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THE RISE AND FALL OF THE PREHISTORIC POPULATION OF NORTHERN ARIZONA¹

By Dr. HAROLD S. COLTON

DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEUM OF NORTHERN ARIZONA, FLAGSTAFF

IN the Southwest more people take an interest in the early inhabitants of the country than in any other portion of the United States. This is easy to understand because the evidence of these people exists on every hand. Even though we deplore the practice, many of the present population pot-hunt more or less and speculate on the pots and the makers of the pots. Archeologists tackle the same problems with refined technical methods. They too speculate, filling in the gaps that exist in the data and let their imaginations loose to complete the story.

In this paper I am going to speculate on the people of northern Arizona. The rise and fall of the pre-

historic people is speculative, but the foundation rests on fairly solid rock. The age of the earth or the origin of mankind—subjects that are perfectly orthodox to discuss—rest on foundations which, in comparison, are laid on sand.

My problem was suggested to me several years ago by Dr. Ellsworth Huntington, of Yale. He suggested that a study be made of the prehistoric populations of the Near East, the Peruvian plateau and the Southwest, with a view to a possible correlation with climatic conditions. He hoped that I would make the study of the Southwest. The facts on which such a study might be based seemed so nebulous that I did not take it seriously. But I thought about it and after a while I decided that even if I did not have figures for an accurate census, still I might make an approximation of the truth. Therefore, I now with

¹ Address of the retiring president of the Southwestern Division of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, delivered at the sixteenth annual meeting of the Southwestern Division, held at Flagstaff, Arizona, from April 27 to 30, 1936.

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