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## OBITUARIES

### Dr. Aleš Hrdlička

By the death of Dr. Aleš Hrdlička, which occurred in Washington, D.C., on September 5, at the age of seventy-four, the United States loses its leading exponent of physical anthropology, and anthropologists throughout the world a loyal and helpful friend. He was born of Czech parents who emigrated to the United States, carrying their young family with them, Aleš being the eldest of four boys.

Hrdlička's early life was a struggle, but by the age of twenty-two we find him a qualified homeopathic physician; later he took an allopathic degree. As soon as he qualified, we see him pursuing a practice which he continued with remarkable assiduity throughout life, that of observing, recording and publishing the interesting things he met with in his daily life. For Hrdlička, right from the beginning of his career to the end of it, was a quarryman, an assembler of building material, rather than a builder; he had a firm faith that master-builders would come along and find his materials of service. So it was when he became anthropologist to the Pathological Institute of the New York State Hospitals in 1896; he began measuring and recording the physical characters of the insane. At the beginning of the present century he passed from medicine to anthropology, becoming a member of the staff attached to the Department of Physical Anthropology in the U.S. National Museum, Washington. In 1910 he became curator of the Department and continued in that office until 1942; even then he did not retire but withdrew to the Smithsonian Institution, where he continued his labours until his sudden end.

During the period of his curatorship Hrdlička gathered personally, or acquired, representative collections of skulls and skeletons of men and anthropoids from their native regions in all parts of the world, aiming at giving each variety of mankind a full representation in the national museum, particularly those races which were, or have been, native to America. From time to time he issued reports on these collections, chiefly in publications connected with the museum. It was characteristic of him that he was never satisfied with reported discoveries of fossil man until he had examined the bones with his own eyes and measured them with his own callipers; no matter how out-of-the-way the site of discovery might be, in China, Java, Australia, Africa, Europe or South America, he made his way thither, held an inquest and returned with a documented report. The first of these reports appeared in 1913; the last and most valuable in 1930 (*Smithsonian Misc. Coll.*, vol. 83). He gave particular attention to discoveries of

ancient man made in America, and seemed to take delight in reducing their antiquity to the lowest possible factor, and their type to that of the American Indian—in doing which his perspicacity was probably not much at fault.

Although Hrdlička grew up a fervid American, he retained a strong affection for the land of his birth, especially for its strong school of Czech anthropologists; they in turn were proud of him; on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday (1929), they celebrated the event by bringing out as Hrdlička volume of their publication *Anthropologie*. On the occasion of his seventieth birthday he was again honoured by having dedicated to him a volume of the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, to which colleagues at home and abroad contributed. It was fitting that this journal should celebrate the event, for it was Hrdlička's 'bairn'; he brought it into life in 1918, nourished and protected it until it grew into a hardy independence, and then handed it over to the Wistar Institute.

To aid in the celebration of this jubilee, Dr. D. Rubin de la Borbolla drew up a classified bibliography of Hrdlička's publications (*Boletín Bibliog. Anthropologia Americana*, vol. 2; 1939); between 1892 and 1938 they numbered 295. Clearly a review of such a literature does not fall within the compass of this notice; suffice to say that skull and brain, long bones and short, were subjected again and again to detailed report. In what may be called his field-work he centred his attention on the population of the United States, both living and extinct; on the changes produced by the arrival of millions of central Europeans in the first decade of the present century; the persistence of the British type in the descendants of early colonists ("Old Americans", 1925); more especially was his attention given to the American Indians, both to living representatives and to their predecessors, unearthed from ancient graves. No problem occupied his thoughts so continuously as that of the origin and homeland of this interesting race; his search for evidence turned his footsteps towards Alaska, and to the neighbouring region of Asia, which he finally concluded must be regarded as the cradle of the Amerind type.

In 1927 Hrdlička came to London to give the Huxley Lecture to the Royal Anthropological Institute and receive the Huxley Medal. In the spring of 1939 he again arrived in London, where he had arranged to give lectures at University College, and then to pass on to Russia, where important discoveries of fossil man had been reported. On leaving ship he had a sudden heart seizure (coronary thrombosis), lay for weeks in University College Hospital, made a surprisingly good recovery, gave his lectures and then made his pilgrimage to Russia.

In August of the present year I received from Hrdlička an autographed copy of what has proved to be his last book; it is entitled "Alaska Diary" (Cattell Press, Penn., 1943). Between 1926 and 1938 he made ten expeditions to Alaska, to study Eskimo and Indian, and to search for evidence bearing on the coming of the Amerinds; the "Diary" refers to the explorations made between 1926 and 1931. "These records", wrote Hrdlička, "have no pretense to any literary value, nor to any virtue aside from reality. They are just brief but faithful records of what befell or what was encountered by the writer."

With the "Alaska Diary" came a letter to me written by Dr. Hrdlička on June 23, some ten weeks before his sudden end. A few brief extracts from this

letter will bring home to readers what kind of man he was better than anything I can tell them. "Future American histories of England", he said, "will be written in quite different, and much more honored and proud terms than were those of the past. May the English-Russian relations, also, continue and grow ever deeper. With those two realms going hand in hand, Europe will be effectually healed and restored, and so will much of the Old World; without it there would be misery and chaos." He took a rather pessimistic view of the future of his own subject: "I keep on, as formerly, and may yet see something accomplished even after the Alaska reports are off my shoulders. But conditions are rather disheartening; physical anthropology is in a deep trough. With anatomists weaned off from Anatomy and Anthropology, and the young would-be anthropologists impatient of sufficient preparation and so turning into flimsy statisticians, there are few chances in sight for a rejuvenation. . . . The basic reasons for the decline are plain enough. Those parts of anthropology that most appealed to the imagination and held most promise, have to a large extent been covered and failed to either satisfy or definitely solve matters. . . . But enough of this. If I have troubled you with it, it was with some faint hope that you might show me I am wrong, or getting old, or disgruntled, or something. As a matter of fact, I will the next minute be head-over-heels in happy and absorbing work on my old friend the tibia; and my head is full of plans and happy anticipations as to where I will go and whom to see after the war; and the seeing through of the three Alaska volumes is a real work of love."

A. KEITH.

#### Dr. A. H. Evans

ALTHOUGH it was published just before the opening of the present century, the volume on "Birds" by A. H. Evans, in Harmer and Shipley's "Cambridge Natural History", remains a well-used text-book. It is more readable than most text-books, it deals lightly and inadequately with structure (but then Beddard's work had appeared only the year before), and it concentrates upon the classification and particularly upon the appearance and habits of the birds themselves. This was almost to be expected, for Evans was essentially a field naturalist. In his school-boy days at Durham, his interest in birds had been encouraged by Canon Tristram; at Cambridge, in the seventies of last century, it was confirmed by Alfred Newton; and the majority of his scientific contributions are records of observations in the field and faunal lists of areas he knew well.

Scotland gained much from Evans's frequent visits. To the fine series of vertebrate faunas of that country edited by Harvie-Brown and Buckley, he wrote, with the latter, "A Vertebrate Fauna of the Shetland Islands" (1899), and followed this with his own "Fauna of the Tweed Area" (1911); he also contributed occasional records to the *Annals of Scottish Natural History*. But his interests were not confined to local ornithology: with S. B. Wilson he described the birds of the Hawaiian Islands—"Aves Hawaiensis" (1890-99); he wrote for the *Ibis* descriptions of his visits to South Africa and Australia with the British Association; he translated and annotated under the title "Turner on Birds" (1903) the rare sixteenth century "Avium Praecipuarum, quarum apud Plinium et Aristotelem mentio est,

brevis & succincta historia" of William Turner, reputed father of British ornithology.

Evans took his share also in the conduct of ornithological affairs: from 1884 until 1889 he was recorder of the section "Aves" in the *Zoological Record*; from 1901 until 1912 he shared with P. L. Selater the editorship of the *Ibis*; for some eight years he was guardian of Hickling and Horsey Broad for the owners; he was National Trust local secretary for Wicken Fen, and wrote an account of the Fen birds; he was president of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club, and joint editor and vice-president of the British Ornithologists' Union.

These by no means exhaust the accomplishments of A. H. Evans, but they give the impression of a man of energy and activity, of learning and enthusiasm. Arthur Humble Evans was born in 1855, son of the vicar of Sermerston, Northumberland, and after graduating at Cambridge in 1879 (later he was awarded the Sc.D. degree) he continued there, teaching and tutoring in subjects which included English history and economics, for almost fifty years. When he was eighty-four years of age he published a "Flora of Cambridgeshire" and shortly before paid his last visit to a meeting of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. He died on March 28, 1943, having passed by little more than a month the eighty-eighth anniversary of his birth.

JAMES RITCHIE.

#### Prof. F. Bacon

ENGINEERS in many parts of the world who received their training at the University College of Swansea under Prof. Frederic Bacon, and the many others who came in contact with him through his varied activities, will learn with great regret of his sudden death, which occurred at Earlestone Common, near Newbury, on August 23.

Prof. Bacon, who was sixty-two, was the son of the Rev. J. M. Bacon, the scientific aeronaut. His first practical experience was obtained with Plenty and Sons, engineers, at Newbury. In 1899 he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he won an exhibition and studied under the late Sir Alfred Ewing. In 1902 he obtained first-class honours in the Mechanical Science Tripos. After further practical experience with Yarrow and Co. at Poplar and the British Westinghouse Electrical and Manufacturing Co. at Trafford Park, Manchester, he was appointed in 1905 to the teaching staff at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, and later he also gave special lectures on the photo-microstructure of metals at University College, London.

In 1913 he was appointed professor of engineering in the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire at Cardiff, and on the outbreak of the War of 1914-18 he organized the facilities of the Engineering Department for the manufacture of precision gauges required for shell manufacture. Later he served as lieutenant R.N.V.R. attached to H.M.S. *Vernon* in connexion with the design and development of paravanes, etc. Afterwards he was transferred to the Anti-Submarine Division of the Admiralty as technical expert in the experimental development of anti-mine and anti-submarine devices. In 1920 the chair of engineering was created in the University College of Swansea, and Prof. Bacon was appointed to this position, which he held until his death.

Prof. Bacon was a born research worker and