

# INDIAN RELICS

By Allan H. Hudson.

ONE OF THE MOST interesting aspects of excavation work is the way in which new problems are always thrusting themselves on the mind. One gathers considerable data, finds out a few things and begins to realize what a lot of problems are suggested by the data.

The basic outline of Indian points, the midden points, are so distinctive that one is compelled to ask if they signify an invasion of the area by another tribe, or were they a local or general evolution from earlier forms. To answer that would require a comparative study of material over a wide area. We have noted here that very few of the midden points are made of flint. During the modern historical period there is a factual knowledge of the movement of tribes, but what evidence would be required to establish definitely the movement of tribes before that period? The folklore of tribes might furnish clues but no more; we'd need more definite evidence.

I doubt whether there was much difference in stone working methods between tribes, though point styles might differ somewhat. Ornaments between tribes might differ. Pottery remnants might furnish better clues but it is doubtful if pottery goes much further back than a thousand years in this area—that is subject to correction—so that as a clue to tribal movements it would fail prior to that.

Pottery first shows up in the upper part of what we call the black earth zone. This black zone is quite common in the district and has been exposed by drifting in several places. At Besant, in the excavations, it is quite a contrast in color to the other zones as it is covered by an old drift sand. If the black zone is present on a long occupied site, the teller zone underneath could also contain Indian material.

The black zone contains the widest range of point sizes and even styles and seems to have been the golden age in the use of flint as material. Last fall, low down in the zone, two rather small points with V bases were found. Points like them are

occasionally found as surface finds, and because they are so unlike the normal, one speculates on their significance. Visitors to the area? Raiding parties?—or just variants from the normal, made for a special purpose?

It seems to me that the time is coming when Saskatchewan needs a professional archaeologist to assess the material and correlate the work done by the amateurs. In our own excavations there are four main zones, and while we tentatively date them for our own benefit on very tenuous clues, there can be no real dating until we get specialists' opinion.

While the Indians of South Saskatchewan would not be likely to practise any form of agriculture, yet stone hoes are frequently found. It has been questioned as to whether these are really hoes. In the black zone, in 1949, we found a rough side-notched hoe that had certainly been used as such. The forward edge was worn round and smooth and still carried a polish. We're now inclined to think that the squaws, at least, did considerable digging. They would certainly dig for roots in times of scarcity, clean out springs, scratch down river banks hunting for good stone material—in fact a considerable fraction of Indian time and effort must have gone into finding good stone material. Yet there is positive evidence of at least a little imported material — material that could not have originated locally.

Burial customs differed widely among the Indians. While we have no data regarding the burial customs of the former Besant inhabitants, there is evidence all round the rim of the nearby Missouri Coteau of interment burials in the neighborhood at some period. Were I acquainted with the material taken from some of these in the past—I've been told that the results are often disappointing—it would be possible to date the burials, if points were present, by comparing with our zonal material. Here again more knowledge would furnish clues bearing on the migration of tribes.