASIA, SAYS MOSSO

In His Work on "The Dawn of Mediterranean Civilization" He Gives the Aryan Theory a Hard Blow.

THE poor old Aryan theory, which brought us up to believe that all we know came originally from the Orient, has just had another blow. It was so tottering before that it could hardly stand and now Angelo Mosso in a work on "The Dawn of Mediterranean Civilization" gives it another rap.

Civilization didn't come from the East at all, he says, valiantly backing up what Prof. Sergi of the Department of Anthropology in the University of Rome and his many followers have vigorously declared from time to time. We found out things for ourselves and Northern Africa, Crete and Italy spread knowledge throughout Europe.

Even before the use of metals was understood, European and African man had made long steps toward civilization, and several different cultures were developed along parallel lines about the Mediterranean, quite independently of Asiatic influence. Before the stone age was ended prehistoric man had reached a brain development equal to that which we have now and progress was no longer a matter of growing away from the animal, but only of finding out how to use what nature had given.

Mr. Mosso has entered a new field, in some respects, because it has been his special province to find the place Italy held in primitive civilization and also to gather together all the specimens of prehistoric industry and to show by comparison how widespread was the knowledge of that time. He points out, too, that it developed slowly and naturally, the use of copper coming in by degrees and then bronze succeeding, but never making a complete break with the past.

By such means as this he shows that the school of scientists who protest that great migrations did not play much part in primitive civilization can make out a strong case. If the men of Europe and Northern Africa had been a race of savages conquered by a superior people from the East there would, of course, have been a definite line where the old civiliza-

tion fell and the new and better began full grown. There is no such line; therefore, they say, there was no such invasion.

Not even in Egypt does the new school admit any great Asiatic influence. Before the Pharaohs came—that is, before 3000 B. C.—the customs and beliefs of the dynastic periods were well started. Not only that, but they agree with what has been found in Southern Europe, and it is not necessary to call in the Semites to account for the greatness of Egypt.

Sergi would account for the resemblances between the Egyptians and the Phoenicians by the influence of Africa on Asia—not the other and more familiar way. "Many still believe that our culture comes from Asia," says Mosso, "but anthropology has decided this controversy, and we know that the Asiatic race never penetrated into Egypt or the isles of the Aegean."

One very important fact discovered in the course of explorations in Egypt has been that prehistoric man buried his dead in a contracted position, the knees pulled well up toward the chin. Throughout Europe the same method of burial is found. On the eastern coast of Italy graves have been found which reproduce exactly in regard to the position of the skeleton and the vases and flint implements left in the grave the tombs found as far south as Nubia. In the centre of Italy there are strata of civilization superimposed exactly as they are in the valley of the Nile.

The remains of prehistoric man in Italy show a higher degree of culture than existed in the Spanish or the Balkan peninsulas. "Power on the sea gave man impulse to civilization. Art, philosophy, and religion were born in the Mediterranean; in her peninsulas the work of thought and

of the hand touched the apogee of perfection, and from Greece were scattered throughout the world the seeds of the ideal life."

All this, however, took many a millennium. Man's progress has been far slower than was suspected fifty years ago and infinitely more uneven. Not only was the length of the Stone Age much greater than was previously thought, but there is proof now of an age of copper which preceded the use of bronze. This was denied until recently.

Far back in the Stone Age the use of writing begins. Different styles of writing were developed in different countries, and the glory of having introduced the art into Europe has been forever taken away from the Phoenicians. Crete had a writing of her own thousands of years before the age of Homer, and similar inscriptions have been found elsewhere in Europe. As far north as Finland rock-carvings have been found which may well have been the beginning of an alphabet, independently developed.

Not only did the Cretans have writing three or four thousand years before the Christian era, but they actually had a kind of printing. Their words, or letters, for the signs seem to be now one and now the other, were evidently carved on pieces of wood or ivory and then impressed into soft clay. In this way many inscriptions could be made with little trouble.

The Cretan hieroglyphics have been so recently discovered that no real attempt to decipher them has yet been made. The signs are for the most part obvious enough, though to put them together may be a task that will never be accomplished. There is a man walking in haste, a tree, an olive branch, a flower, and so on—neat

have special meaning. They are quite unlike the Egyptian or any other hieroglyphics.

The prehistoric Europeans had, like the early Egyptians, a linear script as well as an older and more elaborate form of writing that they kept for inscriptions. Just as the Church to-day uses some archaic forms of speech because they have, to us, a dignity and beauty that is lacking in the colloquial talk, so the ancients kept a special form for their monuments. Unhappily there are not many records of prehistoric writing in Europe, and the best preserved specimens from Crete seem to have been only merchants' tablets, a bit of prehistoric bookkeeping.

"A new and important point in regard to these studies," says Mosso, "is that they have shown that our alphabet was formed without the participation of the Indo-Germanic peoples. From the monuments of Crete pours the spring of writing, rising from a more primitive source than the two linguistic parent stocks, the Aryan and the Semitic. The theory put forth by the students of comparative philology no longer prevails, since the discoveries in Crete have shown that the art of writing existed before the presumed penetration of an Aryan race or of its influence on the island."

On one point Mosso disagrees with Evans, the great excavator of Crete. The date claimed for the ancient civilizations discovered on that island which have within the last ten years absolutely revolutionized ideas of human development he considers too early. Evans would put the first neolithic stratum discovered at Crete at 14,000 years. Mosso, who admires Evans and accepts most of his theories, finds himself obliged to cut this in half. Still, that even enlarges our

knowledge of European civilization by some 4,000 years, so there is plenty of room left for satisfaction.

Of course, primitive man was long-headed, and Mosso lays stress on this point, though he does not discuss it at length. The anthropologists have done that. Round-headed races from Asia came in, truly, and mixed with the native population, but the long heads had developed a distinct and high civilization of their own and the advent of the newcomers made no change. "The whole history of our civilization must be considered the history of the Mediterranean race."

"North Africa," says Mosso, "had a decisive influence on the diffusion of neolithic civilization, and upon the monuments of the first dynasties as well as on the vases of the neolithic age in Egypt we find the figures of the elephant, the ass, and the ostrich, which are animals characteristic of Central Africa. The horse and the camel do not figure on the monuments of the most ancient dynasties."

And he goes on to say that naturalists are agreed in admitting the preponderating influence of Africa upon the population of Europe. From Africa man probably passed to Europe, and in the Stone Age had increased so as to form a considerable population. Sixty-three departments of France show remains of prehistoric man, who had attained a brain development equal to our own.

One may be pardoned at a certain grim satisfaction at the fall of the Aryan theory. The complacency with which certain scientists have for years declared that wherever there was civilization it came from the fair-haired races, they having always dominated the dark-haired, and that civilization came through them and them alone, had begun to be somewhat of a bore to the ordinary reader. He began to suspect that somewhere, some time, a dark-haired man may have been on top. The dark-haired Italians have certainly changed the point of view.