

**Bashford Dean in uniform as a Major, U.S. Army, 1917, in charge of the
Helmet and Body Armor Unit, Ordnance Department.**

A Personal Reminiscence of Bashford Dean, and His Unpublished Talk, Circa 1920, “The Hobby of Collecting Ancient Armor”

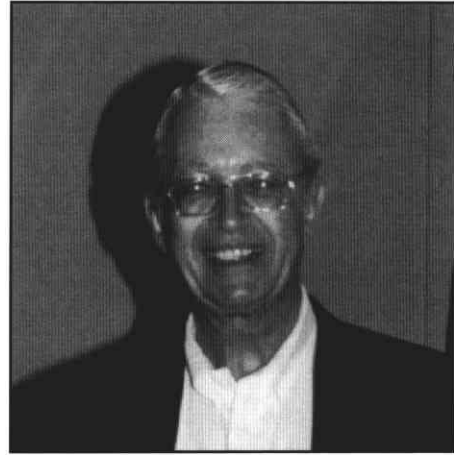
Dean K. Boorman

I have always said, in a semi-serious vein, since I was invited through John Watson in 1988 to join the ASAC and similarly since 1976 when I was invited by Warren Moore to join the Armor and Arms Club of New York, that I am in these prestigious organizations because of nepotism. Or maybe I should say that this is nepotism once removed, in that it was actually my great-uncle, Bashford Dean, who was the founder of the Arms and Armor Department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art as well as The Armor and Arms Club, and an illustrious student and collector of medieval armor.

Of course I had to have my own collection, primarily American military longarms through the Civil War, viewed before I could become a member of the ASAC, but I think it is appropriate that I should “pay my dues” by presenting, for the ASAC members and others interested in the history of American arms collecting which began with medieval armor, material on Bashford Dean which has come down through my family. In particular, my mother, (her father Thomas Dean, was Bashford Dean’s brother) who typed the text of a speech which Bashford Dean wrote, probably between 1916 and 1920, and which I found among her papers. It was not known to the staff at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, with which Dean was associated from 1904 to his death in 1928, so it is presented here in print for the first time.

Besides scholarly interest, this unpublished speech provides an intimate and charming portrait of my great-uncle as an arms collector and of the period in which his collecting activities took place. Those of us, like myself, who collect firearms of a later era will recognize many parallels to present-day experience. Bashford Dean speaks of the esthetic appeal of arms and armor; tells of his early experience in being taken in by forgeries; finding good pieces in unexpected spots; diligently following up leads on potentially available pieces or collections; and trading instead of purchasing, where necessary.

As background for Bashford Dean’s own words in his talk, I will present here a sketch of his life, based on published materials listed at the end of this article and on stories told by my mother, other family members, and arms collectors and staff associated with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, with particular thanks to Stuart Pyhrr, the present curator. I am also adding a personal commentary on what medieval armor is, based on source material I



found in preparing this article (unfortunately not from personal experience, since I did not inherit any armor from Bashford Dean’s collection).

Bashford Dean was born in 1867 in New York City. His father was a well-to-do-lawyer, ‘from an old Westchester County family. His first name, Bashford, was his mother’s family name, also from Westchester. His great grandfather, Sergeant John Dean, fought all through the Revolution, and it was the men from his squad who captured the British spy Major Andre, carrying the plans for West Point supplied by Benedict Arnold. Through my grandfather, I inherited John Dean’s fine Hudson Valley fowler, which is on display in the American arms section at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Bashford Dean’s father interested him in the romance of knights in armor when he was a child, but at the same time a friend of his father’s, Professor Edward Morse, started him in a career interest in natural history. Reportedly young Bashford made a drawing of a fish showing its heart and blood vessels at the age of seven (he was always an expert illustrator, for example making a design with suits of armor now used as the membership certificate of The Armor and Arms Club of New York).

A precocious student, Bashford Dean enrolled in the City College of New York at the age of only fourteen to study zoology, becoming the Class Salutatorian. He went on to graduate work at Columbia University, where he graduated with a Ph.D. degree at the age of 23. While still a graduate student he was a tutor in zoology at CCNY, was an assistant for the New York State Fish and Game



Bashford Dean in one suit of a large collection of Japanese armor acquired while he was on sabbatical from Columbia University in Japan, 1900 and 1905.



The Armor Hall at Wave Hill, completed after Dean's death in 1928.

Commission, and made a special investigation of oyster culture in several European countries for the United States Fish Commission, after which he was the director of the Biological Laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor, New York. After graduate school, he began a life-long appointment as Professor of Zoology at Columbia University. His career in zoology included being the founder and first curator of the Department of Reptiles and Fishes at the American Museum of Natural History.

In 1893, at the age of 26, he married Miss Alice Dyckman, of the old Dyckman family of the northern end of Manhattan Island, as per Dyckman Street. She and her sister Freda were the heirs of a substantial estate, so that Bashford Dean could pursue his interests in natural history and in arms and armor without money worries, but looking at the record of his dual curatorships and extensive publications in both fields during his entire life, it is evident that he did not use the Dyckman income to lead a life of idleness. It is also noteworthy that with a comfortable lifestyle and many wealthy friends, he used his wealth and connections primarily to benefit both the American Museum of Natural History and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, beyond his finally realized goal of building a magnificent hall for his own armor collection (this hall still exists, without the armor, attached to Wave Hill, an historic mansion in Riverdale, New York, now operated by the City as a cultural center).

In regard to armor and arms collecting, the text at the end of this article tells how Bashford Dean admired a medieval helmet in a neighbor's house when he was only five or six years old, and when he was ten, encouraged by a book on medieval armor that his father gave him, he went to an auction in New York and bought two daggers which he kept all his life.

In his first trip to Europe when he was just out of college, in 1887, he bought what seemed to be a fine Gothic helmet, but which turned out to be a fake. He kept this "for the good of his soul," since it taught him a valuable lesson (and one still applicable to modern collectors, who should be very careful of authenticity). By 1897, Dean was making important purchases of armor in further trips to Europe.

In 1900 and 1905, on sabbatical from Columbia University to study fish and oyster culture in Japan, where he learned the Japanese language and was awarded two silver bowls by the Emperor for his services, he acquired two large collections of Japanese armor and swords. He sold the first to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1904. The second and more important, which he acquired in 1905, he gave to the Museum in 1914, and it still forms the nucleus of its collection, which is the largest outside of

Japan.

The story of Bashford Dean's European armor collecting is closely tied in with the development of the arms and armor collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He became the unpaid Honorary Armor and Arms Curator in 1904 and then mounted the first full-scale permanent display of arms and armor in the Museum after this became a separate department, with himself as the regular Curator, in 1912. He was already associated with the Museum by 1903, however, when he organized a loan exhibition of Japanese arms and armor, for which he produced a catalogue.

For the entire period up to his death in 1928, he amassed a large personal collection, while at the same time adding to the Museum's collection and also buying and selling to produce income to support both his and the Museum's collections. Among the highlights was arranging the contribution to the Museum in 1913 of the William H. Riggs collection, with over 2,000 objects. Bashford Dean's own collection, housed in the Armor Hall at Riverdale illustrated with this article, as appraised for his estate in 1927, amounted to approximately \$1 million. The inventoried items were almost 2,000 in number and included 60

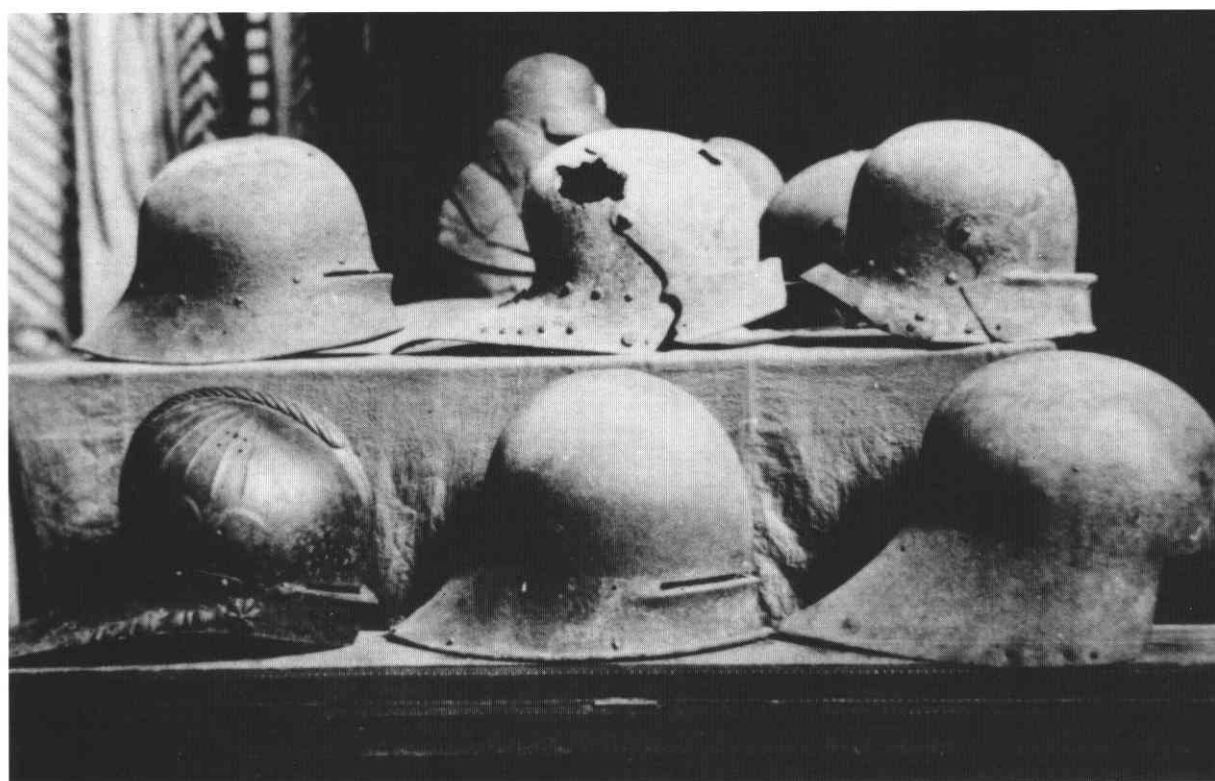
suits of armor, 178 helmets, 84 breastplates and 39 backplates, 51 arm and 52 leg defenses, 44 pieces of mail, 97 gauntlets, and 28 shields; there were 89 swords, 37 daggers, 186 firearms and 26 cannon. A veritable arsenal!

Bashford Dean's influence on armor and arms collecting extended well beyond his own collection and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Philippe de Montebello, the present Director, notes as follows in a Museum Bulletin: "He brought to the job a scientific mind and a passionate enthusiasm. For more than twenty years, he acquired objects, cultivated donors, arranged exhibitions, and wrote handbooks, catalogues, and innumerable articles. Dean's enthusiasm was infectious, and other art museums, such as those at Cleveland and St. Louis, expanded their holdings to include arms and armor. The great private collections formed by William Randolph Hearst, George F. Harding, and C.O. von Kienbusch, now wholly or in part in the museums at Detroit, Chicago, and Philadelphia, also owe much to Dean's example."

Bashford Dean took time off during World War I, in 1917 and 1918, to head up, with the rank of Major, the Helmet and Body Armor Unit of the Ordnance Department, charged with the responsibility of designing a



Part of Dean's European armor collection at Wave Hill, Riverdale, New York, before the construction of the Armor Wing.



Deteriorating pieces of armor photographed by Bashford Dean at the Turkish Military Museum in Istanbul in 1920, rescued by his subsequent purchases; the major items are now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

helmet for the American army and also considering the possible use of bullet-proof vests and other body protection. The unit laid the groundwork for what became the "steel pot" helmet of World War II, and also the armor protection used by bomber pilots. However, time was too short to reach a consensus on the helmet design, so the American army was forced to use the British "tin hat." It is interesting to note that the present composite American helmet has even more of a resemblance to the designs of Bashford Dean's unit. The fruits of Dean's war work were published in the monograph *Helmets and Body Armor in Modern Warfare* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1920).

On a personal note, I was born in December, 1927, while Bashford Dean died in December, 1928. I knew his wife and relatives, and was always sorry that he had no children, because these would have been closer to my own age. My mother was Bashford Dean's favorite niece, and from the time she graduated from college in 1905 made a number of trips to Europe with him and Aunt

Alice, his wife. She used to tell me how they would travel first class, staying at hotels like the Ritz in Madrid, and hiring touring cars with chauffeurs to visit friends and look at armor. They made a visit in France, I believe, to Mr. Riggs and his mistress, who lived with Mr. Riggs, who did not have a wife, for many years. Aunt Alice, who was otherwise very proper, just said, "they do that over there."

From my mother's stories, Bashford Dean was not unduly modest. When he was appointed a Major in World War I, he said, "I should have been a Colonel." He told the Armor and Arms Club, and this is in their publications as well as in references by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, that our ancestor from the Revolutionary War was Captain John Dean. Actually, from historic records, he was Sergeant John Dean, which, however does not detract from his war record mentioned above.

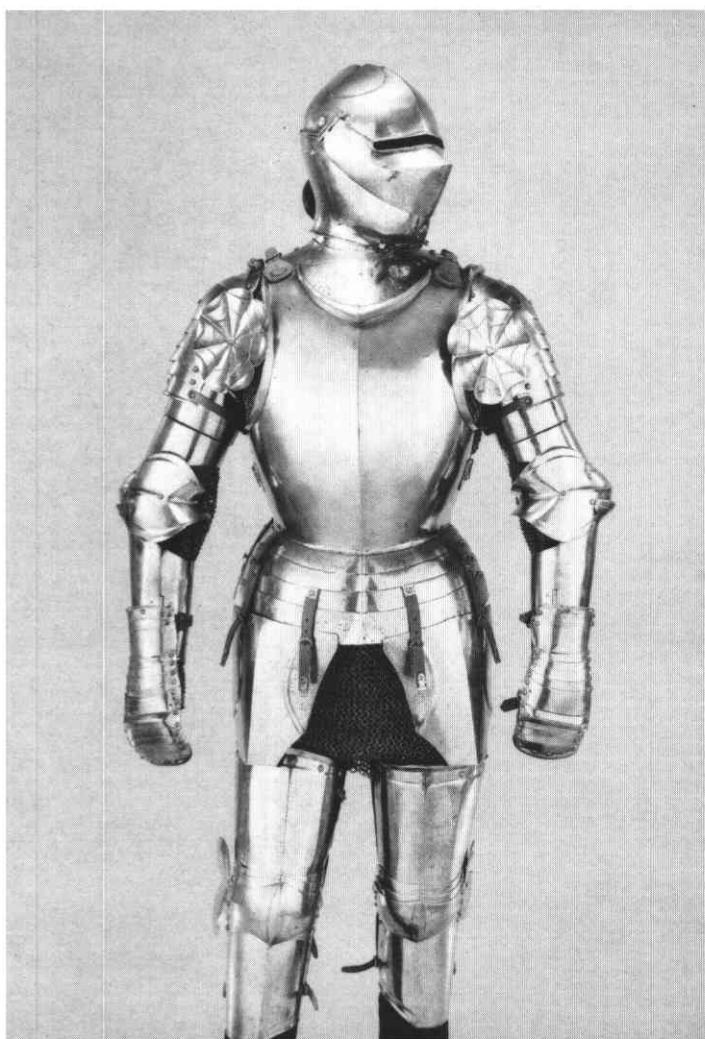
Bashford Dean died in 1928, at the age of only 61. The place he died was Battle Creek, Michigan, where he had gone for treatment. There is a new book, *The Road to Welville*, which casts some doubt on what kind of medi-



The Great Hall and displays of armor at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, after its recent refurbishment.

cine was practiced there. In any event, Harvey Murton, who was trained by Dean as an armorer, has told me he thinks that he had stomach cancer.

Unfortunately he had no children, and the relatives I remember from annual trips we used to make to Aunt Alice's home in Riverdale for New Year's Day dinner are all gone. One quarter of his whole estate, which was valued at a million dollars at the time of his death, was given to the Metropolitan Museum of Art on his death, and at least some of the rest eventually found its way there, which was in accordance with his wishes.



"Rare Composite Full Armour, Comprehensively Late 15th And Early 16th Century," sold at Sotheby's auction in New York in January, 1994, for \$51,750; originally in Bashford Dean's collection.

Armor Collecting

The large majority of present-day arms collectors are familiar with the "medieval armor" that Bashford Dean collected only by casual inspection of museum displays. As background for Dean's speech, which follows, I think it is helpful particularly to note the limited time period within which European armor was made, relating also to the very limited supply of the genuine article which has come down to us today.

Up until around the 1300, and including the period of the Norman invasion of England in 1066 and the major period of the Crusades up to the death of Richard the Lionhearted in 1199, armor consisted only of mail (popularly known as "chain mail"), worn with conical helmets not covering the face. In the following century, from 1300 to 1400, particularly because of the vulnerability of mail against the crossbow and longbow, plate armor was developed, originally to be worn over mail, with helmets extended to enclose the entire head. The manufacture of plate armor became wide-spread for knights in warfare, and tournaments with jousting also became popular.

Armor became fully developed between 1400 and 1500, led by the Italians. However, armor was still vulnerable to the English longbow as in the French defeat at Agincourt in 1415, and by the middle 1400s firearms began to be dominant, with matchlock muskets and cannon coming into widespread use.

The final flowering of armor design took place in the 1500s just as the use of armor in battle was gradually ending. Design emphasis was on ceremonial and parade armor. Much later, in the Victorian era of Sir Walter Scott, the romance of knighthood was rediscovered and there was much manufacture of reproduction armor, which is a major note of caution for collectors.

A few suits of armor still come up for sale to collectors, primarily at major auctions in the United States and Europe. Although prices seem high, a comparison of a recent sale with an earlier price for the same suit of armor, originally owned by Bashford Dean and assembled from pieces in his collection, indicates that prices may not have increased unduly. The "Rare Composite Full Armour, Comprehensively Late 15th and Early 16th Century" illustrated with this article sold at the American Art Galleries in New York for \$12,000 in 1923, and sold again at Sotheby's auction in January, 1994, again in New York, for \$51,750. Considering the rate of inflation of the dollar since 1923, this was not an unreasonable 1994 purchase.

The Hobby of Collecting Ancient Armor

Bashford Dean

Hobbies, happily, are common, but, happily also, the hobby of collecting ancient armor is rare, for if many people should undertake to form collections of armor, there would be very little indeed to divide among them. In point of fact, there are I believe, in this country, not more than six people who really collect armor, and in foreign countries the number of discriminating enthusiasts is also delightfully small. So far as I have discovered there are scarcely more than half a dozen amateurs in France; in England, not as many; in Germany, perhaps a dozen; in Italy, three or four; in Russia, three. I mean, of course, by "collectors", those whose interest is in medieval arms and armor of Europe, not of the Orient, for collectors of Eastern arms are and have ever been fairly numerous.

In the first place, he who would collect armor successfully should have certain definite traits, qualifications and training: thus, he must have a natural interest in these rare objects; he should also be in a position to make constant visits to European collectors in order to fit himself for his avocation; he must have a "seeing eye" to enable him to pick and choose his specimens – when he discovers them, he must be pertinacious; and finally, he must have a generous pocketbook as today his purchases are apt to be costly. I do not mean by this, however, that lack of means will infallibly keep amateurs from the field, for several there are who are not wealthy, *inter alius me*, but I have in mind rather perhaps the danger of purchasing forgeries which confronts the collector, for arms and armor have been prized during so long a time that generations of copyists have flourished whose work is so accurately done that a novice collector who has several times been imposed upon may well lose interest. There is no doubt that a prime requisite for riding this hobby comfortably is to be able to distinguish false specimens from genuine ones.

But if even the peril of making mistakes cannot turn one from the path of collecting armor, I think one can say decidedly (as all hobby riders do of their favorite subjects) that there is no field which yields greater dividends in the matter of personal satisfaction. For what is more beautiful than a suit of armor, which, as Paul Eudel says, "is the pearl of a collection, the cherished dream of many a collector, a dream cherished only too often in vain"? What object, indeed, has more beautiful lines than a well made helmet or plastron, gracefully fashioned in tempered steel, glorious in outline, enriched often by the greatest masters of Gothic and Renaissance times? What sculptor, save the greatest, has been able to model armor, like a gauntlet or a thigh-piece, so that even a detached fragment seems to

show within it the life and movement of its wearer? And what sculptor save only an armorer could accomplish such a work of art in so refractory a medium as steel? Then too, what object has more beautiful color than a suit of armor, whose shadows run their gamuts everywhere from cool grey to the deepest black on one hand, and on the other to the most brilliant points and surfaces of light? Finally, where can one put himself in closer personal touch with objects of historical interest which bring him nearer to the stirring and romantic *gestes* of early times?

At all events (if a confession is in order, and the Hobby Club is an intimately confidential institution) my own feelings as to the preeminence of arms and armor among other art objects have been such that I have been gathering armor ever since I was a child. And one should seek as the genesis of a hobby, I am sure that I can trace mine back in an unbroken line to its original *stable*, which, by the way was a fine old house in Yonkers, home of a family, three of whose members, Jared Boyce, Carlton Gates, and William Nisbit, traveled abroad extensively in the forties, fifties, and sixties and brought home many veritable treasures* – tapestries, stained glass, paintings, ivories, armor and arms. And I well remember the impression these objects made upon me, when as a child of five or six years I was taken on a visit there. Particularly I can picture in the wide dark hall of the old house a great oaken chest on which stood a Maximilian Helmet, gilded and engraved. I recall standing in front of it, fascinated, in fact I stood there so long that Mrs. Nisbit and my mother came to "hunt me up" and when they found me my elderly hostess declared that "the child should have a helmet to play with" – so I carried it out and sat with it on the front porch and studied it inside and out for a long time.

This was certainly my active start as a hobbyist. Thereafter for several years I made drawings of the anatomy of armor: this I knew, for a fond mother gave me recently a package of sketches and water colors which she had carefully dated. From this time, too, I remember the delight with which I studied the armor, sadly inaccurate by the way, of some certain bronze statuettes, "Ivanhoe", "Quentin Durward" and a great "Tancred" on horseback which formed the garniture of my father's parlor mantel. When ten years old, learning that the well known Cogniat collection was to be dispersed, I found my way into the auction rooms of Leavitt, then on Astor Place, and promptly spent all of my savings! From that time onward my passion for armor grew and each journey abroad brought me in closer touch with dealers and collectors.

Of course I had no idea at that time what a long and

costly education lay before me. In this country there were unfortunately no dealers; and there were then few collectors – I note only Rutherford Stuyvesant, who later became a close and valued friend; Edward Hubbard Litchfield was (in the late seventies) only beginning to form his important collection; O.P.H. Belmont, whose armor now belongs to Clarence H. Mackay, had hardly commenced to collect. The cabinets of Henry H. Havemeyer, Giovanni P. Morosini, and Hoyt were not yet formed. I then knew, unhappily, no amateur in my vicinity to whom I could go for sympathy and counsel. Only lately, as we shall see hereafter, did I learn that Mr. Pierre Lorillard Reynolds, a not distant neighbor, was an enthusiast in armor.

I had, of course, to learn of the pitfalls of forgeries and it cost me decades of study, for I had no teachers, before I felt reasonably confident that I could distinguish the false from the true. Then, too, I had to determine more or less accurately who were the individual faussaires and what were the earmarks of their work. Certainly, one can say that in this field experience is a wonderful master. I remember during my first stay in London passing a shop in Wardour street, where, on the corner of a Gothic credence, stood a helmet which attracted my keenest interest. Its form was beautiful and its fluted side shimmered with shadows and light. In this case, it did not take long for me to decide to purchase the helmet, in spite of its exalted price. It had, so far as I knew, all the attributes of antiquity, and I remember today the jealous care which I gave to this helmet. It was in my hands morning, noon and night. I reconstructed its history and gazing through the slits of its visor I pictured the glorious court of the great Maximilian! At least I could imagine all this until the day when a distinguished expert came to my house. Then I learned, to my sorrow, that my purchase was not a judicious one. It was even “hot”, as my friend said as he expanded his fat Teutonic hands in front of my helmet, as though he expected still to find in the metal the warmth of the copyist’s forge! Under such conditions, a collector could only vow grimly that he would learn to distinguish the old from the new, to visit galleries where genuine specimens existed and to compare them, point for point, rivet for rivet, with more modern forgeries. For myself, I feel sure that the purchase of my bogus helmet did me more good than to have acquired an entire suit of genuine armor.

I have already noted that armor is not easy to find, and that one often travels far to secure a genuine specimen. Accordingly it may be of interest to the gentlemen of the Hobby Club if I should now speak of some of the ways in which armor may be collected.

There is first of all ever the possibility of finding armor in its original “habitat” so to speak. Every ancient castle may yet have in or about it specimens which are not out of the collectors’ reach. Most of them, however, are in so sorry a condition that only an extreme enthusiast would purchase them. They are found in out-of-the-way corners, rusted through in many cases, useful only as *documents pour servir*, and of this type I have gathered many specimens, sometimes dug up in the moats of castles or fished

out of ancient wells, the last a fruitful source of finds, since in cases of stress everything seems to have been tossed into the wells. The castle on the Island of Rhodes had at one time a rich hoard of rusty armor, and *early* armor, and at various times I have picked up fifty or more pieces from this ancient fortress.

But, in general, little comes to the collector from its original home. Castles have been ransacked thoroughly for prizes, and a few there are which have retained any of the armor which was originally theirs. Thus such a castle as Hohenaschau, which had a wonderful armory, has now I am told not a vestige of armor within its walls. There are a few castles in the Tyrol, Hungary, and Bohemia, which retain specimens from their old armories, and I recall one in particular which has remained ever in the possession of the Counts von _____, in which armor of the fifteenth century still hangs on original racks—a veritable treasure house for some future collector! (You note that I do not record the name or locality of this hobbyist’s paradise, lest a rival collector lessen my chances for a future *coup!*)

There are also castles which have been restored within the memory of man, which contain armor and which occasionally yield up their treasure to the amateur. I call to mind a visit I paid to one of these in Spain, in company, by the way, with the painter Samuel Isham, one of the best of traveling companions and one of the most admirably and humanly read men I have met. We went to the castle from Toledo, a long, hot, dusty ride and not a very interesting one, but when we came to our castle we had before us a picture which is photographed deeply in my mind. The arid plateau on which we had journeyed ended suddenly and below us lay our castle: It was built of richly colored brown sandstone, and was embowered in dark green foliage: all glowed in a purple and golden sunset, and as we came near the castle wall a great peacock suddenly perched upon it and displayed its metallic plumage in the last rays of the sun. The armory of this castle had many good things in it, and I am sorry I had not the means to purchase it *en bloc* instead of in fragments. I am glad though that some of the best suits came to this country and are now in Tuxedo in the cabinet of my friend Colonel Ambrose Monell.

Which reminds me of the project about which the Colonel and I have long had pleasant visions! Do you recall the defeats of the Burgundian Charles the Bold at the hands of the Swiss? In the course of one of these it is recorded that part of the Burgundian Army, including richly panoplied horses, knights with gilded and jewelled armor, was driven into the lake at Morat. *And there they still are!* The shore is steep, the armor carried the victims down and buried them in the mud, but out of the reach of the ordinary means of recovery. Occasionally a rich fragment of armor is picked up there, washed into shallower water, marking the point where the knights were lost. *Well, our plan is to charter dredging barges and divers and recover these treasures.* However as yet the Colonel and I have never carried out our plan, but we believe it quite feasible, if the dredging rights can be gotten from the

Government of Switzerland. Assuming that only one piece of armor of this superlative period can be retrieved our expedition would quite repay us, for the intrinsic value of such a piece would easily counterbalance our outlays.

Of course one's task as a collector would be easy if he had only to visit numerous dealers, make selections, sign cheques, and give the needful directions for shipping. But, alas, dealers in armor are few and far between; their real treasures are rare and their prices often prohibitive. One may mention that such antiquaries as Bachereau in Paris, Fenton in London, Drei or Bohler in Munich are accomplished experts, who can help splendidly one who has at his disposal unlimited time and means. But if he accepts this professional help, such a collector obviously cannot attain the rank of a hobbyist, for the latter could not possibly leave his delightful avocation to others—nor can he forego the adventurous roads, the griefs, the privations, the fatigues, the patient resourcefulness which in the end will lead him into a hall, *his own hall*, of armored knights...

Let us see what this all means: assuming that his armor does not come from the hands of a few special dealers in antiquities, from what sources does the hobbyist collect? I can answer somewhat after the fashion of the old Adirondack guide whom the artist, Mr. Lathrop, had asked what was the special season in which bear could be had. "The season for hunting *bar*," replied the guide bluntly, "is the time when the *bar's* around". So it is clear that the chance of obtaining armor exists only when armor is around. And only by constant vigilance can the hobbyist discover his prey...

Any auction sale in any city *may* have in it a precious piece of armor; any antiquity shop in any part of the world is neither too small nor too large to offer something of interest. It is true that one is apt to search fifty shops or fifty salesrooms yet find nothing, but in the fifty-first he may "run across" something so interesting that he will feel well repaid for all his labor. As I write there happens to lie in front of me a finely engraved and inlaid Saxon axe, dated 1683, with medallion portraits of duke and duchess, which I found in an obscure shop in Greenwich, Connecticut. Small dealers in smaller cities have somewhat precious armor, though the chances of discoveries under such conditions are lessening day by day. Thus I have bought objects of considerable interest in such minor places as Meran, Saragossa, Burgos, Perugia, Dijon, Neufchatel, Lausanne, Innsbruck, Braunschweig.

But in these cases, as in all others, accident plays an important part in successful collecting. For a prize does not stay long in any one place, and I have repeatedly visited shops only to find that the object I was seeking had been sold only a few hours or days earlier! One should note, however, that it is not from dealers that the best arms in one's collection are to be had: one must know collectors everywhere, visit them as often as possible and pray that their minds be divinely turned so that they may offer (without even a hint on your part!) to cede you this or that coveted piece. A collector no longer waits, as he once did,

for a brother collector to *die*, in order that some particular object may find its way to his rival vitrine—he merely awaits the psychological moment when his friend wishes to get some other object and asks for the needful funds...

I recall in this regard securing the suit of Spanish Gothic armor now beside me, which a Madrid collector had been given by the Duke of Osuna; this object I wanted keenly, but I had to wait seventeen years before the owner suggested letting me have it; he was then building a new home and needed ready money rather than armor! I recall also purchasing many of the best articles in my collection from a French amateur who had immediate need of a considerable sum, having, as I heard later, acquired the affections of a well known danseuse! In another case, let us hope not from the same intimate cause, numerous objects have come to me from a British collector who was time to time in need of funds. In fact I think it would be safe to say (paraphrasing Sir Robert Walpole's wicked dictum that "all men have their price") that all collectors (save yourself!) have sooner or later a moment of weakness when they will give you title to the coveted armor. I don't mean that they will always yield to the need of actual funds: in fact the most satisfactory return to them is sometimes in the form of an exchange. To this temptation I have even known the greatest and oldest of all arms collectors to fall victim.

To the real collector of armor, every hint is worthy of being followed up with zeal and devotion. I remember on one occasion when I was leaving Paris, my old friend and preceptor, Mr. Riggs, the distinguished benefactor of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, said to me, "as a farewell present I am giving you a valuable indication – and it may be the means of your making a *coup*. It is this: somewhere in or about New York there are still many pieces of armor brought there some time in the fifties by my old friend, Pierre Lorillard Reynolds. I remember when he bought a number of them in Dresden, and I recall seeing them in his house on Fifth Avenue when I was there in 1864(?), especially I remember seeing pieces of a Maximilian horse armor which stood in his chimney piece spread out like a great butterfly. Well, then, may you get them, this is my farewell wish!" I may say in passing that I did get this collection, but not without considerable trouble. For in the first place it was not easy to trace the fate of Mr. Riggs' old friend. I made many inquiries in vain: then it occurred to me to ask an elderly aunt of mine who knew many people during that time. From her I learned at once that Mr. Reynolds had a son living abroad and in time I learned of the whereabouts of his armor: it had, it seemed, been left to a "ward" of his father who then had it in a great stone castle in a Connecticut town with a very modern name. From this personage I soon had a gracious reply to my letter stating that she still had the collection and would I purchase it? If I did, would I come and see it immediately, for she had that day asked a well known dealer to bid for it! You may be sure, then, that I wasted no time in negotiations, convinced that a peculiar constellation of circumstances, shall we say Fate, had watched quite long enough

for the moment to add many excellent things to my collection!

In a hobbyist's experiences one cannot have ever the pleasant memories which have been noted above. One finds extraordinary pitfalls once in a while. The most notable of these I fell into in the honest old city of Dresden, and at the hands of a Hoflieferant, whose firm is generations old and apparently of extreme respectability. From the person in question I had bought objects during several years, and his dealings had been beyond a shadow of reproach. On the occasion in question I was shown some legpieces of a fluted armor dating about 1525 and of excellent quality. I bought them instantly and paid for them, asking that they be sent with other purchases to my steamer. But when the packing case was received these particular objects were not in it. The seller subsequently gave the following explanation: "The objects were not included because of a legal difficulty. They had belonged to a certain lately deceased Count X, and had been sold by one of his sons: thereupon another son objected to the sale. The objects, he claimed, were *fidei comis*, and could not be sold. A family lawsuit was begun, the objects are in the hands of the court, but the case is expected to go in our favor"...

A year later I called in Dresden and learned from my Hoflieferant that "our case had been won in the lower court, but had subsequently been appealed: we would win later." The following year I called again in Dresden, but was told that "The case had not yet been decided."... In spite of the apparent honesty of Herr M., I thought it would do no harm to consult a local attorney, who presently gave me the definite information that no lawsuit which concerned my armor had ever taken place! My lawyer thereupon descended upon my dealer with a search warrant: he discovered the missing pieces and later caused them to be turned over to me!

The fraudulent dealer would have been put in jail had I not been tempted to drop the matter. This I did, I am ashamed to say, rather unrighteously, influenced by reasons in which, none the less, every hobbyist may find extenuating circumstances. For in the first place, the flame of my anger burned low when I succeeded in getting back the pieces I rightfully purchased: especially I blamed myself for having swallowed so readily and digested my Hoflieferant's fiction: finally I was disarmed by the tactful behavior of the culprit himself. For, frightened by the prospect of criminal proceedings, he shortly produced *other pieces of the same suit of armor*, which so delighted me that I could not help purchasing them out of hand. So in the end I condoned the iniquity of the seller. But it is only fair to say that I took the *precaution to carry off my new purchases immediately!*

From all that has been noted above you will probably concede that the path of the armor collector is not a wide and easy one. On the other hand, you will perhaps agree that it has a varied and absorbing interest. Along it one occasionally picks up a veritable prize – but not often. I recall purchasing a splendid Gothic headpiece, or *salade*,

for fifty pesetas in a poor little shop in front of my hotel in Madrid. "Where in the world did you get that?" said Don George de Osma, coming into my room a few minutes later, picking up the object and examining it critically. Senor de Osma is a great connoisseur of ancient armor and of many other bibelots, the son-in-law, by the way, of the late Count de Valencia de Don Juan, director of the Royal Armory of Madrid. When I told my friend where and how I found my prize, he shook his head gravely: he did not know that the little shop across the way had ever in it a piece really worth getting, and he had even seen the magenta-colored panel there bearing a trophy of sadly rusted and "bogus" helmets among which my *salade* had been hidden. Nor did he, I think, quite like the idea of a foreigner coming to town and picking up for a trifle an object that should have remained among Spanish amateurs – at least a mutual friend told me so, adding that Senor Osma "wished he had the power to lock that man Dean up 'til he would consent to leave Spain!"

But, alas, an accidental find of this kind doesn't happen often in a collector's lifetime. He is much more apt to pay a far higher price than he should... Auctions are sometimes curiously freakish. Indifferent pieces may bring great prices and really good things may go low. I bought for the Metropolitan Museum a wide-bladed, gilded and engraved Italian short sword, or *cinquada*, dating about 1500, for a small fraction of its real value, this, too, at the shockingly high priced Volpi sale at the American Art Association. No other competitor seemed quite confident that my quarry was genuine, for these *cinque-deas* have been very accurately copied. Curiously enough, I happened to know the history of this particular piece. I had examined it with interest at Volpi's Davanzati palace in Florence several years earlier, after I just missed the chance of buying it in Venice. A small dealer there from whom I have gotten odds and ends told me of having sold it to Volpi, and deplored not having been told in advance of my coming to Venice, for he would have saved it for me. The object was fished out of the mud of a neighboring canal with other arms, and was so encased in rusty mud that it had to be chipped out of its shell, It was this shell, by the way, which kept it in relatively good condition.

Bargains at auction of good objects are by no means rare in the writer's experience; and the hobbyist who knows his field fairly well should never miss the chance of attending a sale. It happens not infrequently that genuine objects are bought at the price of false ones. But, obviously enough, he may sometimes be led to bid unwisely on an object when he has not had the opportunity to make a careful *expertise* before the sale. I have lent to the "chamber of horrors" (special collection of false objects) of the armor gallery at the Metropolitan Museum several pieces which I have bought when taking chances.

Occasionally what amounts to almost a miracle happens in one's collecting experience – as when at different times and in different places various parts of the same armor are purchased, which thus come together again after the lapse of generations or centuries. This may happen to

one's own advantage or to the advantage of his friends. I recall that M. Pauilhac in Paris bought in Spain the missing elbowpiece of the engraved armor which Mr. Riggs had from the famous Soltykoff Collection. Needless to say, M. Pauilhac presented it to Mr. Riggs. I myself had the privilege of presenting M. Pauilhac in turn with a neckplate of the time of Louis XIII, engraved and enameled, which belonged to a suit in his collection. In another instance the missing arm guard of a beautiful harness in the possession of Count Economos turned up among a series of fragments coming to me from an amateur in Paris, and it was my good fortune to put it back in the place it occupied originally. So, also, in the case of an engraved and gilded half-suit of armor in the Riggs Benefaction at the Metropolitan Museum, I was able to restore to its primitive place the deep hip guard which belonged to it long ago.

Similar "miracles" happen once in a while – and to the especial satisfaction of the hobbyist – when objects are brought to light in their absolutely original condition. This is the more remarkable since such objects in steel have from the nature of their material been subject to cleaning, perhaps yearly, for centuries. Indeed so unusual is this that in most armor the original surface, which may have been colored or gilded or even engraved, has been entirely lost. So few specimens in fact have come down to us in an untouched condition that specialists find ground for disagreement as to what was the primitive "finish" in certain types of armor. Thus Mr. Riggs maintained that armor of the "best period" was highly polished, mirror-like; others declare that it was invariably dulled like a softly painted bronze. The discovery, therefore, of a bit of armor in excellent condition which had escaped the hands of the cleaner since 1500 had therefore an especial interest. This was a visor of an armet-a-rondelle which came to me from Saragossa, probably from some garret where it had hung unnoticed from an ancient beam. The piece was rusted, to be sure, but between the flecks of dust one could see patches of the original surface, which was "white" and brilliant, polished like a mirror, demonstrating the truth of Mr. Riggs' view, or more logically the truth of this view in case of some armor of the "best period" – for we cannot deny that other pieces of armor of the time may have been given a dull finish.

I recall also finding at Dijon a small and ancient box which had shortly before been "fished" out of the corner of an ancient attic above the eaves of the house. This box belonged to some local armorer about or before 1600. It contained parts of unfinished gauntlets, the scales for the fingers strung on wires for convenient handling and had never been riveted to leather. They were beautifully made, some of them engraved, and all beautifully polished. It gave me a curious feeling to take in my hands these ancient objects which seemed only yesterday to have been put in the box by their maker. I had the strong impression that if I should go through the old door near by, I would by some "Alice in Wonderland" wizardry, pass into the sixteenth century and find in the next room a veritable armorer at his table by the low window, and beside him the

gentlemen in pourpoint and trunk hose who had ordered this armor.

Just as a final note I may say that no hobbyist in ancient armor will sound the full virtues of his theme who does not consider the "documents" of the period which bear upon it. He must hunt up everything which will throw light upon the different centuries which his armor represents. In what way, indeed, does he really know his Gothic armor if he does not study at first hand how it was worn, and in what surroundings and with what accessories? This knowledge he seeks in examining tapestries of the period, miniatures on parchment, stained glass, tomb figures in stone or brass, and ancient pictures, – of the last those especially which represent the resurrection, for in them the guards of the sepulchre appear in armor just as the painter represented them from models about him, for, of course, the artist in the fifteenth century gave no thought to the type of panoply worn in the time of Pontius Pilate. So every armor hobbyist should collect these "documents" assiduously: not are they of value merely in his study: they give on the contrary the greatest "decor" to his gallery, for what could be more suitable as a background for precious Gothic armor than a Gothic tapestry full of armored knights, their tents, their primitive cannon, their swords, the costume worn under the armor, the castles in which they live? And in front of such a tapestry, what could be better as a stand for detached pieces of armor than a chest of the period on which are carved figures in full wargear?

As descriptive accompaniment of armor of the sixteenth century one should collect contemporary portraits in which the personages are often represented in full panoply. These pictures give, in addition, just the color which one needs as "background" for his objects, and they are incidentally not very difficult to obtain. And there is even the bare chance that such portraits will throw light upon the original ownership of armor in one's collection or in museums. Thus a full length Venetian portrait of Admiral Rota, which I have, shows him in the armor preserved in the gallery at Turin; a small full length picture of Johan Friedreich of Schleswig-Holstein given me by a friend shows the harness now exhibited in Copenhagen; another portrait in my collection represents the Florentine Cosimo II with his hand upon the very headpiece now exhibited in the Metropolitan Museum.

There is, gentlemen, in conclusion but a single danger you run when you deal with the armor hobbyist – perhaps, indeed, you already have somnolently divined it – perhaps it is even a general danger among hobbyists. But it is assuredly a real danger. Your armor hobbyist *might talk you to death!* He might turn out to be that kind of a person whom Horace describes so feelingly in his *De Arte Poetica*, and from whom he is delivered only by the special help of the divine patron of the fine arts!

* Later sold at Leavitt's (about 1881): I have since secured a number of pieces from the collection.

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Another view of the Great Hall and its armor.