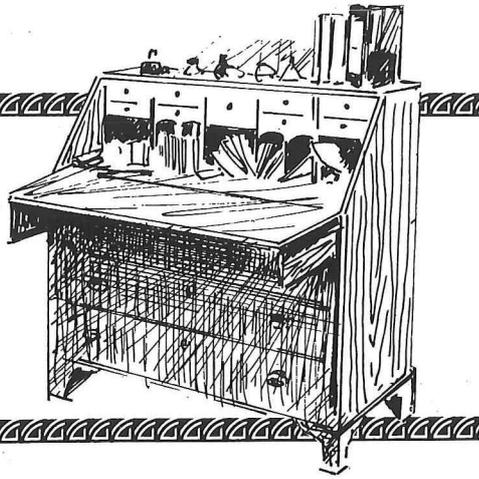




From the

## EDITOR'S

Slant Top



THESE past few months, I have been making quite a few television and radio appearances in connection with the promotion of my new book, *TREASURY OF NEW ENGLAND ANTIQUES*. From the high and mighty in these two information fields, to the littlest 250 watt station, questions have always been raised relative to the reliability of antiques dealers and auctioneers. The telephone call-interview shows in Boston and New York and along the Eastern Seaboard have been unanimous in that this question of ethics has always been raised.

They range from, "How do I know if an antiques dealer is crooked or not?" to, "Is it true you always get gyped when you buy antiques?" Would that these questions would cease, but they don't. Unfortunately, the many who are in business today are suffering from some long-lingering conceptions and misconceptions about those who deal in antiques. It takes many years and sometimes several generations before such type-casting can be forgotten or overcome. Perhaps we should undertake more effort in this direction, because this is, in my opinion, the singularly most important problem in the antiques business today. The manner in which it should be tackled should

be positive, not negative, but everyone must join in and help.

Several years ago, the *Reader's Digest* republished an item that first appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, to wit: Definition, Auctioneer: A Gyp off the old Block. As Secretary of the New Hampshire Auctioneers Association, I fired off a letter to both publications asking for an apology to the auction profession, because I knew that there must be some scoundrels in the auction profession, yet why malign them all with such an inane statement. The letters of apology came forthwith, after my continued reminder that I knew some scoundrels in the publishing profession but did not hold these two periodicals accountable. One can but speculate at how many others wrote them. Not too long ago, an antiques columnist for a metropolitan newspaper in New England wrote a very damaging article concerning some hanky panky that reputedly went on at auctions in a particular area, naming no names, but rather, suggesting that all auctions were conducted in this manner, just by the manner in which it was written. Auctioneers all over New England stormed the bastions this time with letters to the paper demanding that the account be docu-

mented with names, place, items, prices, etc., so the entire auction profession would not be maligned by this purported incident. Needless to say, no such facts existed, and the columnist was replaced several months later after a cooling off period.

The message is this: Always have something good to say about the antiques or auction profession if you are in it. If you become a member of an association you can help encourage others to operate by the codes of ethics most adopt. Encourage others to join. When a derogatory statement is made about the professions, jump in and ask for the facts — you'll find that most don't exist — for someone maybe is just trying to cover up a piece of bad judgement he made. Above all, don't act like the panel of antiques dealers on TV a couple of years ago in Boston who warned the public to beware of shady dealers — setting themselves on some sort of throne.

My answer to such questions is simple; I have never met a dealer or auctioneer with whom I wouldn't do business again — also, any time I discovered I made a bad buy, it was my own fault for not studying up on the subject. The quicker people learn to ask the assistance of auctioneers and dealers on items in which they are interested, the quicker they will learn that they will get the correct answers from someone who wants to cultivate them as a lifetime customer. Perhaps some readers will have comments on the foregoing.



THE picture at left of the Manayunk communion flagon, c. 1839, was made by outdoor light late on a November afternoon. The flagon, which contained traces of gold leaf when found, is the only known piece marked B. Richardson and Son, Philadelphia. (Photograph courtesy of the Eastman Kodak Company. See article on page 20.)

