

ANTHROPOLOGY

Find Biggest Head in America; Belonged to Brainy Alaskan

Distinction Formerly Belonging to Daniel Webster
Now Goes to Unknown Aleut With 2,005 CC. Skull

SCIENCE has discovered America's brainiest man.

He lived and died hundreds of years ago, and his immense skull has now come to light through archaeological digging in Alaska. Dr. Ales Hrdlicka of the Smithsonian Institution reports the discovery as a notable one from his expedition to the Aleutian Islands of Alaska, this summer.

America's greatest big-head, thus revealed as a man of the Aleutian Islands, had a skull shaped to hold a brain of fully 2,005 cubic centimeters. The average human has no more than 1,450 cubic centimeters of brain if he is a man. A woman averages less, about 1,250 to 1,300.

Dr. Hrdlicka compares this big-brained American to other notable brains on record. Daniel Webster is credited

with the largest normal head of all Americans within historic times. But his massive brain was smaller than the Aleut's, being about 2,000 cubic centimeters. Bismarck's brain is estimated to have been about 1,965; Beethoven's, 1,750. The Russian poet Turgeniev, with a huge brain of 2,030 cubic centimeters, still holds the entire world record in this respect, though the American discovery comes close.

Normal

The new-found American skull, only a trifle smaller than Turgeniev's, is pronounced entirely normal by Dr. Hrdlicka. Examination convinces the anthropologist that the man who carried the massive head on his shoulders was no sufferer from any such head-deforming malady as water on the brain, or the thickened bones of gigantism. He was not a person of great size or strength, judging by the moderate size of the bones for muscle attachments. He was, it is believed, a brainy man in intelligence as well as in sheer quantity of brain matter.

There is a rough but definite correlation between brain size and intelligence in normal human beings, Dr. Hrdlicka explains. Brain size, he points out, is the most essential physical difference between man and beast.

In the National Museum's rare scientific collection of 16,000 skulls, the largest such collection in the world, the smallest normal adult skull of a human being is capable of holding no more than 910 cubic centimeters of brain. This is close to the edge of the gulf separating man from ape, so far as brain size is concerned.

Science News Letter, October 17, 1936

MEDICINE

Migraine Relief Reported From Alkaloid Drug

MANY persons with migraine, or "sick headache," may find quick relief in a drug known as ergotamine tartrate, reports Dr. Mary E. O'Sullivan of Bellevue Hospital, New York City.

Dr. O'Sullivan has by this treatment saved 89 migraine patients from "39,000 hours of suffering in the last two years," she tells physicians (*Journal, American Medical Association*, Oct. 10).

The alkaloid, ergotamine tartrate, is not a cure for migraine, the woman physician emphasizes, but it has brought relief to all but eight out of 97 patients who have been treated. It completely checked 1,042 headaches in the 89 patients discussed.

The drug is injected under the skin by the physician, or it may be taken, somewhat less dependably, in tablet form. It should not be taken except under a doctor's orders.

"Any disease that will incapacitate an adult, interfering with his work for a day or more from one to four times a month, is a definite economic liability," says Dr. O'Sullivan. She and others are at work on the cause of migraine under a grant from the Josiah Macy Foundation.

Science News Letter, October 17, 1936

AMERICAN HEAD SIZES

The largest normal American skull, found in the Aleutian Islands, is shown at the right. It has a brain capacity of 2,005 cubic centimeters. The smallest known skull of any normal American, left, belonged to a prehistoric Peruvian Indian, and had only 910 cubic centimeters capacity. Compared with these extremes is the average sized skull in the center, with about 1,400 cubic centimeters capacity.

