

ARCHAEOLOGISTS ARE OFTEN GIVEN THRILL

In Excavations Objects Unearthed Sometimes Are Priceless; Experiences

Some of the thrill experienced by workers with archaeological materials are related by Dr. Berthol Laufer, curator of anthropology at Field Museum of Natural History, in the current issue of Field Museum News.

"In archaeological excavations many objects wrested from the soil are not clearly recognizable at first," Dr. Laufer writes. "Clay figures and pottery often are encrusted with hardened layers of earth which hide their shape or designs. Metal objects are sometimes so disfigured by chemical action of soil and moisture that identification seems almost hopeless. But after receiving 'first aid' in the field, such objects are treated in the museum laboratory by chemical and electrical processes which usually insure their complete recovery.

Many Thrills

"Many a thrill is experienced when a shapeless mass of metal gradually reveals its original form, or when a beautiful design or inlay of precious stones or gold suddenly appears after removal of a malignant patina. Such a resurrection was recently witnessed at Field Museum when a copper reign

ring of a chariot, from Kish, received from the Field Museum-Oxford University Joint Expedition to Mesopotamia, was properly cleaned and unexpectedly revealed the full figure of a stag crowned with branching antlers.

"The surprise was twofold. Copper rein rings were known from Kish heretofore, but the previous ones were surmounted by the figure of a species of horse or simply by metal loops for the reins. In this case the figure was an unsuspected member of the deer family, and a long and heavy rope from the animal's muzzle indicates that stags must have been captured alive and tamed by the early Sumerians. This is the most ancient hint of the taming of stags that has come either from Mesopotamia or elsewhere. The stratum in which this object was discovered dates it to about 3500 B.C."

Domesticated Deer

All members of the deer family are more or less docile and can easily be tamed, although only the reindeer has been completely domesticated, says Dr. Laufer. Kings of ancient India built special stables for sacred deer which were fed by hermits who thus hoped to acquire religious merit. In ancient China tamed deer were used even for drawing carriages. Dr. Laufer states. Tribes of Formosa captured harts to display manly virtue. Many allusions to tamed deer are found in ancient Greek and Roman literature.



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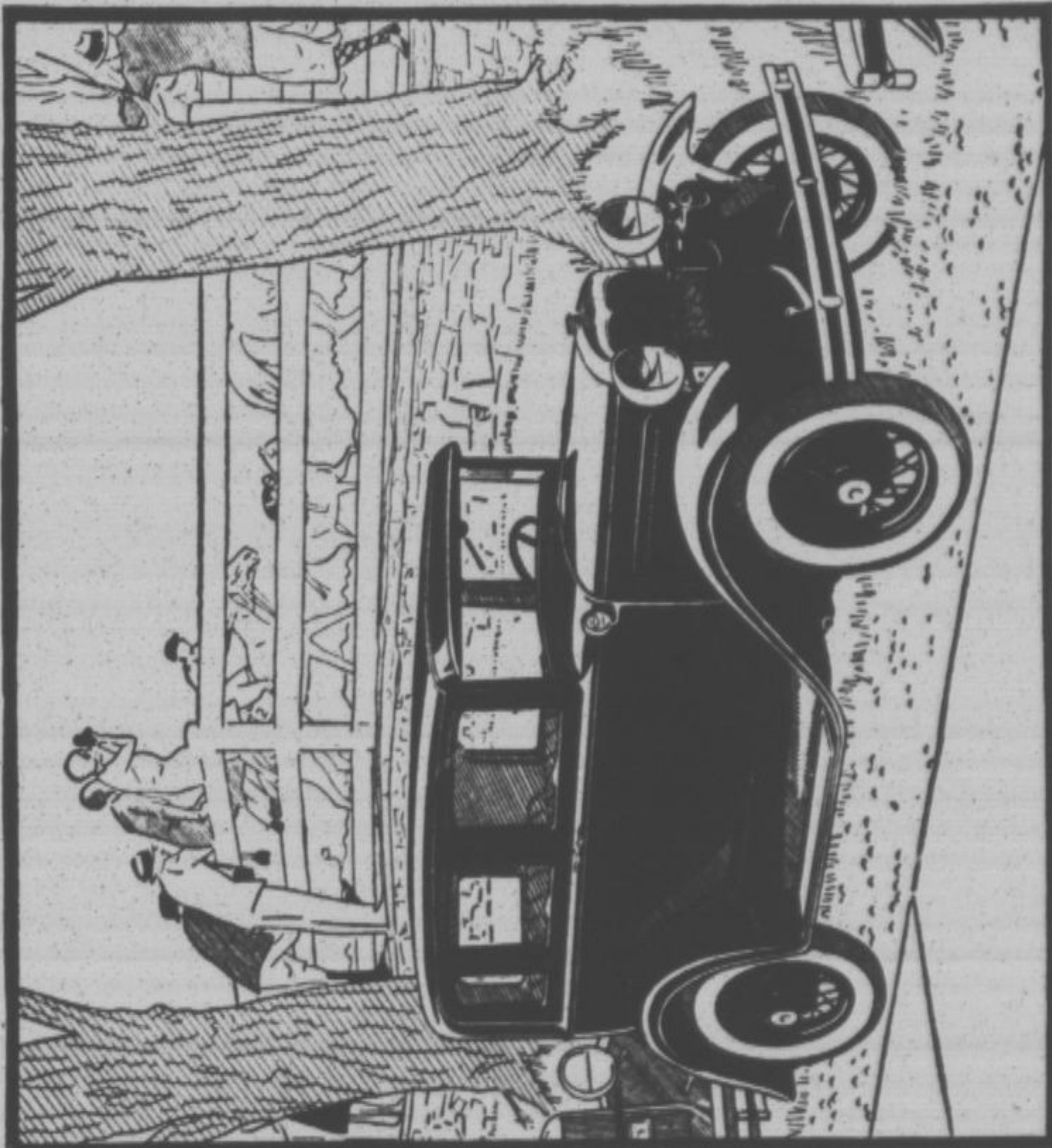
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