

More Digging Needed

Anthropology

Following are further reports on papers in anthropology presented at the New York meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

A great need for further excavation at some of the famous sites where important discoveries of ancient man have been made was urged by Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, of the Smithsonian Institution.

"Scientists spend much time examining a few rare fossilized fragments of skulls and other bones and argue endlessly just how long man lived on earth and what sort of creature he was at first. Meanwhile the sites where the isolated specimens came from and which at any moment might yield more bones, that would settle the uncertainties and clear up deadlock arguments, are neglected. Men will argue and even quarrel violently, but no one undertakes the slow, uncertain, further labor," Dr. Hrdlicka pointed out.

For nearly twenty-years, he said, not a trace of work has been done at the stream bed in Java which yielded the unique bones of the *Pithecanthropus erectus*, the oldest creature resembling man that has ever been discovered. This creature with a thigh bone like that of a man and a skull cap like an ape is estimated to have lived 500,000 years ago. Additional evidence is badly needed, Dr. Hrdlicka pointed out, to prove once and for all that the thigh bone and skull really belong to the same creature, and whether he was ape or human. But there is not even a supervision of the banks of the stream to salvage any specimens that might be washed out from time to time.

Pitdown Neglected

Less than half a day's journey from London, lies the site at Pitdown, where other important and much discussed relics were found. They consist of fragments of two skulls and a part of a lower jaw, and the being they are believed to represent has been named the Dawn Man, or "Eoanthropus". He is held by some scientists to be almost as old and important as the Javanese individual. One scientist after another visits this accessible site, Dr. Hrdlicka said, but with the exception of one venerable retired British scientist, Prof. Smith Woodward, no one in 15 years has done any work there to find more specimens. Yet,

this is one of the most unsettled points of man's prehistory, because the fragments of the skull seem to belong to a being with a head form and a brain far in advance of his time, while the lower jaw and the canine tooth are almost those of an ape.

In Germany, near Tübingen, at least fourteen fossil primate teeth were discovered back in the last century, Dr. Hrdlicka continued. These teeth were of the Tertiary geological period, and belong to anthropoid apes, but so near to human are some of them that the ape must have been close to a primitive man. But since that discovery there is not a report of any further attempt to find out more about these man-like ape creatures.

50,000-Year-Old Americans?

The first human beings to step on American soil must have come either earlier than 50,000 years ago or else as late as 7,000 years ago. This is geology's contribution toward solving the vexatious problem of when this continent was first inhabited. Dr. Ernest Antevs of the the American Geographical Society pointed out that the last great ice sheet slowly spread down over Canada, also freezing part of Alaska, and then slowly retreated again, blockading the northwest coast for thousands of years. The blockade of Behring Straits ended about 7,000 years ago. Since this region is generally accepted to be the route of the first American immigrants, who were Asiatics, immigration must have been impossible until that time.

Early American Emigrants

Long before the time of Columbus the New World sent human emigrants to the Old World, although America originally received its supply of human stock from the Eurasia continent.

This new idea that America was populated from Asia and at a much later date sent some of its peoples back across Behring Strait to mingle with the tribes of Siberia was presented by Dr. Franz Boas of Columbia University.

Evidences contained in the language, customs and remains of the Eskimos, Asiatic peoples, Siberian tribes and American Indians caused Dr. Boas to come to this tentative conclusion.

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NATURE RAMBLINGS

BY FRANK THONE

Natural History



Gray Wolf

Coyotes are still fairly common on the prairies and plains of the West, and even high up into the plateau country. But their cousins, the great gray wolves that once ranged timber and open from the Atlantic to the Pacific, are now almost wiped out. They were such terrible killers, often slaughtering far more meat than any animal could eat, that it paid ranchers' associations and government officials to hire hunters and trappers to kill them off. There are still sections where gray wolves are numerous enough to constitute a major problem to the stock-raiser; but when we recall that wolves were once greatly feared in such states as Iowa and Virginia, we will realize how much the wolf problem has diminished over the country as a whole.

It is not likely that we shall ever live in a wolfless world. The gray wolf is a creature of the northern forests and wastes, where pursuing man seldom goes and where he has so far not thought of conducting major economic enterprises. So on the tundras and among the mountains of the Yukon, and over into the great stretches of Siberia and northern Russia the wolves will range and howl at night for many generations to come.

There is less objection to wolves in the wilderness where man has not yet intruded. They live by cruelty and murder, it is true, but a certain amount of killing is "natural" in a state of nature, maintaining a debit balance against the bulging credits of prolific birth. But where man appears he imperiously takes charge. Only he and the creatures that have meekly submitted to his will are permitted to survive when he clears the wilderness. And the wolf, whose motto, like that of proud Lucifer, has always been "I will not serve!" is then marked for death.

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