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Dear Dr. Crabtree,

Mrs. Katz, the editor of Archaeology, has kindly given me your name as the man in the United States most likely to be able to give me a badly needed reference. I wonder, therefore, if you can help me without going to undue trouble.

In brief, I have long been at work on what should be the first comprehensive, analytical study of the history of art collecting and its related phenomena that has ever been attempted. Last year, I was invited to give the Mellon Lectures at the National Gallery of Art on my subject. Next year, my book will probably reach publication, by the Bollingen Foundation/Harper and Row in this country and by Thames and Hudson in England. Hence, my need for the reference in question is becoming, if not urgent, at least stronger and stronger.

One of the phenomena related to art collecting is what I have labeled "treasure-gathering". Despite the relationship, treasure-gathering, an all but immemorial human activity, differs markedly from the much rarer phenomenon, true art collecting. To the art collector, what chiefly matters in any object is the artist's work; whereas to the treasure gatherer, what chiefly matters is the

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intrinsic value of an object's raw material. This is still true, even ~~the~~ ^{when} the treasure gatherer goes to considerable trouble to get good craftsmen to shape his treasures. The right modern analogy is with the ladies who gather large numbers of precious stones, but may also go to extra trouble to have their stones more beautifully set by artists like Jean Schlumberger.

The problem, though subsidiary to my subject, is an interesting one, and I am eager to suggest when treasure-gathering began. So far as I can discover, obsidian was not traded as a semi-precious raw material before early Neolithic times. Then, too, the magpie-like assemblages of objets trouvés discovered in one or two of the habitation-caves of the great Paleolithic cave painters were collections of pretty things but not of treasures. I clearly remember, however, reading at least one, and I think two, articles on a peculiar milk-chocolate colored flint found in Poland, which was clearly valued more highly than the ordinary raw material of the very early lithic industries. For instance, pieces of it have been found in Old Stone Age contexts as far away as Hungary; so the milk-chocolate colored flint must have been traded or carried over considerable distances.

As happens to me too often, however, while remembering the article or articles in question with the utmost clarity, I have completely forgotten just where and when they appeared. Not in Archaeology, Mrs.

Katz tells me. But perhaps you can fill this wretched gap in my memory. If so, I shall be deeply grateful.

With apologies,

Very sincerely,

Jim Alf

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