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## “RED HAIR AND OUTLAWRY”

Philip J. Rasch

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EDITOR.

In this JOURNAL for May-June, 1947, Dr. Hans von Hentig presented a most interesting article entitled “Redhead and Outlaw—A Study in Criminal Anthropology.” Dr. von Hentig briefly considered the fact that a number of more or less prominent “bad men” were red headed and arrived at three general conclusions:

1. “The number of red-headed men among the noted outlaws surpassed their rate in the normal population.”
2. A partial explanation is that their lives largely depended on the rapidity with which a Colt could be used and “it seems that red-headedness is often combined with accelerated motor innervation.”
3. The temperament of redheads is that of Jesse James. “‘He is revengeful in nature,’ we are told, ‘always sanguine, impetuous, almost heedless.’”

It appears to the writer that there is at least a “reasonable assumption of doubt” as to the validity of all three of these conclusions. Dr. von Hentig has collected an interesting series of red-headed outlaws and his footnotes show a wide acquaintance with the literature of the “Wild West.” However, the question arises as to whether this series may be a selected one. Further, he seems to be unfamiliar with the book which deals most directly with the question under discussion—George D. Hendricks' *The Bad Man of the West*.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hendricks devotes one complete chapter to analyzing the physical characteristics of noted bad men—their eyes, face, hair, height, weight, etc. In his Appendix he sums up the descriptions of fifty-eight of the best known of these gentry, plus eighteen famous peace officers. So far as color of hair is concerned he arrives at the following findings:

<u>Color of Hair</u>	<u>Bad Men</u>	<u>Peace Officers</u>
Blond .....	15	6
Brunette .....	19	2
Red .....	2	0
Unknown .....	22	10
Totals .....	58	18

<sup>1</sup> George D. Hendricks, *The Bad Man of the West*, The Naylor Company, San Antonio, Texas, 1941.

There are several discrepancies in the data collected by Dr. von Hentig and Mr. Hendricks. For instance Dr. von Hentig quotes Emerson Hough's description of Big (Micajah) Harpe as having "coarse hair of a fiery redness;" Mr. Hendricks also quotes certain passages about the Harpes from Hough, but states flatly that Big Harpe had "black, short, curly, uncombed hair."<sup>2</sup> Dr. von Hentig includes Bob Younger, William Clark Quantrill, Jesse James, Wild Bill Hickok, Micky Free and California Joe among his notorious redheads, although admitting this description of Hickok is disputed by certain authorities. Mr. Hendricks does not include Bob Younger in his Appendix, places Quantrill in his "unknown" group, states Jesse James had "short, brownish-black" hair<sup>3</sup> and lists Hickok as having "long blond silken curls."<sup>4</sup> Hough<sup>5</sup> and Cunningham<sup>6</sup> inform their readers that Hickok's hair was yellow. Raine adds to the confusion by describing it as brown.<sup>7</sup> However, he is generally depicted as a blond and identification of him as a redhead would appear to be contrary to the weight of the evidence. There would seem to be scant reason to classify Free and California Joe as outlaws. Both of them may have been troublesome on occasion, but are remembered as scouts, not as killers or bandits. If we accept the description of Quantrill as a redhead, Hendricks' identified series give the following totals:

<u>Color of Hair</u>	<u>Number</u>
Blond .....	21
Brunette .....	21
Red .....	3
Total .....	45

Thus in percentage the redheads compose slightly under 7 per cent of the total. According to figures recently released by the American Institute of Public Opinion American adults questioned by them described the color of their hair as follows:

<u>Color of Hair</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Brown .....	48 per cent
Gray or White.....	22 per cent
Black .....	14 per cent
Blond .....	8 per cent
Red .....	7 per cent
Bald .....	1 per cent

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 278.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

<sup>5</sup> Emerson Hough, *The Story of the Outlaw*, Grosset & Dunlap, New York, 1907, p. 170.

<sup>6</sup> Eugene Cunningham, *Triggernometry*, The Caxton Printers, Ltd., Caldwell, Idaho, 1945, p. 249.

<sup>7</sup> William MacLeod Raine, *Famous Sheriffs & Western Outlaws*, The New Home Library, New York, 1944, p. 274.

According to these figures the number of red-headed men among the noted outlaws and peace officers is exactly their rate in the normal population.

It is realized there are certain obvious objections to the acceptance of these figures. It can hardly be said that the hair color traits of the total population today must necessarily be identical with those of the frontier population of the period 1780 to 1885, that is from the Harpes to Micky Free. It is possible these percentages have been altered by immigration or other causes since those days. Certainly the figures of the American Institute of Public Opinion include women, while Dr. von Hentig specifically omits them from consideration. However, since there is no evidence to indicate that red coloring in hair is a sex-linked characteristic, this difference in sampling technique is not likely to be a factor of any great importance. To accurately compare the percentage of redheads in the total population with the percentage of redheads among criminals would require that statistics as to the color of the hair be available for each generation during the period under discussion. The writer has been unable to find such data for those earlier days; if Dr. von Hentig has unearthed the required information it would be interesting to see an actual comparison of these percentages by individual generations.

A review of the literature of physical education and psychology fails to reveal any statistical studies proving "that red-headedness is often combined with accelerated motor innervation" or that redheads are "vengeful in nature . . . always sanguine, impetuous, almost heedless." On the contrary this literature is full of quotations similar to the following random selection:

"Neither you nor any one else can find any evidence that red hair indicates a fiery temper . . ."<sup>8</sup>

"Differences in color of hair, of eyes . . . are not, so far as can be determined, correlated with differences in mental abilities or in character."<sup>9</sup>

"So far as is known these features [shape of the ears, color of the eyes or hair, etc.] yield absolutely no reliable positive correlations with characteristics of personality."<sup>10</sup>

"Judgment of personality traits by the glint in a man's eye . . . and the color of his hair are popular notions that are psychologically untrue. None of them can stand up under the truth-seeking of an objective examination."<sup>11</sup>

If Dr. von Hentig is familiar with statistical studies which do confirm a positive correlation between red hair and accelerated

<sup>8</sup> Albert Edward Wiggam, *Sorroy But You're Wrong About It*, The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, 1930, p. 93.

<sup>9</sup> Knight Dunlap, *Elements of Psychology*, The C. V. Mosby Co., St. Louis, 1936, p. 435.

<sup>10</sup> Gordon W. Allport, *Personality, A Psychological Interpretation*, Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1937, p. 70.

<sup>11</sup> A. P. Sperlring, *Psychology for the Millions*, Frederick Fell, Inc., New York, 1946, p. 196.

motor innervation and/or certain personality characteristics, the writer for one would be most interested in seeing them.

It is certainly true that red hair is associated with a quick temper in the popular mind and it would be an entertaining piece of research to locate the basis for this belief. In *Your Hair* Dr. Goodman mentions:

"The dislike for red hair in England was supposed to have originated from the aversion to the red-haired Danish invaders of its shores in ancient times. The man with a red beard was held in contempt and regarded as vile with a cruel disposition."<sup>12</sup>

Another suggestion sometimes made is that this opinion of red-heads is connected with the tradition that Judas Iscariot was a redhead.

As a matter of fact it could be argued much more convincingly that a disproportionately high percentage of our bad men were blonds with blue eyes. It will be noted that Hendricks' combined series shows nearly 50 per cent of his gun slingers were blond, whereas the American Institute of Public Opinion finds only 8 per cent of our population falls into that class. So far as the color of eyes are concerned, his combined figures are as follows:

<u>Color of Eyes</u>	<u>Number</u>
Blue .....	51
Black .....	11
Unknown .....	14
Total .....	76

Blue eyes thus compose slightly over 67 per cent of the total. Now compare this with the findings of the American Institute of Public Opinion as to the eye color of our present population:

<u>Color of Eyes</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Brown .....	40 per cent
Blue .....	33 per cent
Grey, Green, Hazel or Black.....	27 per cent

Various miscellaneous bits of evidence tend to corroborate Hendricks' data. For instance, an inmate of San Quentin prison wrote that 95 per cent of the men incarcerated there for armed robbery were blue-eyed. E. V. Durling, a columnist for the Hearst newspapers, once stated that men with brown eyes "do not usually make good . . . rifle shots. In the Army a brown-eyed man rarely wins a marksmanship medal." (A letter to him asking for his authority for these statements has been unanswered.)

Anatomically the pigment in the eyes is brown. If there is only a small amount of this coloring present, the iris appears

<sup>12</sup> Herman Goodman, *Your Hair*, Haleyon House, Garden City, New York, 1943, p. 252.

blue, more pigment turns it grey, still more brown, and finally heavy pigmentation results in eyes described as black. In blue eyes the pigment in the iris is in the rear surface and light is reflected from the pigment cells through the translucent tissue of the cornea and sclerotic coverings of the eyeball. In grey, hazel or brown eyes the pigment is more thickly distributed through the front of the iris. Perhaps some anatomist among the readers of this *Journal* can tell us whether the difference in light absorption in the anterior strata actually affects keenness of vision and thus ability in marksmanship. Perhaps lack of pigment in the eyes tends to be linked with lack of pigment between the fibers of the cortex of the hair so that men with light colored eyes usually have light colored hair. If blue-eyed men actually do see better, we might expect that blue-eyed blonds would form a high percentage of the gun fighters. But how then are we to account for the high percentage of black eyes in Hendricks' figures? And how are we to account for the fact that the study by Paterson and Ludgate<sup>13</sup> indicates there are no significant differences in character between blonds and brunettes?

It is the writer's opinion that claims of a preponderance of redheads or blonds among the bad men rest largely on incomplete statistical evidence. Hendricks, for example, omits from his Appendix such worthies as Elfego Baca, Joaquin Murietta, Tiburcio Vasquez, and, most surprising of all, Sostenes l'Archeveque, who is said to have killed twenty-three Anglos alone. Presumably none of these were red-haired, blond or blue-eyed. He describes such men as Doc Holliday and Buckskin Frank Leslie as having grey eyes, yet this classification does not appear in his tabulated figures. Much further work remains to be done on this question and articles such as the one by Dr. von Hentig at least stimulate the discussion.

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<sup>13</sup> Paterson, D. G., and Ludgate, K. E., "Blond and Brunette Traits: A Quantitative Study," *Journal of Personality Research*, 1922, 1, 122-127.