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*John L. Cowles*

# MAN

A MONTHLY RECORD OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL SCIENCE

PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF  
THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

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## HAIDA PORTRAIT MASK.

BY

HENRY BALFOUR, M.A.

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Haida Portrait Mask.  
Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.

WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF

HENRY BALFOUR,

11, NORHAM GARDENS,

OXFORD.





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America, North-West. With Plate A. Balfour.

**Haida Portrait Mask.** *By Henry Balfour, M.A.*

It is by no means of common occurrence to find savage artists indulging in attempts at realistic portraiture of their fellows, most of their representations of the human form being more or less conventionalised, and portrait studies, at any rate successful ones, are therefore somewhat scarce among the art productions of primitive peoples.

The mask represented in Plate A is, I think, of some interest as being undoubtedly a portrait: and, I may add, it is one of the most successful examples of realistic carving which I have hitherto seen from the hands of a savage sculptor. It was carved by a Haida man some forty years ago, and was obtained from him by Dr. F. Dally in Queen Charlotte Island in 1868. It is a true mask, hollowed out at the back so as to fit over the face and perforated through the eyes, though there is no depression into which the wearer's nose would fit. There are lateral holes above the ears for tying-on strings. The mask is carved from a solid block of the wood of some coniferous tree. Dr. Dally records that it was intended to be a portrait of the artist's wife, and he adds that it was a *good* likeness. The carving is life-sized and has been executed with very considerable skill, and the close attention manifestly given to detail affords evidence of an unusual appreciation of the surface modelling of the human face. The general contour is excellently rendered, and the eyes and other features are skilfully treated. The facial wrinkles have been represented with care and give considerable character to the face. An interesting feature is the representation of the fashionably large wooden plug or stud inserted in the lower lip, distending the latter to a remarkable extent. The tension upon the lower lip, due to this plug, imparts a drawn appearance to the upper lip, faithfully rendered in the mask; the obliteration of the central, sub-nasal furrow, technically known as the *philtrum*, being, no doubt, caused by the downward and lateral tension of the muscles due to the extreme projection of the lower lip. The displacement of the lower lip exposes the lower front teeth, while tending to draw the upper lip more over the upper row of teeth. The ears are to a slight extent conventionally treated. The colouring of the mask is brownish-red, resembling Indian red in tint, the *alæ* of the nose and the ears being painted in a darker tone of the same colour. The hair, eyebrows, and eye-pupils are black, and the teeth are whitened.

This interesting mask was acquired by the late General Pitt Rivers, together with other specimens from Dr. Dally's collection, and is now in the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford.

HENRY BALFOUR.

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