

HUMBLE "COOTIES" HELP SOLVE ANCIENT INDIAN RACE RIDDLES

Lice, although unpleasant subjects, have scientific value as well as intensely practical interest. Therefore Dr. H. E. Ewing, specialist in such creeping things for the U. S. Bureau of Entomology, has made a study of them.

He has found that as races mingle the vermin that plague them mingle also, and hybridize. Any ex-soldier can tell of the too great intimacy of the frontline trenches and how the Russian body-louse reached the American dough-boy via the German and French armies.

But Dr. Ewing is more interested in the fundamental race problems presented by the head-plaguing vermin, or "graybacks". He finds that in America today the head lice of Caucasian, Indian and Negro are all merged in a conglomerate hybrid breed; there seems to be no color line in this unsavory universe of the unwashed.

To find records of graybacks in the pride of their ancient racial purity he has had to turn to the past. The heads of mummies supplied him with material. A few Egyptian lice were turned up; but the best crops were yielded by mummies from ancient Peru and from the old Indian dwellings of our own Southwest. And the inhabitants of the hair of these oldest inhabitants, before the present palmy days of racial melting-pots, were quite distinct. There was a Peruvian type of head louse, a Southwest Indian head louse, a head louse peculiar to the white men of Egypt. And the ancient American vermin are quite distinct from modern Asiatic types captured from the Chinese and Japanese.

Another interesting result of Dr. Ewing's studies seems to indicate that the long-tailed monkeys of the American tropics owe us humans a grudge, for the vermin that afflicts them apparently were passed on to them by man. We may boast - or try to conceal - a simian ancestry, but it seems that the thing the simian scratches for traveled the other way.

SIR OLIVER LODGE HOLDS RAIN MAKING POSSIBLE

Speaking before the London Institute of Physics, Sir Oliver Lodge gave it as his considered opinion that now that we had learnt that the precipitation of moisture depends on electrical conditions, this should give us a hint as to how to bring about rainfall, though, as he said, we still supplicate higher powers for the production or the limitation of rain instead of setting to work to see what we can do for ourselves.

The greater part of the world suffers from droughts, and if there are no clouds or extremely little moisture in the atmosphere, the case is hopeless. In the countries suffering from drought, however, clouds do at times accumulate, but disappear without precipitation. Why should they not be electrified, or the sign of their electrification be changed so that the drops should be of different potential and be likely to run together and coalesce? "Is the atmosphere," Sir Oliver Lodge said, "to be the one region of the earth over which man has no power? I do not believe that it is. The problem strikes me as no more difficult than the problem of disease at one time appeared and I venture to regard the future with hope!"

In the same lecture, speaking of the possible break up of the atom, Sir Oliver expressed doubt as to whether our grandchildren would live to see the utilization of atomic energy on anything like an engineering scale.
