

## ANTHROPOLOGY

# No Biological ill Effects From Inbreeding of Islanders

## Anthropologists Also Hear of Blood Tests on Mummies Dead These 5,000 Years or More

**N**EW evidence that close inbreeding of human beings has no ill effects if the original stocks were biologically sound was presented by Dr. H. L. Shapiro of the American Museum of Natural History to the meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists at Cambridge, Mass.

All of the present population of Pitcairn Island, 202 persons, are descended from six of the mutineers of the famous ship "Bounty," who settled on the island in 1790, with a dozen Tahitian women.

"Inbreeding has been common to such an extent that practically everyone is related to all other members of the community," Dr. Shapiro stated. "Despite this inbreeding the islanders are healthy, vigorous and are free from stigmata of degeneracy. This finding confirms the inbreeding experiments of the laboratory which demonstrate that inbreeding as a process does not lead to disaster. The evil consequences which occur in some inbred stocks may more correctly be attributed to latent defects which are intensified and brought to the surface by inbreeding."

Products of the first matings of the white sailors with the native women seem to have had unusual virility, due perhaps to the reaction to cross-breeding which biologists call "hybrid vigor." The earlier generations were larger as individuals than either of the parent groups, and they were amazingly prolific. The women born in the period

from 1815 to 1839 bore an average of 11.4 children each.

### Test Mummies

Blood group tests, such as sometimes figure spectacularly in cases of disputed parentage dragged into court, can be performed on the long-time dead as well as on the living. A report of such tests carried out on 300 mummies, including Egyptian, Peruvian, Basketmaker, and ancient Aleutian Indians of Alaska, was presented to the meeting by Drs. William G. Boyd and Lyle G. Boyd of Boston University.

Blood groups A and B were found to be present in some of the oldest Egyptian mummies, including a number belonging to times over 5,000 years ago, before any Pharaoh yet ruled in Egypt. The same groups were found in a few ancient Peruvian mummies. Basketmaker mummies responded to the test for blood group A, but not B. All other Indian mummies, including the recently discovered Aleuts, having neither the A nor the B factors, are assigned to blood group O.

One result of this research, in the opinion of the Drs. Boyd, is apparently to overthrow the belief held by some investigators, that the differing blood groups among humans evolved within comparatively recent times.

### Barrels of Bones

What would you do if somebody wished 80 barrels of human bones on you?

That is what the U. S. National Museum is up against, Dr. T. D. Stewart told his fellow-anthropologists.

The bones were collected in the course of excavations for public works, carried out by the C. W. A. Whenever the men found an ancient Indian burial, they saved the bones and sent them on to the museum at Washington for possible scientific value.

A considerable part of this great mass of bones has potential usefulness to science, Dr. Stewart told his audience, but much of the material is too badly

broken and crushed to be worth keeping. The job of sorting is now going on.

### Noses Grow Narrower

Noses on children's faces apparently lose width during several years of growth, Dr. M. S. Goldstein of New York University reported. He measured the width of the bridge of the nose on fifty boys, repeating the measurement biennially between the ages of 3 and 21.

"At all levels the widths consistently diminish between 3 and 17 or 19 years," said Dr. Goldstein. "It is believed that this indicates not a real decrease in width of the bridge, but rather a consequence of its increasing height. At about 19 years the widths begin to increase, probably a sign that the height of the nose has reached its maximum growth. An old age group manifests a broader nasal bridge at all levels."

### Balanced Brains

Brains of the lower members of the primate, or ape-monkey family, are remarkably symmetrical. Each half exactly mirrors the other.

This condition, in marked contrast to the usually somewhat unevenly balanced brains of the higher primates, including man, was described by Dr. C. J. Connolly of the Catholic University of America.

Dr. Connolly worked on the large collection of primate brains in the U. S. National Museum. In all, he studied 210 brains, representing 40 different species.

The symmetry which he discovered was expressed not only in the evenly matched sizes and shapes of the opposite halves of the brains, but also in their principal furrows or sulci.

He also found differences in form between specimens of opposite sex, in many of the groups, but there was no sex difference discernible in the patterns of the furrows.

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