

EARLY HISTORY OF MAGNETISM

(Extract from *Nature*, London, March 19, 1932)

At a meeting of the Newcomen Society held at the British Industries Fair, Birmingham, on March 2, Dr J. B. KRAMER read a paper on "The Early History of Magnetism", in which he discussed the various accounts of the first discovery of a magnet and the development of the science of magnetism down to A. D. 1600. His remarks were divided into five sections: the first dealing with the discovery of magnetism up to and including the writings of LUCRETIVS, about 95-52 B. C.; the second with the interpretations and first applications of magnetism up to the thirteenth century; the third with the experimental researches of Peter PEREGRINUS OF MARINCOURT, A. D. 1269; the fourth with the magnetic compass, between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries; and the last with the discovery of terrestrial magnetism by GILBERT and with GILBERT's book "De Magnete".

DISCOVERY OF MAGNETIC PROPERTIES.

For the claim that is sometimes made that the magnet was first known to the Chinese Dr KRAMER finds no support, but after examining the works of ARISTOTLE and others, he comes to the conclusion that the magnet was discovered accidentally by one of the Grecian tribes who originally inhabited Thessaly and were called Magnetes. The discovery was made in one of the settlements in Asia Minor, in the Province of Lydia, about 600 B. C. That magnets attract through a distance, that they induce magnetism in iron and that they repel as well as attract are mentioned by LUCRETIVS. Who made the great discovery that if allowed to move freely a magnet pointed North and South is not known, but Peter PEREGRINUS describes the dual polarity of magnets. The work of GILBERT was based on 199 "magnetical experiments" and his greatest original contribution to science was his magnificent discovery and proof that the earth is a colossal natural magnet in itself. Dr KRAMER's paper contains many extracts from the various writers on magnetism and should prove of wide interest.

