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The D E N T I T I O N and P A L A T E

of the

A U S T R A L I A N A B O R I G I N A L.

from observations on the skull.

A Study

in

Physical Anthropology and Dental Pathology.

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SUMMARY

In briefly summarizing the results of the foregoing observations on the Australian dentition, the following points may be stated as being of leading interest.

The jaws and teeth of the Australian aboriginal are strikingly well formed, with a capacious palate, well formed arches and large teeth; all of which depict a thoroughly functioning and efficient masticatory system.

The teeth of the Australian in size, are probably larger than those of any other living race; and in relation to those of extinct races are sometimes larger, and in most dimensions equal in size.

The teeth incrown form, cusp number, and root form are exceedingly primitive, probably more than any living race, and also some extinct races, such as Tasmanian and Neandertal man.

The arches are well formed and the type contours show in the adult that parallel form which is considered the most primitive outline.

The palate is well formed and capacious, and so far as available comparative results show, is probably larger than any living race; larger than the recently extinct Tasmanian and the Bronze Age dweller of Great Britain; but in its type form not so large as some of the Pleistocene forms of man like those of Heidelberg and Piltdown.

The Australian palate apparently does not possess the somewhat circular form that is attributed to Neandertal man, the former possessing the more primitive contour.

The symmetrical conditions of occlusal and interproximal wear of the teeth, and glenoid fossae depths, would indicate that the Australian probably indulged in masti-

apparently very vigorous, as has been shown in the case of the pulp by the remarkable manner in which it physiologically resisted encroachment on its cavity by secondary deposit; and in the case of the membrane by the marked functional stresses it withstood without showing evidence of frequent or general periodontal affections.

The condition of the deciduous teeth would show that the children were remarkably free from dental diseases, that their teeth were made to function from the beginning of their acquirement, and that such developments as their eruption of the teeth, formation of the arches and development of the palate, took place in a very regular manner.

The Australian dentition was strikingly free from developmental aberrations and dental diseases. The latter, as represented by such universally occurring affections as caries, alveolar abscesses and periodontal lesions, were conditions almost entirely limited to old age.

The marked immunity from dental diseases would seem to be very closely related with the coarse tough food which formed their diet and the crude methods of preparation and cooking when such were utilized.

The observations show in every aspect a very marked difference between the well formed Australian dentition, and ill-formed, disease stricken masticatory outfit with which most modern civilized peoples are burdened. See Fig. 153.

Probably the chief benefit derived from such a study as has been here attempted, is the great lesson to be learned from the conditions presented, namely, that if modern civilized races are to preserve strength and contour in the lower architecture of the face, to make the masticatory organs a physiologically functioning unit, to prevent the awful present day ravages of dental diseases and their concomitant systemic disturbances, and through

in the present day dietary and method of food preparation. In short, a return to diet conditions much more primitive than those at present in vogue will be necessary.