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Comment

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Comment by the Editor

LEST ALL BE LOST

To the pious Citizen, content with the things of the present, the thought of ransacking ancient places for relics of a departed race was shocking. The book of life was closed by the Mound Builders thousands of years ago. They placed their dead in hallowed ground. By patient toil and with infinite care, they raised earthen monuments as symbols of faith and devotion. What was thus finished in the past, proclaimed the Citizen with an air of finality, let no man resurrect.

Seriously the Mentor considered the attitude of the Citizen of good intentions but superficial judgment. Accustomed to searching the records of antiquity for lessons of civilization, he held the archaeologist in high esteem. Like the physicist who inquires into the laws of nature, or the geologist who reads the story of creation in the rocks, the student of prehistoric peoples must open the fragmentary books that are closed to all who can not decipher a language not of words.

Curious but untutored collectors, in their quest for trophies, reflected the Mentor, destroy the treasuries they despoil, and do not understand

the significance of what they find. Moreover, cultivation has all but obliterated the thousands of ancient mounds that once proclaimed the existence of primitive man in the woodlands and prairies of Iowa. The plow and harrow have wantonly scattered the bones of that disregarded race.

For confirmation of his opinion, the Mentor turned to one who could speak with authority. "The mounds yield much information concerning the Indian and most of the best-preserved handiwork of our pre-Columbian inhabitants", explained Professor Keyes. "But property rights have been held very sacred in our country and there has been no power to preserve these antiquities or protect them from the desultory search of relic hunters. The object of the scientific exploration of a few mounds this summer was to secure invaluable archaeological information about to be lost forever."

The Citizen of enlightened piety, observed the Mentor, may well be grateful to the Federal government and the State of Iowa for sponsoring the excavation of certain "ancient village sites and Indian mounds now threatened with destruction." The work has already produced some of the most significant discoveries in American archaeology.

J. E. B.