

# AMERICAN ANTIQUITY

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## EDITORIALS

MY FIRST archaeological experience taught me something not found in books. As we jogged across northeast Arizona a-horseback, stopping now and then to look at a surface ruin or a rock-shelter, I peppered the elders of the expedition with questions. I wanted to know who these people were and when they lived and why they went away and where they went and a great deal else. Finally, the leader said, "If we could answer all those questions we wouldn't have left Boston." That was a new thought. I had supposed that archaeologists knew archaeology as farmers know hay.

Many newcomers to archaeology, whether students or laymen, have that same impression. A man who lived in the blistering Nevada desert for his health's sake started "hunting Indian things" by way of pastime. His interest grew with his collections and soon he was reading everything he could find on the subject. It wasn't very much, he complained to us one day at Southwest Museum. Who was the authority on his region, he wanted to know. When we told him he was, he went into a fine dither. He was no scientist, he'd never studied archaeology, he'd only expose his ignorance if he opened his mouth on the subject. He was only trying to learn. So were we all, we assured him, so why not get in the game and add his bit to the scanty store of data on his pet subject? Others had helped him, now he could help them. If he didn't want to be an archaeologist or an authority, we'd promise not to call him those names, at least not in public. He could be just an ordinary citizen, writing down what he observed and discovered. Now he's a member of the Society.

How many persons are cheating themselves and archaeology alike because of the notion that you've no business raising your voice unless you can talk the professional patter and know all the answers? To what extent are we professionals fostering that notion by an attitude that seems to proclaim us the priests of a weighty ritual? The best assurance here is the existence of our Society, in which all who have a true interest in archaeology (not relic-hunting) may meet on common ground. Amer-

ican archaeology is more than ordinarily free of that taint of snobbery for which so many people despise and distrust all things academic. But it's something to have in mind, this tendency of the amateur to overrate the professional and of the latter to underestimate the amateur. It raises a barrier where none should exist.

CHARLES AMSDEN

MINORITY rule seems to be the fashion in the Society for American Archaeology, judging by the turn-out for the business meeting at Indianapolis. It is true that nothing exciting seems to occur at these meetings, yet it is somewhat disappointing to see the Society represented each year by hardly more than a double handful of members. In this small group there are two or three men, often the same individuals from year to year, who are responsible for making and seconding motions during the meetings. People who are unable to come to the meeting cannot be expected to vote, but as long as the majority of those in attendance adjourn to the cloakrooms as soon as business comes on the floor, the few enthusiastic members will continue to elect the officers, and control the policies of the Society.

OUR ASSOCIATE EDITOR. Dr. George C. Vaillant has agreed to act as Associate Editor of AMERICAN ANTIQUITY. The Society for American Archaeology is fortunate indeed in having Dr. Vaillant on the editorial board. He needs no introduction to students of Mexican Archaeology who have watched with admiration the way in which he brought order to what seemed a hopeless jumble of pre-Toltec "barbarians" in the Valley of Mexico. He has long been a Curator of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, a position temporarily abandoned to assume a more active position in connection with the Museum's appeal to the public. The Society owes a debt of gratitude to him for consenting to join the editorial board in the face of his many duties. Space in these pages is always open to him, and we shall hope to hear from him before long.