

ANTHROPOLOGY

Accuracy of History Checked By Study of Famous Bones

Dante's Skull Examined; Remains of English Princes Confirm Their Murder by Richard the Third

THE SCIENTIFIC study of famous bones is making progress.

It is not so long since sentiment was strong against disturbing the rest of kings and poets. Shakespeare had expressed himself for the tribe of famous folk emphatically in his curse on those who moved his bones. That Shakespearean tombstone, and the superstition that a curse awaited those who dared poke about royal tombs of Egypt, were enough to give the world an uneasy feeling over troubling the famous dead.

But archaeology and anthropology and other related sciences that probe into man's past have "grown up" during the past century. And public confidence in scientific methods has grown up, too. When experts examine a burial of a famous person to prove identity, or to learn about physical traits of greatness, or to check troublesome points of history, they bring to the task all the latest devices of measurement. X-ray, science, chemical tests, and anatomical knowledge—and an honest respect.

Bones of the poet Dante were committed to the care of Prof. F. Frassetto in 1921, when the tomb was opened on the six hundredth anniversary of Dante's death. Now, twelve years later, the professor has published his report. It covers 200 pages and includes 95 illustrations.

His Skull Indeed

The outline of Dante's skull has been compared with various busts. It is found to fit with the Vela bust, and in most respects it fits with other sculptured representations of the poet. There seems no reason to doubt that this is indeed the skull of the great poet genius.

Remarkable possibilities of modern anatomy have been shown by recent examination of the remains of the two English princes murdered in the Tower of London. The bones, removed from a marble urn in Westminster Abbey, were examined by the Dean of Anatomy of

the London Hospital Medical College. Prof. William Wright. The King of England lent his permission for the exhumation and study.

Identity of the bones was established by various tests. The bones were those of immature persons, as shown by lack of union of the shoulder sockets and hip joints. X-rays of the teeth set the ages of the boys at ten and twelve years, showing that they died in 1483, and therefore at the instigation of their uncle who became Richard the Third—a point on which English history has been exceedingly uncertain.

Relationship Seen

If further proof of identity were needed, the skulls of the princes suggested blood relationship. There were unusually large supplementary bones in the cranial sutures. The milk teeth were congenitally absent. There were traces of dental diseases suggesting a common hereditary weakness in the enamel of the teeth.

That the boys were smothered by pillows, as tradition avers, is confirmed by the testimony of their bones. Over the facial bones of Edward, the prince whose skull is most complete, lay a red and brown stain following the cheek's contour. It is interpreted as being the stain of blood from intense congestion of the face caused by strangulation.

The famous missing skull of René Descartes is missing no longer, since an anthropologist identified a skull in a Paris museum as that of the French philosopher. Robert Burns' head shape has been recorded.

Shakespeare, curse or no curse, may yet be honored in the manner which a scientific age best understands—by a "reverent and scientific official examination" of his grave.

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CHEMISTRY

Natural Gas Chemical Extracts Lubricant

PRACTICALLY all automobile lubricating oils contain a substantial fraction of so-called Pennsylvania oil, according to Dr. Ulric B. Bray, petroleum chemist, in a report to an American Chemical Society. The difference between good and poor oil lies in the relative amount of the much-prized Pennsylvania-type ingredients. Many supposedly inferior western oils now prove to contain fifty per cent. or more



TWICE PIONEER

It was a distinct innovation when steel, in addition to wrought iron, was used more than fifty years ago in the design of Pittsburgh's Smithfield Street bridge by the famous bridge builder Lindenthal. Now the structure pioneers again in having its heavy steel and timber floor replaced by one made of aluminum and aluminum alloy. The old bridge seemed doomed until aluminum's lightening of its dead load increased the factor of safety so much that the structure will see many more years of service. The photograph shows an aluminum alloy floor panel being lowered into place.