

signs. It so happened that Bauer had worked out a good many signs that Dhome had not been able to interpret and that Dhome had interpreted a good many that Bauer had not understood. Putting the two together, it was found that it was now possible to begin active work interpreting the texts.

It is interesting to note that Dhome had ^{acquired} ~~gained~~ facility in deciphering strange messages through experience gained as an expert with the French army during World War I in interpreting enemy codes. And Bauer had performed the same sort of work in the German army at that time. Thus men who had been enemies now cooperated in a peaceful advance in our knowledge of ancient civilization.

It was possible to make sufficient progress in the work of interpretation to show beyond doubt that Dhome and Bauer had indeed found the true secret of the meaning of the signs. It proved to be an alphabetic type of writing--one of the first alphabetic types in history! It is now certain that alphabetic writing of the type that we use for the English language developed from a system that began in southern Palestine in the second millennium B. C. The Ras Shamra signs bear evidence of being an artificial sort of writing, with wedge-shaped marks arranged in orderly fashion to indicate various letters. Quite evidently it was invented by someone who was familiar with the alphabetic type that had developed shortly before, from which all of the types of alphabetic writing in the world today have sprung. Thus if our Latin system of writing should be described as a grandson of the earliest type of alphabetic writing, the Ras Shamra system should be called its stepchild.

The language in which these tablets are written is closely related to the