

**ARCHAEOLOGIA NOVA
CAESAREA: 1907, NO. II
1908, NO. III 1909**

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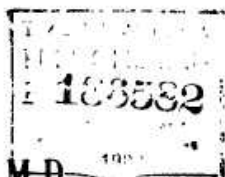
CHARLES CONRAD ABBOTT

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Archæologia Nova Cæsarea

BY

 Charles Conrad Abbott, M.D.



"As quaint old Sir Thomas Browne happily puts it: 'Time which antiquates antiquities and hath an art to make dust of all things, hath yet spared these minor monuments,' and I am heartily glad of it."

1907

TRENTON, N. J.
MACCULLISH & QUIGLEY, PRINTERS.
1907

PREFACE.

BECAUSE two relics of the one-time occupant of the open plain or the pathless forest are found during the same day, it by no means follows that the two objects were once in the possession of the same individual or that they were fashioned at practically the same time; yet, based upon such an absurd assumption is the view so strenuously insisted upon by the coterie which, after a most superficial glance at the territory in question (the tide-water area of the valley of the Delaware), finds itself limited to denying the discoveries of others who have borne the heat and burden of the day in actual exploration.

It is scarcely complimentary to the average intelligence that those who testify in the role of experts should offer negative evidence as of greater value than that which is positive. Unsuccessful themselves in the finding of artifacts in place, after careful search—not only the asserted search, but the care attending it, problematical—they would feign blot out of existence, by a toss of the head or scratch of the pen, all evidence of man's antiquity. Success has attended these unscrupulous efforts far more generally than should have been the case, or would have been, had the subject been treated honestly, as questions purely geological or historical are supposed to be.

Possibly the most glaring instance of this disingenuous treatment of the subject was based on the absolutely impossible examination of sewer trenches in the streets of Trenton, N. J., during the progress of their excavation. It admirably illustrates my contention. With a gratuitous

diagram to make it the more delusive, the statement was made (*Geol. Jour.*, I, 1893, pp. 15-37) that on the present immediate shore of the river rudely chipped argillite implements were found in abundance, but that there occurred no trace of such objects in the gravel at any significant distance from the river. In other words, that no such objects are ever brought to light when digging cellars, sinking wells, excavating for sewers or water mains, or any other deep removal of masses of earth. This is an absolutely erroneous statement as to the actual conditions, and reprehensibly so, because based on what should have been realized as insufficient knowledge of the region. The author heads the paper above referred to with the question: Are there traces of Glacial Man in the Trenton Gravels? Little wonder that he replies negatively to his own question. Negative evidence was his sole quest.

No speculation as to his own origin by palæolithic man could have been more wild, illusory, and often insanely grotesque than these frantic efforts of modern archæologists to blot from history's page the existence of men whose manhood was yet as an unfolded bud. And the more strange, too, because theoretically man ought to be as old here as the so-called Trenton Gravels. Antiquity is called for when we survey the field as a whole. The study of aboriginal languages demands the lapse of many centuries. Yet, when special evidence of such antiquity is offered, the archæologist becomes suddenly afraid of his own shadow and thinks the holding aloof for additional and yet more strongly confirmatory evidence is sanely valorous. Such attitude permanently holds back the truth.

When, by means of a spade, we explore the ground beneath our feet, after having previously carefully examined its surface, we are confronted by a condition which seems to be one of positive character, and yet it is as illusory, often,

in reality, as it is unquestionable in appearance. So many possibilities are there clustering about the inhumation of objects that it is rash indeed to measure antiquity by the depth at which any artifact may occur. Just as a warm day in January does not mean that June will be ushered in tomorrow, so an implement made and used by an Indian, so recently as when a neighbor of the white man, may occur at a depth that startles the discoverer. May startle, but should not, for the whole range of possibility is to be considered. Certainly no hole was ever dug and re-filled without abundant evidence of the fact. A tree torn by the roots from the ground, as in a notable tornado that leveled an orchard, leaves a deep hole in the ground. Springs that trickle patiently far beneath our feet wear away the soil until a blind cavern is formed, and then occurs a great slumping in the field, and the one-time level ground becomes the sides of a ravine. Intense cold has cracked the earth wide enough and these fissures have remained open long enough for an object as large as the ordinary arrow-point to drop from a few inches beneath the surface to a depth of six or seven feet. A trifling brook, that has rippled over the surface for centuries, may be turned aside and forced to flow in quite another direction, and the old course be so completely covered up that when discovered it has all the appearance of a relic of another geological era. The deep burrowing of many a mammal may be the cause of a recent relic's deep burial, and a cloud-burst, flooding a sandy area, may wash from gravel, where it had been an integral part of the deposit, a rude artifact and leave it upon the new-made surface, exposed to frost and heat for the first time in many centuries. I have witnessed all these things. I have been confounded many times. I have learned to be cautious.

Still, notwithstanding the confusion that confronts the student of the earth's immediate surface, there are yet re-

maining evidences of comparative fixity, and we can, through them, determine the major and widespread changes, distinguishing such from the minor and purely local ones. Were it not so, we might well despair of reaching to any conclusion concerning, approximately, the earliest appearance of man.

It is to be regretted that geology is not, as yet, more of an exact science, and not until it ranks with astronomy and mathematics will it be able to set permanently at rest many of the petty doubts that vex the archæologist. It is true that when treating of Laurentian rock, coal deposits or beds of cretaceous marl, the terms used are dependable, for there is no possibility of a human skull appearing and grinning a contradiction, but when we near the present and dig in, but not beneath the "pleistocene," "quaternary," "glacial" or "recent," or whatever term may be applicable to some particular point, then it is, that if gathered here, an association of geologists are scattered, like startled sheep, if asked the simplest question. An archæologist must be his own interpreter of geological conditions. If not equal to this, he is a mere collector of relics, and whatever the value of his specimens, his opinion is little worth.

Probably no river in the United States presents as important and comprehensive a series of archæological horizons as does the Delaware, from a short distance above its tidal flow to its final merging with the sea. The reason is obvious. The terminal moraine is but about fifty miles away. From it is derived the strata of post-glacial deposits of sand and gravel that form so marked a feature of the valley southward of the extension of the ice-sheet. The immediate surroundings, prior and during glacial activity, now and then at a significant elevation above the flood-line, were heavily forested and inhabited by an extensive and

varied fauna, and not a condition is discoverable inimicable to the highest interests of primitive man; but did he dwell here at that time? Did he know, in this region, the reindeer, the moose, musk-ox and mastodon? Did the walrus gambol in the Delaware's icy waters? Ay, there's the rub!

All that which has been set forth as evidence has been contemptuously set aside as having any archæological significance. If objects found suggestively deep were offered that were unquestionably artifacts, then they were intrusive objects, or, if the conditions forbade intrusion, then the artificiality could not be demonstrated, and the sweeping conclusion of these modernists was, and is, that referring all artificiality to the historic Indian, the purposes of archæological research are accomplished.

Whatever their entire significance may ultimately prove to be, the fact remains that large rudely chipped but distinctly fashioned implements of metamorphosed slate—argillite—which are indistinguishable in pattern from European palæolithic implements, have frequently been found in deposits of gravel, the history of which is unmistakably that of the closing activities of the glacial period, and so far as they were concerned, there was no evidence of such artifacts having become inhumed subsequent to the deposition of the containing bed.

A distinction should ever be drawn between the expression of an opinion and the statement of a fact, but such distinction seems generally to be lost sight of when treating of the archæology of the Delaware valley; by those, at least, who deny the glacial phase of such archæology. Possibly extreme timidity may be the explanation of this unfortunate state of affairs, but far more probable is it that a cultivated strabismus reverses the order, and placing the gravel on the surface and the soil beneath, necessarily makes the older appear the more recent. Be this as it may, there is certainly

more confusion of impression than infusion of fact in the archaeological references we find in scientific journals, government reports and the homelier State reports concerning our surface geology.

If we are to accept the dicta of the many who have dilated on the subject, it would appear that whatsoever we must ascribe to man, be it bone or artifact, if found *in* the earth, is to be held as an intrusive object and really belonging *on* the earth.

As it happens, fossils old as and older than the tertiary beds are found upon the surface. Do they belong there?

The geologists can readily tell you why they do not.

Let a theoretically ancient trace of man be found where floods have washed the surface of a field and the geologist's insistence is that, being of human origin, it never was elsewhere than on the present surface; that it could be brought from beneath after an æon of burial is preposterous.

Happily for those interested in the final acquisition of the truth as to man's career in America, the geologist is yet to be born, with vision so penetrative and glance so terrible that doubt will flee at his approach.

The geologist cannot so readily explain the artifact.

His decisive manner, in the one case, is changed to sad uncertainty in the other. His yea was yea, and nay, nay, when discoursing of a shell, but now, confronted by an artifact or human bone, we are treated to endless polysyllabic circumlocution.

Ignoring, then, the literature of the subject, which bears no more important relation to the river valley than the clouds of dust and smoke that continually traverse its length, I returned, some years ago (November 20, 1901), to the rocks and accumulated material that fills the spaces between them and sought again to have them tell their own story of the past. Now, at the conclusion of my labors, I do not