

ANTHROPOLOGY

Lusty Bone Gnawing Not Done At Banquets of Primitives

Men Have Probably Cut Their Meat Since Stone Age; Eskimo's Good Teeth Due to Diet, Not Mastication

THE CHARMING girl who gnaws a ham bone at the dinner party is not being sensibly primitive. Giving the teeth this sort of hearty work-out is not done in primitive society.

So the Arctic explorer, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, declared in an address at the annual banquet of the American Dietetic Association.

"Between the dentists and the Fletcherizers, we chew today far more than our primitive ancestors," he stated.

Dental reasoning, he said, has gone astray by assuming that the Eskimos, with their fine, healthy teeth, would chew at least as much as we. Then the argument is built up by picturing Eskimos as extraordinary chewers.

"The argument proceeds," said Mr. Stefansson, "that when people ate meat in the way illustrated by the charming girl, they developed and retained excellent teeth through much biting and chewing of tough and coarse food."

The point overlooked, he continued, is that primitive people have had tools since Stone Age days, and carnivorous primitives have one single method of handling meat, practically everywhere in the world.

The proper primitive way of eating was then shown by the explorer, who has lived for years among Eskimos, eating their meat diet:

"You take a good-sized piece of meat in your left hand and a knife in the right," he explained. "With your front teeth you nip lightly into the edge of the piece, just so you get a good hold, and then you cut in front of your lips. This piece of meat is not likely to be larger than the one you cut with knife and fork when you dine politely on a sirloin."

In actual fact, Eskimos chew their food less than almost any other people, said Mr. Stefansson, and their native meat diet does not massage their gums with coarse food. Yet not one cavity has been found in any tooth of any Eskimo who died before his food was Europeanized. The Eskimos are the only people known, past or present, who have this 100 per cent record of no decayed teeth.

Popular belief that Eskimos chew skins a great deal in preparing them for clothing, thus getting dental exercise, was declared "greatly exaggerated."

Attributing the Eskimo's good teeth to his diet, Mr. Stefansson said:

"All deficiency diseases seem always absent from people living wholly on meat. In view of much discussed theories it is well to specify that certainly there is never a case of scurvy and almost certainly never one of rickets. Tooth decay is absent, pyorrhea is rare or absent. Teeth when ground down, as by sand in dried meat, seem never to wear wholly down to the pulp so as to result in alveolar abscesses."

Cancer has probably never been reported from Eskimos still living on their native food, the explorer commented.

It is a reasonably sure conclusion, he declared, that "you can be healthy, and live at least the biblical three score and ten, on a vegetarian diet, on a meat diet, or on a combination of the two."

Science News Letter, October 31, 1936

The crop pest, bindweed or morning glory, defies drought because its roots, that spread even as long as 25 to 30 feet, store up so much food for hard times.

RADIO

November 3, 5:15 p.m., E.S.T.
SOUTH WITH THE BIRDS—Frederick C. Lincoln of the U. S. Bureau of Biological Survey.

November 10, 5:15 p.m., E.S.T.
HOW MUCH?—Ralph W. Smith of the National Bureau of Standards.

In the Science Service series of radio discussions led by Watson Davis, Director, over the Columbia Broadcasting System.

PSYCHOLOGY

Use Hearing More Than Touch as Auxiliary Sense

HEARING takes the place of sight for the blind much more than does the sense of touch. So says Dr. Friedrich Mansfeld who is conducting experiments on the psychology of the blind in cooperation with Prof. Karl Buhler, internationally known psychologist of the University of Vienna.

Dr. Mansfeld has been blind himself since he was eight years old.

The blind man going along the street follows a pathway of familiar sound, Dr. Mansfeld explains. He hears street cars stopping here, running there, automobiles, birds in the trees, and the echo of his own footsteps from house walls, pavements, and other objects.

Every material sends back a distinctive sound in response to his step or his voice. As he passes through a room, he hears and recognizes the cupboard by its wood sound, the window by its glass tone.

There is also a peculiar intensity and quality of sound associated with each individual day which depends upon the weather or atmospheric conditions, according to Dr. Mansfeld. This he calls the "sound of the day."

Science News Letter, October 31, 1936

ETHNOLOGY

Indians Use 1112 Plants For Food; Made Jelly

INDIANS of North America tasted, and found good for food, over a thousand of the plants on the continent.

No less than 1112 species of plants used in some way as food by Indians are listed in a new publication compiled by a chemist, Elias Yanovsky of the U. S. Bureau of Chemistry and Soils. The list includes ferns, algae, and fungi and shows that Indian cooks contrived fruit jellies, beverages, soups, breads, and other dishes.

Science News Letter, October 31, 1936

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