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The "Michigan Relics"

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Abstract: A reprint of an article for *Deseret Museum Bulletin*, September 1911, with the addition of a letter from Miriam Brooks substantiating Talmage's observations.

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The "Michigan Relics."

A Story of Forgery and Deception

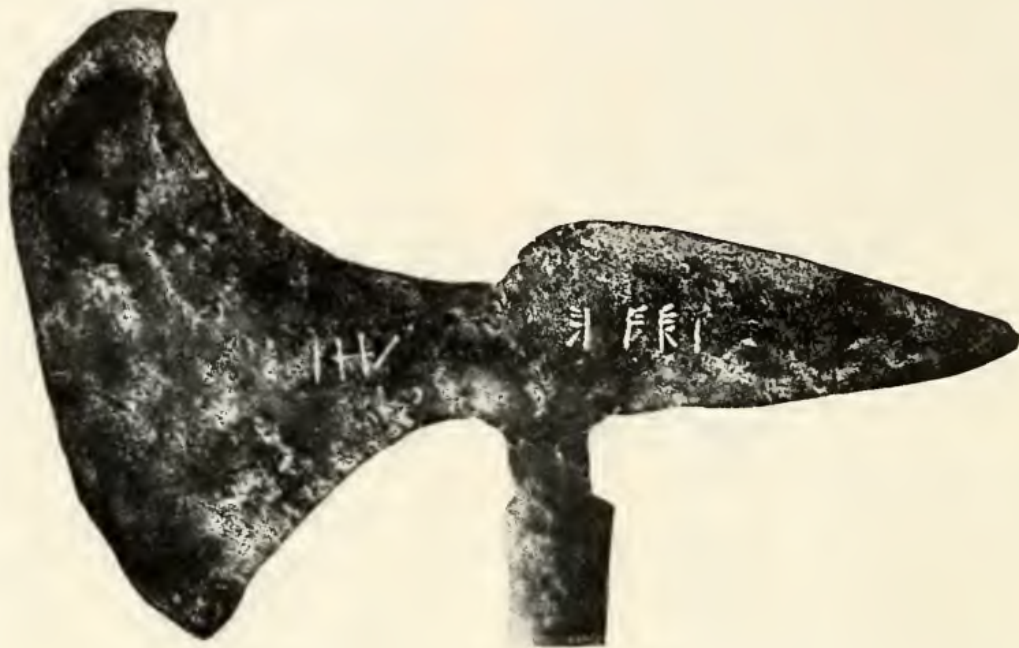
TOLD BY DR. JAMES E. TALMAGE.

At irregular intervals during the last twenty years, there have appeared, in newspapers and magazines, reports of the digging-up of alleged relics of antiquity in certain parts of Michigan. The objects thus unearthed constitute a class of their own, differing in certain features from all other archeological material ever found in America or elsewhere. The finds comprise a variety of objects, such as small caskets, tablets, ornaments, weapons, tools, smoking pipes, and vessels of pottery. The materials of which these objects consist are clay, both unbaked and baked, slate of different colors, and copper. Practically every piece thus far reported is inscribed, the clays by impression of type-pieces while the receptive surface was still moist, the coppers by hammer-impact of harder dies, and the slates by graving tools.

My interest in the matter of these discoveries dates back to the summer of 1909, prior to which time I confess to having been practically uninformed even as to the literature then current relating to the subject. In June of the year named I saw, in the Archeological Museum of the University of Ohio, a clay tablet belonging to the class of objects herein referred to. From

inquiries made at that institution I learned of certain parties resident in Detroit, Michigan, who had made themselves prominent in the exploitation of these finds. Correspondence opened by myself led to personal acquaintance with Mr. Daniel Soper and Rev. James Savage.

The Mr. Soper referred to had once been Secretary of State for Michigan, and I found him to be a man concerning whom conflicting reports are afloat. By some of his acquaintances he is



2. Blade of thin copper, probably intended as a representation of an early battle-ax. This object was taken by the writer from a "mound" in Palmer Park, near Detroit, Michigan, November 15th, 1909. The piece is 7 3-4 inches in greatest length, by 5 1-8 inches greatest width. From this blade, discs have been cut, and these have been subjected to both chemical analysis and conductivity determinations. Both series of tests prove the copper to be a modern product—the result of the smelting of sulphur-bearing and arsenical ores, and surely not native copper such as has been found in American mounds of known and attested antiquity.

strongly supported both as to reputation and character; by others it is as strongly declared that his record as a citizen is not wholly without a blemish; in short, his name is known both in good and ill report. To me this is no proof of unworthiness. The best of men may be maligned. I try to believe the best I have heard of the gentleman, and to discount as far as possible the unfavorable reports.

I found the Rev. James Savage to be Dean of the Catholic

Church known as the Church of the Most Holy Trinity, in Detroit. He is an enthusiastic student of Indian relics and owns a splendid collection of objects, which objects are in strong contrast with the "relics" herein referred to and regarded as spurious. At first I believed, and I am still charitably inclined to hope, that Dean Savage is a victim and not a conscious party in the deception and fraud shown in this exploitation of archeological forgery.

The names of these gentlemen have been used so freely in recent press reports that I feel at liberty to adopt the open and personal style in describing my relations with them in this matter. My own name has been similarly used with almost equal freedom.

In November, 1909, I journeyed from Salt Lake City to Detroit solely in the interest of this investigation. I was courteously received by both Mr. Soper and Father Savage, and was permitted to examine the collections of the so-called ancient relics owned by these gentlemen.

I found the collections to comprise a large array of artifacts of clay, copper and slate, every piece bearing a certain combination of characters after the pattern here shown.



On some of the artifacts this "tribal mark" or "sign-



3. Perforated tablet, designated by Scottford as a neck-ornament, or pendant, unearthed by the writer from a "mound" in Palmer Park, near Detroit, Michigan, November 15th, 1909. Tablet measures 4 3-8 inches long by 1 7-8 inches wide, and is made of gray slate.

This inscription has been commonly referred to in newspaper articles as the "tribal mark;" it has been more pointedly designated by Prof. Francis W. Kelsey as the "sign-manual of the

manual," appears as a combination of characters like rough drawings of modern nails; on other pieces the marks resemble cuneiform inscriptions, rudely wedge-like. That the same "mark" or "sign" is intended in each instance, however, appears to be beyond question.

If the objects brought together by Mr. Soper and Dean Savage were genuinely archaic, they would support the following statements:

(1) That the north-central area of the the United States, more specifically the present State of Michigan, was inhabited in the long-ago, before the existence of the present tribal divisions of our North American Indians, by a numerous people belonging to the Caucasian race and possessing a high degree of civilization.

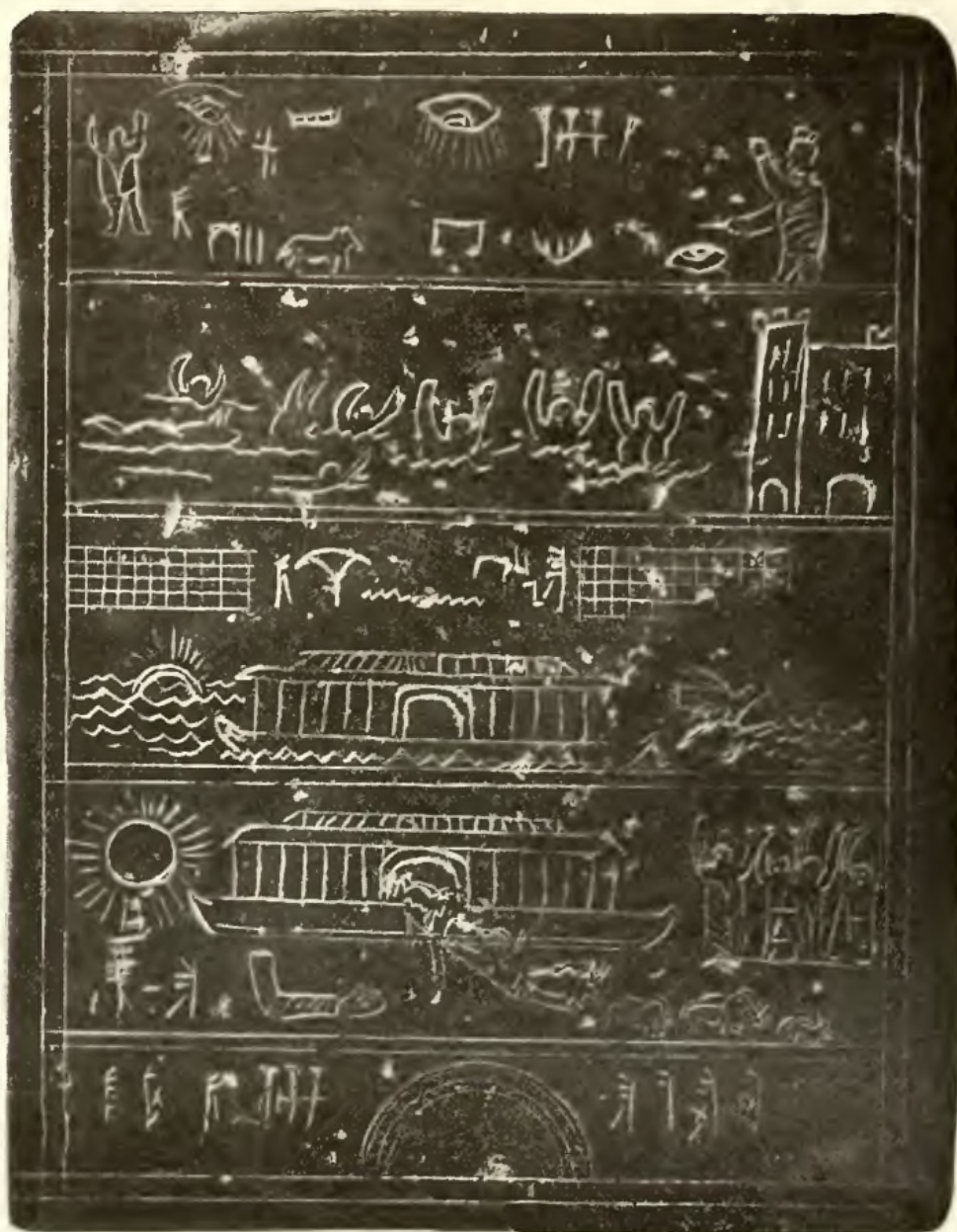
(2) That, living at the same time and inhabiting the same area was another people of inferior culture, resembling the Indians of today both in physiognomy and customs.

(3) That these two peoples, representing widely different cultures, were at enmity one with the other, and that the people of the higher class were in a state of constant migration, seemingly fleeing before the assaults of their semi-barbarous foes. They paused not in any one place long enough to build enduring towns, but on the other hand lived in a condition of readiness for flight.

(4) That the people of higher culture used a written language comprising both pictographic and other characters. Some of these written



4. A blade of slate, unearthed by the writer from a "mound" in Palmer Park, near Detroit, Michigan, November 15th, 1909. This piece appears to be a skinning knife. Were it a genuine relic of antiquity and an actual burial with the ancient dead, it might be considered as telling of the last struggle—a fatal encounter of a hunter in conflict with the nondescript animal shown. The inaccurate details of the inscription taken as a whole, the modern headgear of the hero-bust, and the evidently recent graving of the lines as shown by the new fracture-marks seen through the lens, combine to show that the piece is a forgery, and the attempted delineation of the ancient scene a deliberate deception. The reverse side bears no inscription. The piece measures 9 inches in greatest length, and about 2 1-2 inches in greatest width.



5. Tablet of gray or greenish slate, unearthed by the writer from a "mound" in Palmer Park, near Detroit, Michigan, November 18th, 1909. The tablet is about 11 1-2 inches long by 9 1-4 inches wide and 3-8 inch in thickness. The "tribal mark" appears at the top. On the side here shown, there are crude outline drawings, evidently intended to be a pictographic story of the Noachian deluge—showing in the order of the zones or bands the following incidents: (1) Noah's preaching under Divine commission, as indicated by the All-Seeing-Eye, and the rejection of Noah's message by the crowned leader of the people, with other details. (2) The Deluge, with men and animals drowning, and buildings being submerged. (3) The ark afloat; the dove sent out upon the waters; the duration of the flood—forty days and forty nights—as indicated by the parallelograms; the sun of prosperity rising. (4) The ark at rest with the sun of prosperity high above the horizon; animals disembarking and men already disembarked, the latter probably representing Noah with his three sons in the attitude of giving thanks. (5) The bow regarded as the sign of Jehovah's covenant set in the heavens in token of the Divine pledge that the earth should not be again overwhelmed by water.

characters had points of resemblance to the alphabets of the Orient, specifically the Egyptian, the Greek, the Assyrian, the Phoenician, and the Hebrew.

(5) That the people of the higher class had a knowledge of certain books of Jewish scripture, specifically Genesis, and possibly also later books belonging to the Old Testament compilation.

The striking parallelism between these indications and the historical story embodied in the Book of Mormon will be seen at once by anyone familiar with the book named. Indeed, were the Michigan "relics" what they purport to be, they would furnish strong external evidence of the main facts set forth in the Book of Mormon narrative. As a matter of fact, however, the Michigan "relics" are forgeries, and the seeming confirmation of the Book of Mormon story is fictitious and false.

After careful examination of the collections belonging to Mr. Soper and Father Savage, I suggested to these gentlemen the advisability of my opening some of the mounds myself. I had no very strong hopes of finding "relics," but I had a desire to study the structure of the mounds. My suggestion was promptly concurred in, and a certain James O. Scotford was named to me as the most desirable man to hire as a digger. On hearing his name I remembered that he had been designated by Prof. Kelsey as having "manifested a skill in finding relics that made him the envy of the region." I demurred to the proposition of hiring Scotford, and went so far as to say that if my investigation was to be impartial, he was the one man in the world whom I should not engage for the work. My demurrer was courteously, diplomatically, but nevertheless firmly, overruled; and I thereupon decided to engage Scotford, and, furthermore to submit to the lead of the men with whom I was dealing, without forgetting for a moment that I was being led.

On the 15th of November, 1909, and again on the 18th, Soper, Scotford, and I opened some of the little mounds, Scotford doing the digging, Soper and I looking on, and I alone removing any and every object exposed by the digger. In view of the conclusion to which I have since come, to the effect that these "relics" are forgeries, I have questioned myself as to the impressions made upon me at the time of the digging here referred to, and have read

with interest to myself the record written by me at the time. I quote from my own journal:

November 15, 1909: From the street-car station near the Oldsmobile factory, on the Woodward Avenue line, Soper, Scotford and I walked



6. The reverse of No. 5. The "tribal mark" appears at the top. Next below is a conflict scene between two parties of different cultures; and then a compass-inscribed circle,—probably a calendar,—showing thirteen divisions. The accompanying outlines may be understood as showing the death of the leader of the helmeted party, with indications of the lunar division, or month, and the specific phase of the moon, marking the time of the death.

westward. At about one-eighth of a mile from the station it was found that Scotford, the engaged digger, had no spade or shovel. He procured a shovel from a man who, on my inquiry, was described as the care-taker and authorized custodian of the woodland area toward which we were journeying. A shovel was quickly produced. On passing I ought to say that the shovel thus supplied was of the long-handled type, pointed blade, and was a subject of much grumbling on the part of Scotford, who, nevertheless, accomplished surprising results with the implement. In the woodland, not more than a mile from the car station, I found a hummocky surface. Some of the little knolls were plainly "turnouts," *i. e.* elevations produced by overturning of trees. Other



7. Copper blade unearthed by the writer beneath an old tree-stump in Palmer Park, near Detroit, Michigan, November 18th, 1909. The blade is about 7 1/4 inches long; it is of thin copper and is inscribed on one side only, bearing on this side the ubiquitous "tribal mark," and in close proximity thereto a rudely inscribed X.



8. Copper blade, 7 inches long, belonging to the Soper collection. This is inscribed with the "tribal mark" only.

hummocks—rarely more than two or three feet above the general level—were as plainly artificial in origin. No conception of drainage processes or of erosion by natural circumdenudation would explain their origin. They are evidently man-made mounds. Each is surrounded by a ditch-like depression, designated by my companions as the moat. This moat is little more than a shallow ditch, and the mound itself is a non-conspicuous object. Indeed the mounds would not attract the attention of any casual or non-scientific observer. In but few instances do the mounds extend above the general level more than two or three feet, and generally their length is not more than four or five feet, with an average width of two to three feet. As stated by Father Savage and by Mr. Soper,

and as volubly maintained by Scotford, when two mounds are contiguous, and when one of the two has been found to be productive, the other will surely be so. The gratuitous explanation given me is, that in case of such contiguity, one mound is that of the buried husband, the other that of the wife. I am not convinced as to this explanation.

We went into the woods and I was shown a number of mounds that had been opened by my companions or their friends. About four feet from one of these dug-into mounds was another, untouched. It was about fifteen feet long, eleven to twelve feet wide, and reached an extreme relief of about three and one-half feet above the general surface, and about four and one-half feet above the bottom of the ditch or moat. This ditch appears to be the depression resulting from the heaping-up of the earth for the mound. This particular mound was moss-covered and bore a good growth of willows. Plainly, the mound itself is of no recent construction, though I saw nothing to warrant the assumption of age running into centuries. I examined the mound with critical care, and failed to find the least evidence of recent disturbance. Cer-



9. A copper blade with attached ferrule for handle, 7.7 inches in greatest length, 2 inches in greatest width; thickness of back of blade $\frac{3}{8}$ inch. This belongs to the Soper collection. It is inscribed on one side only with the "tribal mark" within a circlet of rings.

tainly it had not been dug into in the immediate past,—probably not for years. I photographed the mound before digging was begun; then Scotford began to dig. The material is that of the region,—lake-sand without a pebble or other stone larger than sand-grains. The digging was easy, and the sand appeared to have been long at rest. The longer diameter of the mound extended east and west. At a point about the middle of the long diameter and about twelve inches below the top of the elevation, therefore fully two and one-half feet above the level of the ground, a layer of dark earth was encountered, merely a streak not more than one and one-half inches to two inches in thickness. The discovery of this streak was hailed with delight by both Scotford and Soper, as the charcoal streak said by them to be never absent from a true or

man-made mound. Below the dark streak the sand was of fine grain,—described by my companions as the existing remains of a human body here interred. Under the lens, however, the gray ash-like material proved to consist of water-worn grains of sand. On top of this so-called ashy layer, and therefore directly under the black streak at the central line of the mound first described, the shovel struck a hard object. I removed an artifact, seemingly an ax of shape as here shown. [See illustration No. 2].

Very little digging was done in the mound after this discovery, both Soper and Scotford suggesting that we try another. My object being to follow and observe, and not to take any initiative action at present, I concurred. About one hundred yards southerly from the mound described, was another irregular in outline, with a large tree-stump still rooted at the east end. This was designated to me as the “serpent mound.” It was moss-covered and overgrown with shrubs, as was the first. At a point about eighteen inches below the top, a layer of black material was encountered (described as charcoal and possibly such). Immediately beneath the charcoal we found a tablet of dark gray slate with inscriptions on both sides as shown by sketch. [See illustration No. 3]. I was somewhat suspicious when Scotford, pointing to the inscribed circle with rays, said: “This is like what was found on one of the plates from Mormon Hill, at Cumorah, New York.”

A few feet lower, and two feet nearer the southerly margin of the mound, we found another article made of the same kind of slate. This was probably a skinning-knife. It was inscribed on one side only. [See illustration No. 4]. The figures are exceedingly crude; the bust suggests a modern French soldier; the quadruped is of nondescript variety; the hunter is a poor caricature.

With this find digging operations were suspended at the joint suggestion of both Soper and Scotford. Thereupon we returned to town.

November 18, 1909: Shortly after 1 p. m., Soper, Scotford and I were on the ground of our last excavation work,—the woodlands west of the Oldsmobile factory. We went direct to the “serpent mound” already referred to. Having today a small ax, which tool we lacked before, we readily cut through the tree-roots penetrating the mound, and then digging was easier. At a point not more than six inches below the level at which the skinning-knife was found, and near the medial line of the mound, I took out a tablet of black slate, rectangular, though chipped at one of the bottom corners, ten and three-eighths inches long, four and one-eighth inches wide, and one-fourth inch in thickness.

This is covered with inscriptions on both sides. I shall not attempt a copy of the inscriptions here. [See frontispiece]. We dug for half an hour after making this find, and then, at the suggestion of Soper, concurred in by Scotford, we left this mound. The next mound dug into was a small hummock about nine feet long, six feet wide, and two to two and one-half feet extreme height above the ground level. The long axis of this mound ran easterly-westerly. Near point marking intersection of major and minor axes, and about twenty-four inches below top,—therefore almost directly at ground level,—we found a layer of black material



10. A double-bladed ax of copper, belonging to the Soper collection, 7.7 inches in greatest length, 6.3 in greatest width and about .2 inch in thickness at junction of side or wing-blades with the central body. Compared with other copper artifacts found, this piece is heavy and massive. It weighs a little over 1 pound and 5 ounces avoirdupois.

other outlines, seemingly indicating the preaching of Noah under Divine commission, and the rejection of his message.

(2) The second band shows the flood in progress with men and animals drowning and buildings being submerged.

(3) The third band shows the ark afloat with a number of undeciphered characters, and two parallelograms each divided into forty

referred to by my companions as charcoal; and on top of this layer the edge of a tablet was exposed. I removed the slab with my own hands. It proved to be a tablet of greenish slate about eleven and one-half inches long, nine and one-fourth inches wide, and three-eighths of an inch in thickness. On one side of this [see illustration, No. 5] appears a pictographic representation of the Noachian deluge. The record is divided by horizontal double lines into five bands or zones as follows:

(1) The top band shows the "tribal mark," two pictographs of the All-Seeing Eye with rays, two human figures, and

squares, explained by my companions as indicating the duration of the flood as of forty days and forty nights; and the sun half risen above the waters, glibly explained by Scotford as indicating the return of prosperity to the imprisoned mariners.

(4) The fourth band or panel-zone shows the sun of prosperity fully risen, the ark at rest, men and animals disembarked or disembarking.

(5) The fifth band at the bottom of the slab shows the rain-bow set in the heavens as a symbol of the Divine covenant that the earth should not be again overwhelmed by water.

On the reverse [see illustration No. 6] there appear:

(1) At top the "tribal mark."

(2) Beneath this, in central position, two bands of warriors, one party wearing helmets and bearing bows and arrows; the other party wearing feathers as head-gear and armed with spears. One of the plumed band, presumably the chief, lies dead.

(3) Below the last band are shown two busts of human form, one plumed, the other helmeted, with half-moon and lines leading to a calendar disc below. Immediately below the helmeted head lies a prostrate warrior. It would appear also that a peace-maker is here indicated, striving to prevent further hostilities between the armed bands.

(4) Still lower is the calendar-circle or zodiac of thirteen divisions, the risen sun over waters on the left.

Nothing further was developed in this mound. It should be remarked, however, that we dug but little after the last find. We opened six other hummocks, but after a very brief digging into each, the work was abandoned at the suggestion of Soper and Scotford, because, as they explained, there was no appearance of the black or charcoal layer. We dug into two others in which the black layer was revealed but nothing was found in the matter of "relics."

About the ninth mound dug into after leaving the site of the last find, was an irregular hummock with the stump of a large, hollow tree in place. Under the stump near center of the hummock and practically at or near the general ground level, we came across a knife of thin copper, with furrled receptacle for handle. [See illustration No. 7]. On one side was the "tribal mark" with a rude X. The other side was without inscription. We returned to town as darkness approached.

I have given the foregoing transcript of notes made at the time with a view of setting forth my own impressions and opinions in the early stages of my investigation. It will be seen that even at that time I recognized evidence of spuriousness in the "relic"

finds, I have tried to maintain an open state of mind, however, until the accumulation of evidence became decisive.

Leaving Detroit, I went on to New York and later to Washington, and exhibited the six pieces found by myself to



11. Copper tablet belonging to the Soper collection. Approximately 6 inches by 3 1-2 inches. This is said to have been dug up in Gratiot county, Michigan, in 1898. Inscriptions comprise the "tribal mark" both at top and bottom; a calendar circle with 13 divisions; other straight-line characters, and 2 moon crescents.

the archeologists at the American Museum of Natural History, New York, and at the Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington. The finds were pronounced "fakes" both at New York and Washington, but not one of the ethnologists consulted ventured to give definite and specific reasons for his conclusions. Thereupon I returned to Detroit, and without announcing my presence to the men whom I had met on my former visit, and indeed with some precautions against revealing my identity, I returned to the field of my former exploit, and, with the help of hired diggers, opened up twenty-two mounds similar in general appearance to those

in which under Scotford's skilful digging, I had found so many artifacts; but not one of the twenty two yielded so much as a scrap in the way of artifact or "relic." Of course this is in the nature of negative evidence only, but negative evidence may be important, and when cumulative may become decisive.

After my return home from this visit, I learned of the activity of a Mr. Rudolph Etzenhouser, who, it seems, had been promoting a plan of publishing a booklet relating to the finds. This gentleman, I subsequently learned, was an official of the Reorganized Church of

Latter-day Saints. In the early part of 1910 there appeared in print a brochure entitled "Engravings of Pre-historic Specimens from Michigan, U.S.A.; Copyright, 1910, by Rudolph Etzenhouser, Proprietor." In addition to the foregoing the title page bears the following imprint:

ENGRAVER'S CERTIFICATE

The originals from which the accompanying reproductions were made have been carefully inspected by us. We certify that the half-tones are accurate reproductions of the pre-historic originals. Van Leyen & Hensler, Detroit, Michigan.

Over the signature of Rudolph Etzenhouser appears an "Introduction" from which the following excerpts are taken:

Students of American archæology will find in the following pages reproductions of the monuments of a race of primitive Americans, monuments of a people whose existence has hitherto been involved in an obscurity as complete as that which enveloped their history. Some of the specimens are of stone, some of copper, and others of clay. They have been unearthed for the most part, through the efforts of amateur investigators, and represent the contents of hundreds of mounds scattered over the Lower Peninsula of Michigan. The language inscribed on these tablets has not as yet been interpreted but will doubtless, some day, succumb to the advance of philology, and they will perhaps yield an interesting chapter to the ancient history of this continent.

To Mr. Daniel E. Soper, of 1110 Ford Building, Detroit, Michigan, belongs the credit of having been for several years the moving spirit in the investigation of these pre-historic relics of Michigan.

Mr. Soper's absorbing interest led him to approach men of science. Some who had specially questioned the genuineness of the relics were invited to be upon the ground for special research to determine the facts. None of these latter have responded as yet, though it is hoped they may later on.

Rev. James Savage, of 116 Porter Street, Detroit, Michigan, first came to the aid of Mr. Soper, and assisted him admirably and untiringly. Later the undersigned became interested and joined them in their efforts.

If this brochure serves to arouse the interest of students of philology or those engaged in historical and archæological research, in this investigation, it will not have been compiled in vain.

Yours respectfully,

RUDOLPH ETZENHOUSER.

The brochure contains forty-four large octavo pages of plate illustrations, and as a product of the printer's art, is good.

Among the two to three hundred objects in the collections of Messrs. Soper and Savage, I select a few for specific mention. Of the accompanying illustrations, Nos. 13 and 17 are reproductions of photographs furnished by Rev. James Savage; all others are from original negatives made by myself:

Illustration No. 8: A copper spear-head, 7 inches long, belonging to the Soper collection. This is inscribed with the "tribal mark" only.

In common with many other of the copper pieces, this shows surface markings due to a crystal-magma such as would be produced in an acid solution in which the copper was immersed, and such as is unknown in the case of copper pieces corroded by atmospheric oxidation due to the slow processes of time.

Illustration No. 9: A copper blade with up-turned point and attached ferrule for handle, 7.7 inches long, belonging to the Soper collection. It is inscribed on one side only, showing thereon the "tribal mark" within an enclosure of small rings.

Illustration No. 10: A large and somewhat elaborately decorated copper piece, suggesting a double-blade battle-ax with spear-point. This belongs to the Soper collection. Compared with other copper weapons this piece is massive. Most of the copper blades and points are of thin metal, almost sheet-like.

Illustration No. 11: Copper tablet belonging to the Soper collection, approximately 6 inches long by 3.5 inches wide. The inscription comprises what seems to be a calendar-circle of thirteen divisions, the "tribal mark," which appears twice, other straight-line characters, and two delineations of the moon, quarter-full.

Illustration No. 12: Copper tablet belonging to the Soper collec-



12. Copper tablet belonging to the Soper collection. Said to have been found in Isabella County, Michigan, August, 1897. The tablet measures 5.8 by 4.1 inches and is of about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch in thickness. In common with several other of the copper pieces, the surface of this tablet shows the effect of the crystallization of copper salts in the process of corrosion by acid.

tion, approximately 5.8 inches by 4.1 inches. This shows most plainly the surface markings due to the crystallization of copper salts in the process of acid corrosion.

Illustration No. 13: Copper tablet belonging to the Savage collection. In comparison with others of the copper tablets this is thick; it is a little over 8 inches in length and about the same in width. It is referred to by Father Savage, as also by Messrs. Soper and Etzenhouser, as the "Ten Commandment Tablet," and is described by them as an independent version of the Decalogue. For this inference or conclusion as to the nature of the tablet, there seems to be no good reason aside from the fact that the slab is of shape to suggest a double tablet, and that it bears ten separate inscriptions numbered by dots. It will be observed that the



13. Copper tablet said to have been found near Blanchard, Montcalm County, Michigan, in 1907. This measures a little over 8 inches both in length and width, and is in the form of a double tablet with two sets of bands or zones comprising five in each set. This is known as the "Ten Commandment" tablet. This is one of the most carefully inscribed artifacts belonging to these collections of "relics." The illustration is reproduced from a full-scale photograph furnished the writer by Rev. James Savage, to whose collection the tablet belongs.

"Ten Commandments" here given are all of about equal length.

Illustration No. 14: Tablet of green slate belonging to the Soper collection, 7.25 inches in length by a little over 5.75 inches in width. On the side here shown is a pictographic representation of the Tower of Babel in process of construction. The confusion of the builders is indicated as is also their consequent dissension. In the lower band or zone appears a scene not easily explained by the record in Genesis. There



14. Tablet of green slate belonging to the Soper collection and said to have been found near Detroit. January 8th, 1909. The tablet measures $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length, by a little over $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches in width. On the reverse side (not here shown) the tablet contains a crude pictographic representation of the Noachian flood, similar in general features to that shown in illustration No. 6, except that the rain-bow is omitted. On the side shown above, the building of the Tower of Babel is indicated with confusion and contention arising among the builders. The bottom band has received no sufficient explanation from the account of Babel given in Genesis.

are outlines of several human figures in the attitude of reverential petition before the figure of a bird, usually understood to be the symbol of Divinity, with a number of tongues projecting from its beak. It may be that this is intended as a representation of the petition presented by Jared and his followers asking the Lord not to confound their tongues (Book of Mormon, Ether 3: 33-37). The reverse side of this tablet, not here reproduced, contains a crude pictographic representation of the Deluge, similar in general features to that shown in No. 6, except that there are but four bands instead of five, the rainbow being omitted.

Illustrations Nos. 15 and 16: A tablet of black slate, about 8.1 inches long by 5.5 inches wide, belonging to the Soper collection. On one side is a roughly-drawn human head, with an attempted delineation of an Egyptian head-gear, beneath which appear two pyramids in outline. On the reverse appear a number of rough pictographs and hieroglyphs, as also a variety of nondescript characters. Some of the characters are arranged in vertical columns, others in horizontal bands. The most prominent horizontal band on the reverse side (No. 16) was explained to me by Father Savage as a delineation of the priests of Baal in perturbation over their failure to call down heavenly fire, and the repose of Elijah (the figure with the bird's head, indicating his Divine commission) who stands by his altar, serene and sure (see I Kings 18: 18-40). This is one of the most carefully made of the slate tablets seen by me, and is of so fresh an appearance as to suggest practical newness.

Illustration No. 17: A tablet of black slate, 8 by 5.5 inches, belonging to the Savage collection. On one side a battle scene is depicted; the combatants comprise two parties, one helmeted and bearing bows and arrows, the others top-knotted or wearing feathers and armed with spears. It may be observed that the feather-topped warriors are clothed in trousers and sweaters of modern make. On the reverse side appears the calendar-circle of thirteen sections, with other delineations.

In the early discovery of these "relics," the tablets and other objects found were mostly of clay. Some of the clay pieces were unbaked and fragile. In the criticism offered as early as 1890 it was shown that such tablets could not have held together in moist earth for even a period of months, to say nothing of years and centuries. With up-to-date enterprise the discoverers ceased to find objects of clay, and forthwith produced from the "mounds" artifacts of slate and copper. The later tablets of more enduring material are strikingly similar to the earlier and more perishable sort, in the matter of inscriptions. The clay



15. Tablet of black slate belonging to the Soper collection. Said to have been found near Detroit, Michigan, May 14th, 1908. The tablet is 8.1 inches long by 5.5 inches wide, and .4 inch in greatest thickness. The crude picture seems to be an attempt to outline an Egyptian face with head-gear, with a representation of the pyramids below. The scouring lines made by abrasive powder are very plain. For reverse see illustration No. 16.

tablets were impressed with dies or type pieces, of which several samples have been found. I have seen and handled over a dozen of them,—ready-made type-plates of Noah in the attitude of a preacher, others of the ark and the dove. If these things were genuinely archaic, their discovery would set back the first use of moveable types far beyond the earliest authentic record of such application. The copper tablets of more recent manufacture have been imprinted by dies and not by the cutting of graving tools.

As a result of my investigation, I am thoroughly convinced that the alleged “relics” are forgeries and that they are made and buried to be dug up on demand. In my investigation I have endeavored to maintain a judicial and unbiased condition of mind, and to carefully consider and weigh the evidence on both sides. Among the reasons leading me to the conclusion that these alleged archeological relics are spurious, are the following:

(1) According to the evidence I have been able to gather, practically all discoveries of the Michigan “relics” thus far announced have been made by James O. Scotford, of Detroit, or by his son-in-law, Scoby, or by parties who, like myself, have been operating for the time-being under guidance of the men named. Now, were these “relics” actually of ancient burial, and were they as generally distributed as reports of the discoveries would indicate, there would surely be some accidental finds. It is reasonable to believe that some of the “relics” would have been dug up in the clearing of the woodlands, in the making of excavations incident to building operations, and in the breaking-up of land for agricultural purposes. As a matter of fact, however, there seems to have been no discovery of these “relics” except such as have been made by parties who have gone into the field for the purpose, usually with witnesses at hand ready to attest the conditions of the finds. Of all the purported relics that have come to my notice I have thus far failed to find one that has been unearthed or dug up by others than parties who were in the field for the express purpose of making such discoveries.

(2) The conditions of burial seem to preclude a possibility of ancient interment. The objects are generally found within a foot or two feet of the surface, and I have heard of no credible instance of any one of these objects having been exposed through nature’s

weathering, attested by parties other than those well known to be skilled in making these finds. Nevertheless did these objects exist by the hundreds in these little mounds, within a short distance of



16. Reverse of No. 15. The broad central band was explained to me by the parties most renowned in the finding of these "relics" as a pictograph of the notable scene in which figured so conspicuously the Prophet Elijah, and the priests of Baal (I Kings 18:18-40).

the surface, it is beyond human belief that they should never be uncovered except by pre-arranged digging. Furthermore there is absolutely no evidence that appeals to me as proof that these little mounds are graves. It has been assumed that the "relics" were buried with the dead, and the area within which they are found has been referred to as a great necropolis. Yet not even



17. A tablet of black slate belonging to the Savage collection, said to have been found near Grayling, Crawford County, Michigan, August 9, 1909. The tablet measures 8 by 5 1-2 inches. The battle scene forming the principal picture on the side here shown is of exceedingly crude execution. The warriors fighting with spears appear to be clothed in modern sweaters and trousers.

a single tooth has been discovered in any one of these mounds to mark the presence of a buried body.

(3) Most of the objects are so fresh as to be practically new. Some of the slate tablets I have seen and handled, suggest the thought that they may have just left the maker's hands. The lines made by the graving tools, when examined microscopically, show fresh fractures, practically indistinguishable from others made in the course of experiment at the time of the examination.

(4) The copper pieces, while generally of an attractive greenness, due to the coating of verdigris, have evidently been corroded by rapid chemical treatment and not by the slow processes of time. The green layer on every piece I have seen is thin and non-adherent, easily wearing off even with careful hand-

ling, leaving a surface clean and smooth except for the slight roughness produced by chemical action. Moreover, the surface of the copper pieces generally shows the outlines of crystal aggregates due to the formation of copper compounds in the process of chemical corrosion.

(5) The copper of which these articles are fashioned is ordinary commercial copper, smelted from sulphur-bearing and arsenical ores. It is not native copper, such as the copper objects taken from genuinely ancient mounds in this country are known to be. This conclusion as to the character of the metal is based on chemi-

cal analyses made in my own laboratory and elsewhere, and on conductivity determinations made at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington.

(6) The way in which the pieces of slate and copper have been fashioned indicates their modern origin. On the edge of the copper battle-ax unearthed by myself (see illustration, No. 2) the equi-distant and regular marks of a modern file are revealed by the lens. On the edges of the black slate tablet referred to as one of my discoveries (see frontispiece)



18. Reverse of No. 17. Here appear the calendar circle with 13 sections, and what appears to be an attempt to record the death of one of the fighters, with indication of date. This picture and No. 7 are reproduced from photographs furnished the writer by Rev. James Savage.

the tooth marks of a modern saw are plainly seen. Practically every other of the many slate tablets seen by me in these collec-

tions has rounded edges. This particular piece has edges but slightly rubbed down, and the saw-marks are plain. By the way, this piece, which of all the pieces examined by me is the most flagrant instance of modern workmanship, has been the subject of a somewhat animated correspondence. Its *return* has been demanded. As the piece was unearthed by a digger in my employ, whose services were engaged and paid for by me, I cannot understand any claim of ownership superior to my own, except possibly that of the man who made and buried the object.

(7) The inscriptions themselves condemn the "relics" as forgeries. The persistency with which the "tribal mark" appears on every object from an arrow-point to the most elaborately inscribed tablet indicates rather a modern fad than an ancient custom. All authenticated Hebrew and Egyptian inscriptions are known to be made with care. Such inscriptions may be stilted and stiff in their outlines, but nevertheless they are made with scrupulous attention to conventional detail and show none of the hap-hazard, off-hand, slovenly sketching revealed by these Michigan forgeries.*

(8) The characters are a jumble thrown together without regard to origin. Some of them are copied from the Moabite Stone, others from the Icelandic Runestones, others from the Phoenician, Egyptian, ancient Greek and early Hebrew alphabets, with heretofore unknown variations.

I lay no claim to originality or priority in thus denouncing the Michigan "relics" as forgeries. Soon after I began the investigation I learned that such finds had been so pronounced by able men years before I had ever heard of them. Nevertheless I resolved to undertake the investigation as a subject of new and individual examination. Prof. Francis W. Kelsey, of the University of Michigan, and Prof. Morris Jastrow, of the University of

* See an open letter to the author written by Miss Miriam Brooks, under date of August 8, 1911; *Deseret Evening News*, Salt Lake City, August 12, 1911.

Pennsylvania, long ago denounced the forgeries and warned collectors against them.*

Later publications discrediting the Michigan finds have appeared, some of them dating but a few weeks back.†

In the foregoing reference is made, by footnote, to an open letter addressed to the author by Miss Miriam Brooks, said letter having been published in the *Deseret Evening News* of August 12, 1911. The letter embodies a spontaneous expression of opinion by a gifted student of art and history, young, ardent and capable; as such it is valuable as an instance of the impression made upon a receptive though wholly disinterested mind as to the character of these "relics." The open letter as published, and as unseen by the present writer prior to its appearance in print, follows, with editorial caption and introductory comment in full.

(From the *Deseret Evening News*, Salt Lake City Utah, August 12, 1911).

THOSE SPURIOUS MICHIGAN FINDS.

Miss Miriam Brooks adds to the proof of the fraud in the artifacts taken from the mounds in the vicinity of Detroit, Michigan.

Following the publication by the *News* last Saturday of Dr. James E. Talmage's article on the spurious "archelological" finds in Michigan, Miss Miriam Brooks has written a letter to Dr. Talmage through the columns of the *News*. In concluding his article last week, Dr. Talmage said that space limitations prevented a further analysis or discussion of the subject at the time, but that in the future such further treatment was probable. It may be that the points covered in the letter which follows would have been

* See the *Nation*, January 28, 1892, and reference thereto in the *American Anthropologist*, Volume 10, Number 1, January-March, 1908.

† See article by Prof. Francis W. Kelsey, in the *Nation*, 1910; the article is signed under date of May 31, 1910. See statements by Prof. Frederick Starr, of the University of Chicago, in *Chicago Examiner*, July 28 and 30, 1911; also statement by Prof. J. O. Kinnaman, in the *Detroit News*, August 2, 1911. See, further, a report on the subject in the *American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal*, September, 1911.

in Dr. Talmage's further discussion of the subject, together with others requiring much effort. Miss Brooks' letter brings out some interesting points and further adds to the evidence of the spurious nature of the "finds." Her letter follows:

SILVER LAKE, UTAH, Aug. 8, 1911.

Dr. James E. Talmage, Salt Lake City, Utah.

DEAR SIR—Having been very much interested in your article on the archaeological finds in Michigan, in the *Saturday News*, I would like to suggest a piece of evidence which I think is very strong against their being genuine.

The drawing is not that of ancient Hebrews and Egyptians. While the figures, objects and hieroglyphics chosen and their strange mode of arrangement is somewhat similar to the kind of things the ancients drew, the drawing of them is not at all like that of the ancients. The old Egyptians and Hebrews made strange figures, wooden in appearance, and not greatly resembling human beings or animals as they are; but the way in which they were drawn in perfection of line and design has been unsurpassed in any art of any age. These drawings on the newly found slates, as indicated by the newspaper reproductions, are nothing but "hen scratches," with no pretense to any kind of beauty or design. The art of the ancients was so one with their religion, that every line and figure was drawn and composed with the greatest kind of religious care and feeling. Each picture was a design so perfect in every detail of composition that they have been used as models throughout the ages since. In these slates there is no good element of design at all—merely an attempt at grotesque arrangement of certain groups scarcely resembling the ancient drawings even in absurdity or native primitiveness.

Taking the first slate (Fig. 1; see illustrations, Nos. 5 and 6) showing the story of Noah and the Ark. The marginal lines of this drawing have been ruled, in places over or double ruled and the corners overlap each other. Such slovenliness is not to be found in ancient art. That alone would condemn it. Some of the panel lines too, run over into the margin and the inner marginal line is ruled without a break past the panel lines. Such a detail in bad drawing, I think, is not to be found in old hieroglyphics. The Egyptian or Hebrew would probably have done thus: made the panels each a separate rectangle with the corners well joined and then drawn the marginal line around them. It would have made the same effect of double lining. Taking the figures in the first panel: that of the king at the right is not even a good school-boy drawing. They made a mistake in putting a modern coat on him with a long, straight sleeve and a crown like that of Queen Vic-

toria. The man in the left corner, supposedly Noah preaching, is decidedly dressed in a modern coat; one leg is knickerbockered and the other is trowsered; one arm is half grown and the other is full grown. When an Egyptian made arms and legs he made them stiff and conventional but he made them uniform. All the other hieroglyphics are helter-skelter and scratchy, having no conventionality or pretense to design whatever.

The second panel is too ridiculous. The building is a cross between an old German or English castle and a New York sky-scraper. The man who drew the drowning figures evidently had for his ideal the funny sheet of the Sunday paper: in fact, the whole thing belongs to that class; a class of art, in which, if an ancient should have indulged, he would most assuredly have been put to death. Their drawings were their sacred records. The representation of water in Egyptian art formed a particularly beautiful and conventional part of their designs; as did also the sun and the sun's rays; and their arks bear no resemblance whatever to a modern street car afloat. The doorway in the ark of these slates is semi-rectangular in one corner and arched in the other. They strove to be more convincing; and made either an ark beautiful in proportion and curve, or a rectangle well joined at the corners. My technical knowledge is very limited, but I believe they used the arch somewhat. All the other drawings, as represented in these reproductions, are on a par with the first two panels. The figures representing ideal images are particularly ridiculous—or I should say, particularly bad, and ridiculous to suppose that the ancients could have been guilty of them. In the helmets there has been no attempt made or care taken to make perfect and regular spaces between the lines—they have been scratched off in a hurry and nowhere in the slates is there any evidence of number having been taken into account. With the ancients, every number had a mystic significance, and in their hieroglyphics, not only was every line religiously made beautiful, but each line and number of lines had a particular religious and mystic meaning, and their designs are carefully worked out according to these numbers and their various meanings. Nothing was ever so scratched that they might be any number, having no meaning. In fact, there is no line in an ancient record drawing, not even those of mere ornament, which does not have some importance.

The ancient drawings were stiff and conventional and perhaps crude in being unnatural—but as for beauty of line and space, and uniformity and perfect balance of figures in design and composition, they represent part of the fine art of all ages. No Egyptian or ancient Hebrew could possibly have created the sorry "Hooligan" Indian with the splintered

sky-rocket spear represented as killing the ten-year-old school-boy's helmeted man on the war story side of the large slate. When an Egyptian drew anything at all, he drew it well according to their standards. There were no helter-skelter dabblers in art in those days. Drawing was the result of their life; it was not only one with their religion; but it was the historical record of their religion and of the life of their nation, and all the dignity of their earnest purpose and love was put into each slate—and these were made only by the educated ones.

The man who made these counterfeits did not study carefully enough the real archeological slates and the art that is in them. In trying to imitate these, he evidently saw them as nothing more than queer stuff made most any old way.

Hoping that this suggestion may prove of some value to you, I am

Respectfully yours,

MIRIAM BROOKS.

Nature Proclaims a Deity.

There is a God! The herbs of the valley, the cedars of the mountains, bless him; the insect sports in his beam; the bird sings him in the foliage; the thunder proclaims him in the heavens; the ocean declares his immensity; man alone has said "There is no God!" Unite in thought at the same instant the most beautiful objects in nature. Suppose that you see, at once, all the hours of the day, and all the seasons of the year—a morning of spring and a morning of autumn—a night bespangled with stars, and a night darkened by clouds—meadows enameled with flowers—forests hoary with snow—fields gilded by the tints of autumn—then alone you will have a just conception of the universe! While you are gazing on that sun which is plunging into the vault of the west, another observer admires him emerging from the gilded gates of the east. By what inconceivable power does that aged star, which is sinking fatigued and burning in the shades of the evening, reappear at the same instant fresh and humid with the rosy dew of the morning? At every hour of the day, the glorious orb is at once rising, resplendent as noon-day, and setting in the west; or rather, our senses deceive us, and there is, properly speaking, no east or west, no north or south in the world.—*Chateaubriand*.