Arctic Mummies in National Museum

Anthropology

Three mummies from the Arctic caves of the Aleutian Islands, similar to those just discovered by the Stoll-McCracken Expedition, have been in the possession of the U. S. National Museum for more than 50 years.

The museum had a number of these strange mummies that date back to about the seventeenth century, before the white man penetrated the Arctic. For a time some of them were on display. But they are rather gruesome exhibits and they had a somewhat morbid fascination for the public, so they were finally macerated and the skeletons were measured and examined to add to the government scientist's knowledge of ancient men in America.

The three mummies that have been preserved intact in their burial robes and wrappings are those of an adult, a child of about ten years, and a young infant.

A careful study of the Arctic burials was made by Dr. William H. Dall, of the Smithsonian Institution, in the 1870s. The islanders were loath to talk about the ways of their ancestors. But Dr. Dall wandered through the maze of rocks and caverns, and discovered a number of the mummy caves. The bodies were wrapped in skins and grass mats and hidden in the caves, partly because the islands afford few good places for interment, and partly because the caves offer the best protection against the chill fog and dampness of the region. Secrecy was important, because the body of a famous whaler of the tribe, or even the possessions of a whaler, would bring skill in whaling to anyone who possessed them. To foil robbers and to keep the skill of the dead hunter in his family, the dead man was entombed as cautiously as possible.

A rarer type of mummy than those wrapped in skins and mats has been seen in the islands by explorers, but no specimens have ever been brought away. These mummies are not encased, but have been placed in the caves in positions resembling life. Dead men clad in wooden armor, it is said, stiffly grip their spears as they wait to fight the shadowy enemies of another world. Dead women sit holding their bone needles and embroidery as in life. *(Turn to next page)*

ONE OF THE ALEUTIAN MUMMIES in the U. S. National Museum at Washington

Vacations for Animals

Zoology

A country zoo, where tired animals of the London Zoo can go for a holiday and where sick animals can go to recuperate, is proposed in a bill considered by the British Parliament.

The estate which would be set aside for the animals covers 480 acres and provides enough room for the animals to exercise in surroundings somewhat like their natural home country. The holiday home for the wild animals would be about 40 miles from London.

Science News-Letter, July 14, 1928

Charcoal-Driven Autos

Engineering

The use of charcoal for producer-gas as a propellant for motor vehicles is being seriously considered in Great Britain. The Forests Products Research Laboratory have already conducted preliminary experiments on various methods of preparing charcoal for this purpose. So far they have investigated two French types of portable kilns, and also the more ordinary type of bee-hive kiln. Arrangements have been made with the Fuel Research Station to carry out tests on the charcoal prepared from various species of timber, and to determine its value for producer-gas.

Science News-Letter, July 14, 1928

Magnet Removes Bullet From Lung

Medicine

The problem of removing an awkwardly located German bullet from the lung of a Canadian soldier where it had been reposing for ten years was solved by Dr. Chevalier Jackson, at his bronchoscopic clinic in Philadelphia by means of a magnet.

During an action in 1918 the soldier was wounded in the jaw. The fracture united, the wound healed and the patient was honorably discharged. After several years a cough developed, with considerable pain in the the left side of the chest. X-ray examination showed a machine gun bullet in th eupper lobe of the left lung. The soldier's history indicated that there had been no way for the bullet to enter the body except through the wound in the jaw, so the doctors concluded that the bullet had been nearly spent when it struck the jaw bone and had been carried into the lung by an indrawn breath.

By means of X-rays and the bronchoscope, an instrument which enables the operator to look directly into the lung, it was found that an abscess-like cavity had formed around the bullet. When bronchus forceps were inserted into this cavity, however, they shoved the bullet up into a "round the corner" position where the operator could not possibly get a grasp on it.

Since the bullet was presumably covered with steel Dr. Jackson decided to see what a magnet would do. In order to be influenced by a magnet an object must have steel, nickel, cobalt or magnetic iron in its composition. This excludes about 90 per cent. of the foreign bodies removed from the air and lung passages, and for this reason magnets are seldom used in bronchoscopic work. In this case the bullet proved responsive and by maneuvers with the magnet outside the man's chest the bullet was drawn into a favorable position and withdrawn through the throat and mouth, after which the patient made a successful recovery.

Science News-Letter, July 14, 1928

Science in general has needed an interpreter to translate it into the terminology of the man on the street, and that is one of the great functions of industrial research.

CHARLES F. KETTERING.

Science News-Letter, July 14, 1928