

ARCHAEOLOGY

# Emperor's Edict on Stone Linked to Holy Sepulchre

## Newly Deciphered Orders Protecting Tombs Possibly By Tiberius, Who Ruled at Time of Christ's Crucifixion

**N**INETEEN hundred years after the death of Christ a public statement by Caesar which may relate to Jesus' tomb has come to light in a museum here, and is provoking eager interest of Biblical scholars.

In fact, the edict may have been issued as the result of discovery of his empty sepulchre. And the pronouncement of Caesar might be considered the beginning of the centuries of protection afforded the shrine of Christendom.

### Death Penalty

The edict was originally written in Latin, then translated into Greek and carved on the stone. Text of newly revealed stone slab mandate, specially translated for Science Service, reads as follows:

"It is my pleasure, with reference to graves and tombs, that, whoever has made them for veneration of forefathers or children or friends, they remain unchanged forever. And if anyone proves that any person has destroyed or in any other way cast forth the dead, or removed them to other places with evil intent to the injury of the remains, or removed the inscriptions or the stones, for such a person I order a trial, just as though for sacrilege to the gods in the human worship, for it will be much more necessary on the whole to honor the dead. Let no one be permitted to change them. But otherwise I desire that such a one be condemned to capital punishment on the charge of grave-robbery."

The royal statement is inscribed on a stone slab two feet high. The stone was found in Nazareth years ago, but was added quietly to the collection of a Frenchman who kept his archaeological treasures almost fanatically secret, even from the eyes of his fellow collectors. Following his death recently, the stone came to the Cabinet des Médailles here where its historic importance was soon recognized.

The inscription has no date. It is headed simply, "A Mandate of Caesar."

French clerics are divided in opinion

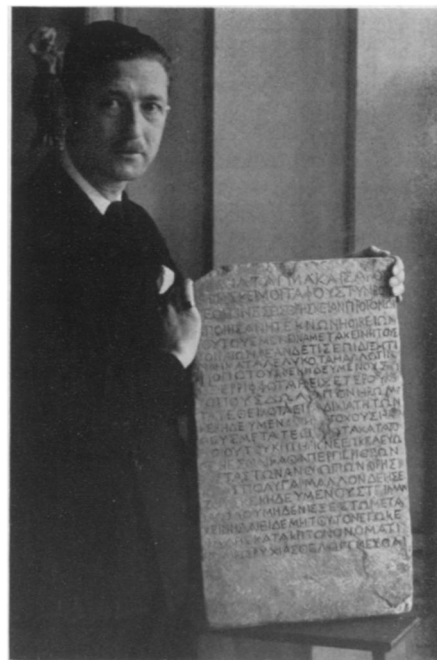
as to whether the stone can actually be documentary evidence of official correspondence over the death of Christ.

They are practically agreed that the document belongs to the age of Christ, either to the reign of Augustus, who ruled up to 14 A. D., or to the reign of Tiberius, who ruled at the time of Christ's death. The style of Greek lettering on the stone is a clue to its age.

If Tiberius wrote the mandate, says M. Franz Cumont, French Biblical scholar, one is tempted to link this decree with the greatest event that occurred in Palestine during Tiberius' reign. According to the Gospel, when Jesus' tomb was found empty, the priests of the temple had the soldiers say that certain disciples had stolen the body during the night. This accusation gained credit, at least among the Jews themselves.

It is likely, M. Cumont believes, that Pilate noted this accusation against disciples and asked for instructions from Rome. The mandate would be Caesar's reply.

If Tiberius did not write the mandate, the alternate view is that some



"A MANDATE OF CAESAR"

—held by M. Jean Babelon of the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris which recently acquired the stone for scientific study.

disturbing incident occurred during Augustus' reign to call forth a statement from Rome. Such an incident occurred when the Samaritans broke into the Temple of the Jews at Jerusalem and scattered human bones there, desecrating the Temple.

This national feud, it is pointed out, might have resulted in a notice from Caesar when hostilities reached such a stage that the dead as well as the living were treated with contempt.

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PALEOBOTANY

# Venezuela Once Had Forests Like Those of California

**R**AIN-FORESTS like those that now clothe California hills once stood on the uplands of Venezuela, and woods like those on the Pacific slope of Panama today once stood in the valleys of Oregon and Washington.

This mutual cousinship between the plant communities of now and long ago in North, Central and South America has been traced by an expedition under the auspices of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, led by Dr. Ralph W. Chaney, of the University of California. Dr. Erling Dorf of Princeton University,

who accompanied the expedition, has revealed some of its discoveries.

Dr. Dorf summarized the work of the trip as proving a more definite relationship than hitherto thought to exist between the forests of the eocene period in the northern hemisphere and living ones in Central and South America. Discoveries made in the course of the expedition verify the theory that forests which existed in North America 60,000,000 years ago were pushed south as the climate became increasingly cold and dry, prior to the Ice Age.