

# WHAT IS THE TRUE AMERICAN TYPE?

This Is a Puzzle Which Experts Are Now Trying to Solve.



Dr. Wiley's Baby, Head of the Series.

**W**HAT is the real American type—of man and of woman? At last have we prospects of a solution of this ethnologic riddle which has so long vexed science and art.

Art has made various attempts at a solution, but its identifications have been indefinite. Science has added some suggestions, but at best they have been vague and speculative.

America is called the melting pot, the crucible of the races, and we are termed a mongrel people. Yet among us exists a white race that we may properly call "thoroughbred American." Individuals of this race are now the object of a diligent search instituted by the United States National Museum.

Although not hitherto announced, this important work was commenced two years ago by Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, curator in charge of the museum's laboratory of physical anthropology. According to his classification, any individual whose parents and grandparents have all been American-born belong to the ethnic group whose physical characteristics he has, by accurate measurements and tests, set about to determine.

Being eligible for this catalogue, the writer yesterday presented himself at the laboratory and volunteered as a subject for measurement and examination. The process entailed no discomfort or inconvenience whatsoever. On the contrary, it proved most interesting, and as a generous return Dr. Hrdlicka consented to be interviewed briefly upon this work and its related phases.

### A Fascinating Study.

His specialty—the revelation of ourselves to ourselves—is certainly the most fascinating study that can enter the ken of the savant. And his laboratory is probably the most interesting of the many scientific workshops maintained by the Federal Government. It is equipped with every standard instrument of precision needed for the measurement of living man—his head, his body, his functions.

Although born in Bohemia, of which fact he is modestly proud, Dr. Hrdlicka has been in the United States since his childhood and has been engaged in state or Federal Government service since his majority. After receiving his collegiate education in New York and his post-graduate training in Paris, he entered, 20 years ago, upon an extensive series of anthropological studies, in the course of which he has investigated the races of man in Mongolia, Siberia, Egypt, Europe, North, Central and South America. For the last 11 years he has been in charge of the National Museum's division of physical anthropology.

### The "Thoroughbred American."

"Of the many ethnic groups represented in the population of this country the least known to science is what we might term the 'thoroughbred' white American type," said Dr. Hrdlicka. "I include in this all who are lineal descendants of American stock for at least three generations. This old and most important constituent of our population has never been studied exclusively, although many haphazard and sometimes foolish theories concerning its physical status have been advanced. Speculations on such a subject, having little foundation in well ascertained facts, can mean but little and may readily prove misleading. Thus, some persons, here and abroad, believe that this American stock is approaching the Indian physically. A much more plausible and more widely shared opinion is that Americans are developing not only a new nationality, but a new uniform strain or type of the white race.

"To the investigator the problem presents many interesting sides. How

strong are these old Americans in numbers? What are the physical and physiological changes, if any, that have been wrought in them by the American environment, by the more strenuous mode of life experienced here and by the mixture of the various elements of which they are composed? Do they tend toward a new subtype of the white race? What is the average for stature, weight, head and chest dimensions, size of hand and foot, temperature, pulse rate, respiration and muscular strength? What is the prevailing color of their eyes and hair?

### Sets Age Limit.

"In order to approach a definite answer to these and other questions, and in order to establish much-needed standards for future comparisons, I am personally making a series of scrupulously careful tests and measurements of healthy adult white Americans, both of whose parents and all of whose grandparents were natives of the United States. Those examined are of both sexes and between 24 and 60 years of age. All persons fulfilling these requirements and not crippled or chronically ill are earnestly invited to present themselves, when convenient, for examination. The study, to be of real value, must include at least 200 men and as many women, and it will be difficult to reach these numbers without the voluntary co-operation of many friends.

The entire examination of each individual requires but 15 or 20 minutes and calls for no greater exposure of the body than the removal of the shoes while height is being measured, or, in the case of women, the loosening of the hair while the dimensions of the head are being taken. None of the subjects' names will, of course, be published, al-

though the original data will always be available to those measured."

### Preserves Types in Plaster.

For the benefit of future generations an attempt to preserve the features of the thoroughbred American of the present day is being made by Dr. Hrdlicka and fullbloods of both our Indian and negro types are being similarly treated. Each of these types—the old white Americans, the Indians and the American negroes—will be represented at different life stages, in a series of life-size plaster busts sculptured from life masks. Each series begins with two new-born infants—a boy and girl. Next are a boy and girl of 9 months, and then follow a male and female of each of the following ages: 3, 6, 10, 15, 20, 28, 35, 45, 55, 65, 75, 85, and others over 100, if obtainable. Already the series include American and Indian women of 55, while among the negroes there are two well authenticated centenarians, both women, one 103 and the other 114.

### Dr. Wiley's Baby Heads Series.

Under the doctor's directions, these busts are being made by Frank Micka, a talented sculptor. Those of the infants are the only models made full length and not cast from life masks. The sculptor visits the homes of the infants' parents and models the little ones while they sleep or lie quietly awake. They are never in the least disturbed or excited. The American "thoroughbred" series begins with a life-size cast of John Preston Wiley, the younger baby boy of Dr. Harvey W. Wiley, the noted chemist and pure food champion. This was a remarkable child, weighing



Sitting for the Head and Shoulders.



Sculptor Micka Finishing a Bust.



Dr. Hrdlicka Measuring a Subject.



Testing Muscular Strength.



Making a Life Mask.



wrinkle or vein, every mole, hair or eyebrow. The reproduction of each feature is so accurate that it needs no retouching whatsoever by the sculptor. It is occasionally difficult to obtain a dignified expression pleasing both to the subject and to others.

### The Modus Operandi.

In the studio the writer was shown the modus operandi of making these life masks and finished casts. Over the subject's shoulders is first placed a piece of calico which protects his clothing from the plaster. Then his hair is smoothed back and tied down with a bandana, which process leaves his entire forehead bare. To prevent his adhering to the plaster, such hair as will be exposed to the mask—as the eyebrows, beard and that bordering the forehead—is greased with soft soap. The entire skin of the face is next covered with a thin oil and cotton is placed in each ear.

Plaster mixed with certain ingredients, determined by the special requirements of each case, is then applied gently upon the face, like cream. It is first spread over the mouth, chin and jaw—the most movable parts of the face—and as soon as it has so far hardened as not to be disturbed by the subject's swallowing or moving his lips, the sculptor works his plaster up to the top of the forehead, being always careful to leave openings at the eyes and nostrils. The process has been reduced to such a fine art that there is absolutely no distortion of features and the most nervous subject suffers no displeasurable sensations.

### The Finishing Touches.

After its removal the hardened mask is halved down the line of the nose, is backed with a stout supporting base, is filled inside with modeling clay and is

later lifted off, a half at a time. After a lifelike reproduction of the face has thus been made in clay, the model sits for the head, neck and shoulders, whose accurate reproduction is assured by careful measurements. Several sittings are required before such a bust is satisfactory. Upon its base is placed the name, age and generation record of the subject.

"The series of Indian busts has now been completed and that of the negroes is well under way," Dr. Hrdlicka continued. "For the American series we still need a new-born girl and a man of 65. In this series it has been difficult, with the more aged, to secure normal subjects in whom there has been no intermixture of foreign blood nearer than the great-grandparents. In a few more generations such an undertaking would probably be beyond hope, so fast is the old American stock dissolving into the new American nation. Their marriage with whites of foreign birth are steadily increasing.

"This is no less true of our negroes and Indians. Less than a fifth of Washington's 35,000 negroes can still be regarded as of pure blood.

### Types Fast Disappearing.

"More rapidly still is our Indian race, as known to the white pioneers, disappearing. This is due not alone to increasing death rates and advancing interbreeding with other races, but also to great changes in physique, caused by altered modes of life and by advancing civilization. It is almost impossible now to find specimens of full-blooded Indian men and women of many types. Even where blood remains relatively pure the facial features and expressions of adults as well as of children are undergoing marked changes. Under the influence of clothing and of life within doors, the skin of our Indians is growing decidedly lighter. Their faces are growing fuller and less expressive; their bodies stouter and oftener formless. The little, strong, feet, sharp-toothed young Indian of the past is now seldom seen, except among mountain tribes who still live their own life. The same is true of the impressive, heavily wrinkled, serious old Indian men, and of the strong, healthy Indian women. Within 30 years—certainly within three or four generations—our Indians will have assumed the features and physiognomy partly of the white man and partly of the civilized Japanese, Manchurian and Korean.

"To save for posterity enduring records of all of these three vanishing types—the old American whites, the pure-blood negro and the Indian full-blood—photographs are insufficient, and it is for this reason that we are striving to reproduce them in plaster. No similar systematic undertaking has as yet been made in any country or by any institution.

"The three series of busts when completed are to be exhibited at the Panama-California Exposition at San Diego, in 1915, and will later become the property of the permanent museum of that city."

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