

Character and Faces

Why senators get mistaken for Bolsheviks and financiers for bootleggers when an individual attempts to judge their places in life by looking at photographs, is explained by Dr. Stuart A. Rice, psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Rice has just reported results of an investigation in which 258 students at Dartmouth College acted as judges of personality.

The reason why a human being's face cannot be accurately rated in character and intelligence by the observation method, just as horses and dogs are judged at prize shows, is traced to the fact that each person carries about in his mind type pictures of what a king, a criminal, or a scholar should look like. These mental pictures, or stereotypes, Dr. Rice explains, are made up to a considerable degree of superficial earmarks such as the cut of the hair, the mode of wearing collar and tie, and similar details of appearance.

In the test the college students were shown pictures of nine individuals taken from a newspaper of two years ago. They were told that one of the nine was a senator, one a labor leader, two were manufacturers, and so on, and each picture was to be fitted with the most suitable title.

Dr. Rice reports that: "In the case of Krassin, the Soviet Envoy, a wing collar, Van Dyke beard and moustaches contribute to an appearance that may be described as distinguished, and which no doubt led to 59 identifications as the U. S. Senator, in comparison with nine as a bolshevik and none as a labor leader. Senator Pepper received as many or more identifications as labor leader, bolshevik, financier, editor-politician, and manufacturer than he received in his own senatorial capacity.

"The largest number of correct identifications was made in the case of the alleged bootlegger. This individual alone was pictured in out-door costume. He is shown in a heavy overcoat with up-turned collar, a cap, tortoise-shell glasses and cigar gripped firmly between his lips."

Different groups of students were also asked to estimate the intelligence and craftiness of each of the nine individuals. When the students were told correctly who the individuals were, they rated the persons of highest rank and position as being higher in intelligence and lower in craftiness than they did when they were misled as to the correct identity of the pictures.

Science News-Letter, December 11, 1926

Fossil Ivory Ornaments

Modern Eskimos of Alaska supply hand-carved bric-a-brac of fossilized ivory, millions of years old, to the tourist trade and novelty shops of the Northwest.

Cribbage boards, bracelets, paperknives, and bead necklaces that show the influence of ever advancing civilization grafted onto the primitive walrus tusk etchings of an older age have recently been put on display at the U. S. National Museum. Some of these examples of an old-new handicraft were brought back by Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, anthropologist of the museum, from his recent expedition to Alaska.

Another collection has just been presented to the museum by Carl Loman, reputed to be the largest reindeer herder in Alaska, that contains many valuable specimens of the ancient primitive art, as well as beautiful examples of the new.

The fossilized walrus ivory used by both the ancient and modern Eskimos acquires through the centuries rich mottlings of grey and deep cream color, deepening in some pieces to an iridescent sheen, comparable in beauty to Chinese carvings of jade and agate. Though new ivory is used in many carvings, necklaces and amulets of the old world, when obtainable, certainly occupy a well deserved place in the current vogue for semi-precious jewelery.

Science News-Letter, December 11, 1926

Jar on Indian's Stomach

An earthen effigy jar in the shape of an animal said by the Hopi Indians to represent an antelope was one of the most curious objects unearthed recently near Flagstaff, Ariz., by Dr. J. Walter Fewkes, ethnologist of the Smithsonian Institution. It was found buried on the abdomen of an Indian priest.

The surface of the jar was elaborately decorated, and was undoubtedly used for religious purposes, Dr. Fewkes said, and probably as a container for holy water or sacred meal. A splendid collection of pottery, numbering over 300 unbroken vessels, as well as many curious fragments, was obtained from the site of an ancient Indian cemetery near the Pueblo. He also gathered rings, bracelets, turquoises, shells, and other ornaments. Dr. Fewkes considers his summer's work at Elden Pueblo, six miles from Flagstaff, one of the most successful of his careers.

Science News-Letter, December 11, 1926

NATURE RAMBLINGS

By FRANK THONE



Witch-Hazel

The last rose of summer, even the last of the hardy roses that modern horticulture has produced, is long since gone, and with it the last of the asters and gentians and all the other late-autumn flowers. But in the undergrowth of our richer woodlands one flower still blooms on, and before even the alder and skunk-cabbage burst forth next spring it will be there again.

To be sure, it isn't much of a flower, judged by summer-garden standards: just four little yellowish sepals bunched together on a nubbiny little twig, and between them four string-like, sprawling, twisty yellow things that the botanists tell us are petals, though they certainly do not look much like them. But such as they are, the flowers of the witch-hazel are with us—the last flowers of fall, or the first of spring, as you choose, if you are prejudiced against admitting that flowers can bloom in the winter.

The flowers of the witch-hazel are very leisurely affairs. They remain open for a long time, and the pollen that goes from one to another (probably by wind, for where are the insects now?) takes months to complete the process of fertilization. Then the small, brown, cross-slashed fruits form with equal deliberation, and at last expel their tiny, black seeds, like shots from miniature pistols, to take up the job of producing new witch-hazel bushes where they fall.

Extract of witch hazel leaves still enjoys a large sale in the drug stores, though much skepticism has arisen concerning its virtues as a surface antiseptic. Physicians seem to be inclined to ascribe its effects almost wholly to the 25 per cent of alcohol, more or less, that it contains, and some chemists have stated that they find traces of formaldehyde in it also.

The shrub is said to have received its name from the favor it enjoyed among the necromantic gentry who used forked wands of its wood in divining or "dousing" for well-sites and buried treasure.

Science News-Letter, December 11, 1926