

Ancient Arctic Village Excavated

New evidence of man's prehistoric life in the Arctic has been dug out of the frozen ruins of a very large Eskimo settlement on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea by Henry B. Collins, Jr., archæologist of the Smithsonian Institution, and G. Herman Brandt of Cleveland.

St. Lawrence Island and the Diomed Islands in Bering Strait may be called the metropolises of the prehistoric Arctic, said Mr. Collins, who recently returned from his Alaskan expedition. At these two points the people who lived in the north many centuries ago were especially interested in making their everyday possessions and ceremonial objects beautiful with fine carving. Here, too, ceremonials, the foundation of the social life, flourished most, judging by the quantities of carved ivory objects found.

Digging into the stiffly frozen refuse heap of the ancient village, Mr. Collins and Mr. Brandt unearthed ivory

and bone harpoons, meat picks, and many strangely shaped carved objects which today have no known use. Holes bored in some of these and the various shapes suggest possible use as caps for ceremonial wands, charms, and personal ornaments, but not even the Eskimos who occupy the same region today and live under somewhat similar conditions can help solve the prehistoric ivory puzzles. There are no such things in the modern Eskimo household.

Three successive stages of Eskimo culture are traced in the possessions dug out of the hard earth, and the oldest, most deeply buried objects show the finest and most intelligent workmanship. The layer above this contains articles decorated in less aesthetic fashion, and the topmost layer of earth and recent villages contain the craftsmanship of modern Eskimos who have lived within the past 300 years and have forgotten the painstaking skill and the love of de-

sign that their distant ancestors had. It all shows, Mr. Collins points out, that the Eskimos that white men never met were of a higher state of culture than the Eskimos of today.

The age of the most ancient Eskimos may never be determined, but at a rough guess they may be said to have lived at least 1,000 years ago.

"It is becoming evident beyond doubt," the archaeologist stated, "that the oldest articles found represent the most ancient Eskimos in the world and they are older than the Eskimos of Central Canada and Greenland. Somewhere on the shores of northern Alaska or eastern Siberia some members of the Asiatic race adapted themselves to the Arctic conditions and here appeared the typical Eskimo."

Skulls of the oldest Eskimos have not yet been found, but the expedition has brought back skulls of the later prehistoric stage of Eskimo culture.

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Gas Detector Wanted

Wanted: A means to detect minute amounts of deadly mustard gas in the atmosphere. Chemists throughout the world are asked to produce the means. A reward is offered to the most successful.

International competition between chemists has been sponsored by the International Committee of the Red Cross at Geneva for the discovery of a detective reagent of yperite, the deadly mustard gas of the World War. The reagent must detect less than a grain of the yperite in about a quart of air (0.07 mg. in 1 liter), and must be able to trace out the deadly gas without any doubt. The reagent and the apparatus for its use must be easy to construct and capable of being produced in quantity and reasonably.

A sum of 10,000 Swiss francs, about \$2,000, has been granted by the International Red Cross and will be distributed by a jury to one or several of the competitors, according to the value of the work submitted. The contest closes on December 31, 1929. The results will be announced on January 31, 1931. The official languages are French, English, German and Italian.

The reagent adopted shall be called by its author's name and become the property of the International Red Cross.

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Spectrum Test for Color Blindness

The rainbow hues obtained when pure white light is passed through a prism are the best colors to be used in testing cases of partial color blindness, Sir John Herbert Parsons of the University of London, declared at the dedication of the Wilmer Ophthalmological Institute in Baltimore. Sir John, one of the world's authorities on color vision, represented the ophthalmologists, or eye specialists, of England at the dedication exercises.

Color blindness may range all the way from total inability to distinguish colors, when the subject sees everything as gray and black, to mild forms in which the subjects have difficulty in distinguishing one or two shades. Confusion of red and green is a particularly common form, and a highly dangerous one when it occurs in employees of navigation or railway lines. Colored lights and flags are so universally used for signals that public safety depends on accurate testing of railroad and navigation employees. In cases that are not very pronounced, it is extremely difficult to make accurate tests and it is for these cases especially that Sir John recommended the use of spectral colors.

The Board of Trade of London has a special lantern for testing public employees in which the colors are all

shown with the same degree of luminosity or brightness. This lantern is not allowed to be sold on the market, however. The lantern was devised because sailors and railroad men objected to matching colored wools, which they considered altogether too feminine. The wools are commonly used for other types of patients. Both lantern and wool tests are not infallible, Sir John commented, but a trained examiner will be able to tell with these tests whether color blindness exists, even if he cannot tell the degree by these means.

Color blindness is often called Daltonism, from John Dalton, the great English scientist, who discovered it. Dalton himself was a Quaker and shared his sect's abhorrence of bright colors. After receiving the degree of Doctor of Laws, he went about the streets wearing a crimson robe of that doctorate, quite happy and quite unconscious of the agitation he was causing among his Quaker friends. He himself was color blind and did not know the color of the robe he wore. It was 50 years after Dalton's discovery of the condition before any serious efforts were made to eliminate color blindness from the personnel of ship and train crews, Sir John stated.

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