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Hairy primitives or relic submen in South America

An account is given of previously published but hitherto disregarded accounts of a tribe of what appear to be Submen in the Mattos Grosso of Brazil, by Col. P.H. Fawcett. The possibility of such creatures existing in this area is discussed, and some reasons for supposing that they might do so are given. Reference is made to reports of similar Hominids in other parts of the Americas.

Reports of the continued existence of extreme primitives, usually covered in a profuse growth of furry hair ; submen of both pigmy and average man-size ; and possibly of some sub-hominoid (as opposed to truly sub-hominid) types have for some time been received from several widely separated points in South America. They are not, however, as numerous as those emanating from North America or Asia, and very few are detailed or specific. Nevertheless, neither the archives of local newspapers nor even the more serious popular periodicals, scientific journals, or books published in the South American countries have as yet been properly perused for data relative to this subject. Not a little mention of the matter has also been made by foreigners who have travelled in and written about that continent but it appears that this has likewise been mostly ignored.

The major sources of these reports geographically speaking are, the eastern slopes of the Colombian-Ecuadorean north Andean Massif ; the Guiana Massif ; the upper reaches of the Peruvian-Bolivian-Chilean Andes ; certain of the southern Chilean Islands ; and the area of the Matto Grosso. In the first, in addition to a rumoured man-sized type, (4) there is a hairy pigmy called locally the *Shiru* (2) ; in the second area there is a tradition of a larger, furred hominid called the *Didi* (4) ; from the third, have come certain affidavits signed at the request of the police, asserting encounters with a very large hairy hominoid of bestial appearance that would seem to compare very favourably with

descriptions of the giant Sasquatches of Canada; reports from the fourth area stem from a remarkable 17th century publication (12), but have recently been augmented from other sources. (This area will be reported on at another time.) The fifth and last major area is far the most pregnant of reports both in time and space, and it is at this area that we will herewith direct our attention.

No simple definition of the area is possible since its limits are ill-defined. However, if one traces the thousand foot (or the 300 meter) contour from just south of the mouth of the Amazon to the southwest, parallel to the valley of the Madeira, thence southeast along the Brazilian border to the 20th parallel, then east to the valley of the Parana, and finally north via Goyaz to the Maranhao-Tocantins Valley and down to the north Brazilian coastal lowlands, one will have roughly encircled the territory from which a group of related reports have emanated. This great block is mostly rather dry woodland but it contains in the northern parts extensive tall equatorial closed-canopy forest covering the lower altitudes, and true, dry scrublands or Caatinga at higher altitudes. Most of it lies in the State of Matto Grosso, and is still known officially as well as popularly as the *Tierra Incognita* (13). Land clearance has been steadily encroaching from the southwest, south, southeast, and east for a century but neither it nor even exploration has yet really touched the main body of the area.

Since time immemorial, as it now transpires, the better organized Amerindian peoples who lived around this territory took for granted the existence therein of extremely primitive peoples of various kinds, which they appear to have regarded as being closer to what we would term "animals" than to themselves. It must not be overlooked however, that, in this respect the South American Amerinds do not — or, at least originally did not — subscribe to our concepts of humanity, bestiality, or deity; in fact, it is clear that in some cases at least all three blended into one systematic plan along with whole hosts of other entities that we might call "spirits" and so forth. Thus, when asked what some creature, to which they had assigned a particular name, might be, they might just as readily give an answer that meant, to them, people so low in the scheme of things in

their estimation as to be (again, to them) mere animals, as they might say that they were animals that walked on the ground on their two hind legs. Then again, there is definite evidence that in the area of which we speak, the more advanced (though still unsullied by contact with outsiders) tribesmen did not draw a line between what we call man and animal at *any* point, such as at the use of a comprehensible language, or of tools, nor even the knowledge of fire.

Since the arrival of the Portuguese, reports of bestial and dangerous sub-humans (some, forms of terrifying and seemingly sub-hominoid aspect) have filtered out of the hinterland in a more or less steady stream. Most of these were singularly un-specific having passed through the mouths of successive rings of detribalized, and semicivilized natives, halfbreeds, white settlers of lower education, and finally through established country folk before reaching the fully civilized great cities. Along the line, the description of the creatures is usually lost while the accounts of their actions become enhanced and ever more exaggerated. The end product is a mere story with a name attached to it, like that of the *Mapinguary* (4). Nevertheless, these stories display a rather remarkable singularity while they may be divided rather clearly on regional grounds of their origin into several quite distinct and readily recognizable types. One of the better known and most out-standing is of creatures that are invariably alleged to tear the tongues out of cattle after they have killed them (op. cit.).

This writer had supposed until recently that these extreme primitives or submen had not been directly reported upon either by educated Brazilians or visiting foreigners. This, however, turns out not to be the case at all. Due possibly to an increased interest in the whole matter of the possibility of living submen still being found, both in the popular press and through the medium of such books as (4) cited above, quite a number of firsthand accounts are now coming to us, while others are ever more frequently being pointed out in published works. These latter have been overlooked but among them are some very specific and categoric statements. By far the most outstanding so far located are some made by none other than Colonel P.H. Fawcett, made world famous by his dramatic and still unexplained disap-

pearance with his eldest son in this area. Colonel Fawcett's diaries were preserved up to this last fatal expedition, and were published by his son, Brian Fawcett, under the title "*Lost Trails, Lost Cities*" (3) from which edition, the following extracts are taken.

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Colonel Fawcett made an expedition in company of two Englishmen named Manley and Costin, from Bolivia into southwestern Matto Grosso, in the year 1914. They reached the Guapore River, a tributary of the Madeira, at about 14°S. 60°W. and then proceeded north and then east into the Cordilheira dos Parecis. After some weeks they stumbled upon an Amerindian people calling themselves the Maxubis, who were sun worshippers and showed many signs of having been descended from a once much more highly cultured people for they had names for all the visible planets. After staying with them for some time the party proceeded for some days northeast into completely uninhabited and undisturbed forest. On the fifth day, they hit a trail. Col. Fawcett then writes :

"As we stood looking from right to left, trying to decide which direction was the more promising, two savages appeared about a hundred yards to the south, moving at a trot and talking rapidly. On catching sight of us they stopped dead and hurriedly fixed arrows to their bows, while I shouted to them in the Maxubi tongue. We could not see them clearly for the shadows dappling their bodies, but it seemed to me they were large, hairy men, with exceptionally long arms, and with foreheads sloping back from pronounced eye ridges, men of a very primitive kind, in fact, and stark naked. Suddenly they turned and made off into the undergrowth, and we, knowing it was useless to follow, started up the north leg of the trail.

"It was not long before sundown, when, dim and muffled through the trees, came the unmistakable sound of a horn. We halted and listened intently. Again we heard the horn call, answered from other directions till several horns were braying at once. In the subdued light of evening, beneath the high vault of branches in this forest untrodden by civilized man, the sound was as eerie as the opening notes of some fantastic

opera. We knew it was made by the savages, and that those savages were now on our trail. Soon we could hear shouts and jabbering to the accompaniment of the rough horn calls — a barbarous, merciless din, in marked contrast to the stealth of the ordinary savage. Darkness, still distant above the treetops, was settling rapidly down here in the depths of the wood, so we looked about us for a camping site which offered some measure of safety from attack, and finally took refuge in a tacuara thicket. Here the naked savages would not dare to follow on account of the wicked, inch-long thorns. As we slung our hammocks inside the natural stockade we could hear the savages jabbering excitedly all around, but not daring to enter. Then, as the last light went, they left us, and we heard no more of them.

“Next morning there were no savages in our vicinity, and we met with none when, after following another well-defined trail, we came to a clearing where there was a plantation of mandioca and papaws. Brilliantly coloured toucans croaked in the palms as they picked at the fruit, and as no danger threatened we helped ourselves freely. We camped here, and at dusk held a concert in our hammocks, Costin with a harmonica, Manley with a comb, and myself with a flageolet. Perhaps it was foolish of us to advertise our presence in this way; but we were not molested, and no savage appeared.

“In the morning we went on, and within a quarter of a mile came to a sort of palm-leaf sentry-box then another. Then all of a sudden we reached open forest. The undergrowth fell away, disclosing between the tree boles a village of primitive shelters, where squatted some of the most villainous savages I have ever seen. Some were engaged in making arrows, others just idled — great apelike brutes who looked as if they had scarcely evolved beyond the level of beasts.

“I whistled, and an enormous creature, hairy as a dog, leapt to his feet in the nearest shelter, fitted an arrow to his bow in a flash, and came up dancing from one leg to the other till he was only four yards away. Emitting grunts that sounded like “Eugh! Eugh! Eugh!” he remained there dancing, and suddenly the whole forest around us was alive with these hideous ape-men, all grunting “Eugh! Eugh! Eugh!” and dancing from leg to leg in the same way as they strung arrows to their

bows. It looked like a very delicate situation for us, and I wondered if it was the end. I made friendly overtures in Maxubi, but they paid no attention. It was as though human speech were beyond their powers of comprehension.

"The creature in front of me ceased his dance, stood for a moment perfectly still, and then drew his bowstring back till it was level with his ear, at the same time raising the barbed point of the six-foot arrow to the height of my chest. I looked straight into the pig-like eyes half hidden under the overhanging brows, and knew that he was not going to loose that arrow-yet. As deliberately as he had raised it, he now lowered the bow, and commenced once more the slow dance, and the "Eugh! Eugh! Eugh!"

"A second time he raised the arrow at me and drew the bow back, and again I knew he would not shoot. It was just as the Maxubis told me it would be. Again he lowered the bow and continued his dance. Then for the third time he halted and began to bring up the arrow's point. I knew he meant business this time, and drew out a Mauser pistol I had on my hip. It was a big, clumsy thing, of a calibre unsuitable to forest use, but I had brought it because by clipping the wooden holster to the pistol-butt it became a carbine, and was lighter to carry than a true rifle. It used .38 black powder shells which made a din out of all proportion to their size. I never raised it; I just pulled the trigger and banged it off into the ground at the ape-man's feet.

"The effect was instantaneous. A look of complete amazement came into the hideous face, and the little eyes opened wide. He dropped his bow and arrow and sprang away as quickly as a cat to vanish behind a tree. Then the arrows began to fly. We shot off a few rounds into the branches, hoping the noise would scare the savages into a more receptive frame of mind, but they seemed in no way disposed to accept us, and before anyone was hurt we gave it up as hopeless and retreated down the trail till the camp was out of sight. We were not followed, but the clamour in the village continued for a long time as we struck off northwards, and we fancied we still heard the "Eugh! Eugh! Eugh!" of the enraged braves."

These creatures were apparently called *Maricoxis* by the

Maxubis. They dwelt to their northeast. Due east there were said to be another group of short, black people, covered with hair, who were truly cannibalistic and hunted humans for food, cooking the bodies over a fire on a bamboo spit and tearing off the meat. These the Maxubis regarded as merely loathesome and lowly people. On a later trip, Colonel Fawcett was told of an "ape-people" who lived in holes in the ground, were also covered with dark hair, and were nocturnal so that they were known in surrounding areas as the *Morcegos* or Bat-People. These types are called *Cabelludos* or "Hairy People" by the Spanish-speaking, and *Tatus* or armadillos by several Amerindian groups because they live in holes like those animals. Fawcett also records forest Amerinds as telling him that the *Morcegos* have an incredibly well-developed sense of smell which prompts even these acute hunters to suggest that they have some "sixth sense".

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The full significance of these passages, and the information they contain, may not at first be apparent. So "incredible" do they appear when read out of context, one forgets that, read *in context* by one not especially interested in the niceties of physical anthropology or ethnology, and who has never heard of the possibility of submen (or "Apemen" as they used to be called) existing, they may hardly be noticed at all. The average reader of travelogues, and even the more erudite and the real aficionados among them, may read and pass over the most outrageous statements without comment. The real degree of analytical critique of the average well-educated person is enormously lower in specialities other than his own than is customarily believed. Even highly trained scientists may fail to note the significance of statements made in fields other than their own that are either, on the one hand, impossible or, on the other, of quite priceless worth.

There is, at the same time, at least in part, the legitimate attitude of the professional in the field concerned. This is naturally outright scepticism, amounting to a complete denial of the validity of the statement concerned. There is no published commentary on the passages from Fawcett's diaries reproduced above, that this writer has been able to find, by either an-

thropologists or anybody else. This can imply only one of two things. Either no anthropologist or other person with training in other fields concerned ever read said passages or, if they did, they either passed them over or decided then and there that they were so outrageous that they could only be straight fabrication. The non-specialists, such as reviewers of the book, newsmen, science-writers, and others, either missed the material entirely, failed to comprehend its significance, were unable to assess it, did not want to "stick their necks out", or took the view that it was mendacious and should therefore not be mentioned. None of these attitudes by either specialist or non-specialists is satisfactory. A proper assessment is called for.

Let us start with the author of those diaries — Colonel P. H. Fawcett. This man was no upstart. After formal education in England, he joined the Army, albeit rather reluctantly but, by the exercise of initiative and rectitude he was all too soon spotted by persons in authority as a young man of parts. On the recommendation of the Royal Geographical Society he was chosen to prosecute boundary surveys for South American Governments — not an endeavour that would be asked of or bestowed upon a nincompoop. These works he performed over a number of years on behalf of those governments and at their expense — and this point cannot be too strongly stressed, for this was almost an unique accomplishment for a foreigner, and especially an Anglo-Saxon — with much skill and with results that satisfied the most temperamental of those governments. Further, Fawcett was not passed over in his home land. He was a recipient of a Gold Medal from the Society who had backed his selection, and he was much respected as an explorer and a person, as well as a consummate technician. Were those who bestowed upon this man these honours — both individuals and corporate bodies — all fools? Were they all misled as to the character, and sincerity, and knowledge of this man? Did they back him in his endeavours in South America again and again, knowing or feeling that he was nothing but a mystic? Frankly, that notion is preposterous. But, what is the alternative?

Percy Harrison Fawcett was a solid citizen, a serious student of that which he did not know, and an accomplished master of that which he did. In no circumstances could he be called

a romancer and he never was so accused even by those who took the dimmest view of certain of his beliefs and who, as one scholar put it, considered that in one regard he was "chasing a moon-beam". In editing his father's diaries, Brian Fawcett interjects a wealth of further information about his father and gives us many sidelights on his personality. His central theme is that, while his father held certain views on certain subjects (outside his own specialities) which others in those fields considered quite unacceptable, he never once claimed to have made a discovery that directly supported his theories. Yet, he spent a lifetime collecting secondhand statements of facts that appeared to him to so support his beliefs. Had he been even one iota a charlatan, there was nothing to prevent him claiming many of the latter for himself, and presenting them as evidence of his contentions as so many others have done.

Colonel Fawcett was a professional surveyor, an explorer, and basically a geographer. He was not an ethnologist, anthropologist, or archaeologist but it was with these disciplines that he clashed, and it was towards the protagonists of the first that he most often expressed himself as feeling most bitter. In his extensive travels through hitherto unexplored territories he discovered many groups of people for the first time, lived with them, often acquired not a little of their language, recorded what of their customs he could, and attempted some classification of their origins. Much of all of this conflicted with established beliefs among ethnologists, and Fawcett's historical theories were at complete variance with what was then, and still is, accepted. Yet, while those theories were strongly criticized, the veracity of the facts he collected were never questioned. It was his assessment of them that was considered invalid.

It can not be too strongly stressed that Fawcett was not particularly interested in lower cultures or the conduct of real primitives. Absolutely to the contrary, the whole theme and basis of his search was for evidence of *higher* cultures in South America, and it was on this score that he was, as quoted above, believed to be pursuing a phantom. However, Fawcett never went beyond speculation and he frankly admits that, apart from the established facts of upper Andean archaeology relative to such great stone works as Machapicchu and Tiahuanaco, all he

had to offer in support of his belief that there had once been a great civilization on upland Brazil, were some old documents of uncertain veracity, a mass of legends, and some indications of past glories noticeable in the tribal life of certain indigenes. If he had once said that he had stumbled upon one of the great lost cities that he sought and had then failed to bring any proof of his discovery, his word could well have been doubted. But, he never did. His encounter, quoted above, is moreover in a way exactly contrary to the main object of his travels at that time. He was searching for an unknown *civilization* of higher rank, *not* for sub-humans.

This puts his account of the hairy *maricoxis* in a entirely different light, quite apart from the fact that his word was never doubted, that he had two reliable witnesses, and that what he saw was both before and afterwards confirmed by others, in that reports relayed to him by several people described exactly what he had seen without the relaters knowing anything of what he *did* see. We are therefore compelled to accept this report in toto ; and this means simply that, in the year 1914, there were living to the northeast of the Parecis Range in the Matto Grosso, what were apparently tribal groups of fully-haired hominids of grossly primitive aspect, and in no possible way descended from or related to the Amerindian aborigines of the Americas.

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This presents anthropologists with a problem that, without a considerable knowledge of the worldwide investigation of what has come to be called for simplicity's sake that of "ABSMS" (a term derived from the name "abominable snowman" given to an alledged form or forms of submen or subhominids in the Himalayas) (10), is virtually unsurmountable. However, if the matter of ABSMS *is* taken into consideration, the seeming impossibilities of the facts related by Fawcett may be readily dispelled, though a very drastic revision of certain large areas of currently accepted theory of the past history of the hominids is thereby called for.

It was the original belief of anthropologists that the Americas, while the home of some primitive Primates such as Tar-

sioids and obviously either the place of origin or the only retreat of the so-called American Monkeys (or *Platyrrhini*) and Marmosets, was never invaded by any higher forms of Primates (the True Monkeys and the Apes) until the arrival over the Bering Strait of the Eskimos and the Amerinds, and this at a very late post-glacial date to boot. The discovery of Folsom Man led to the rather reluctant acceptance of the fact that what were euphemistically called "Iceage Indians" were spread over North America during the last glacial advance. With the refinement of radiocarbon and other dating methods, however, evidence of the presence of human hunters prior to such as Folsom Man both in North and Central America has had to be pushed back in time very considerably, putting them in the middle and perhaps even in the first interglacial period. Evidence from South America is not as yet by any means so full or concrete but cultures of most extreme antiquity are now alleged there; and right the way down to the southern tip of the continent.

Nevertheless, there is still not an iota of evidence, in the fossil or any other state, of a single higher primate on the one hand, or subman (such as a Neanderthaler) or subhominid (such as an Australopithecine or a Sinjanthropine) on the other, ever having reached or lived in the New World. Further, although concrete evidence of toolmaking man has been pushed back a long way, the earliest manifestations of this in the Americas is still a long way short of the terminal dates given for the existence of subhominids and even submen in the Old World. What is more, there is no reason to suppose that the earliest "men" to reach the Americas were other than Modern Man or that any of them arrived by any route other than the Bering Strait, and this alone would at first appear to exclude the possibility of any more primitive forms ever having done so.

This belief long ago became an axiom; but is it valid?

There is now considerable reason to suppose that it is not; while, it is the very fact that there *was* only this one entrance passage (the Bering Strait) from the Old World to the New, which makes it possible, if not probable, that at least Submen if not also some Subhominids did so enter the Americas long before the arrival of the first Modern Man on the scene. At the same time, it would equally well explain why the True Mon-

keys and the Apes did not do so for they are tropical and warm temperate forms.

Leaving the possibility of Subhominids entering the New World aside for discussion at another time, let us concentrate upon those Submen which may be equated with the true Neanderthalers of Eurasia and other hominids of equivalent development and similar generic features — related forms, such as Rhodesian and Solo Submen. The true Neanderthalers were actually considerably advanced culturally, making fine instruments of stone and undoubtedly having the bow, knowledge of fire, and languages of human level. Moreover, they were spread from extreme western Europe to farthest eastern Asia, and they lived immediately south of and adjacent to the extreme cold of the north during the second half of the recent southward ice-advances. In fact, they were essentially a subarctic life-form. That they may have been clothed in furry hair seems not to have been much considered but, despite certain modern assertions that hairiness does not necessarily imply any special protection from cold, the notion does not exactly conflict with what is seen among other mammals such as the woolly mammoths and rhinoceroses.

If, therefore, early Modern Man could cross the Bering Strait at a very early date, and the Eskimos could do so, there is no argument that may be erected against the possibility that a subarctic race of Subman could not also have done so at a still earlier date. Further, even if the strait was wider then than now, and Neanderthalers did not have primitive boats or rafts, they could quite well have crossed over the ice in winter. There is also another consideration.

Until the discoveries of Dart (2) and Broom in South Africa, and Leakey (5) in East Africa, there was current a strange and illogical impression that subhominids were completely bestial and had not developed tools or weapons of any kind. Although very fine tools had been found in association with and were referred to Neanderthalers almost since the time of their discovery, the idea that some of the pre-Amerindian implements dug up in the Americas might have been fashioned by such creatures simply was not mooted. If anything as primitive as an Australopithecine could make his bone tools and the Zinjanthropines theirs of stone, there can likewise be no argument against some of the

very crude artefacts discovered in lower strata in the Americas having been made at least by Submen.

Once in North America, there was plenty of time for submen to expand widely before the arrival of the first Modern Man, though we must bear in mind that early Man was probably contemporary with many Submen, while the latter appear to have lingered on until today all over the uplands of eastern Eurasia (vide: Reports of the Special Commission of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. (9)). Despite the fact that the Neanderthals were subarctic creatures, they seem to have been just as adaptable as Modern Man, and they were probably a lot "tougher", so that migration south via the uplands of Central America to the Andes and thence down to the temperate regions of southern South America, would not be a hardship or in any way impossible. Further, if Submen did reach the New World, and if the reports of ABSMs from these continents, and especially from North America, are correct (10) it would seem that they expanded in other directions also, and into both colder and warmer environments than those to which they were initially accustomed. As I shall endeavour to make clear in subsequent communications, reports of fully haired hominids of subhuman appearance have been made from all across northern Canada to Labrador, and even to the Canadian Islands and Greenland (11) and (9), and also all down the western mountains from Alaska (1) to Idaho and northern California. Also, there remain traditions of them throughout the southwestern United States; and they are again alleged still to exist in the Sierra Madre Occidental of Mexico, in Chiapas, and in Guatemala. Then, as we pointed out at the outset, they are scattered all over South America, where they have in some cases apparently been driven down into comparatively low and very hot and humid forest regions though always, be it noted, in mountainous territory.

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In view of these facts, if facts they be, Colonel Fawcett's report and his description of the creatures he encountered may, and should, be regarded in quite another light. From the impossible, it becomes at least possible, and, I would contend, in view of its author's reputation for extreme and almost pedantic

veracity and devotion to detail, it must be elevated to the realm of the highest probability. Moreover, there are certain of the details given by Fawcett that may very materially strengthen this contention.

First, his description of the head of these *Maricoxis* is most specific, and is not to be matched with any description of any normal Amerind. The reference to the small, round eyes, close together and seeming to look "straightforward" as those of apes appear to do, also coincides exactly with many descriptions given by those who, all over the world, say that they have met ABSMs face to face and at extreme close range; and do not forget that Fawcett was only a few feet from one of these creatures. The use of bows and arrows does not, as we have seen, conflict with "possibility": nor does it with some reports of ABSMs from Asia. But, most significant of all is undoubtedly the curious (and at first reading, almost laughable) matter of their chanting.

Colonel Fawcett describes or transliterates the sound made by these *Maricoxis* as "Eugh! Eugh! Eugh!" — namely, as I appraise it, "OOgh, OOgh, OOgh" with the initial "EU" sound as in the French "UE" in *rue*. If this be so, it exactly describes sounds alledged to have been made by a form of ABSM now commonly known as the Sasquatch of Canada, as given by a Mr. Albert Ostman (7) in his extraordinary account of having been held captive by such creatures for a week. Mr. Ostman is of Swedish origin and has a distinct accent. He gave it as "Ugh-Ugh-Ugh" but in an interview reproduced the sound again with the initial french *ue*.

The only final conclusion we can therefore draw is, I contend, an acceptance of the fact that there were neanderthaloid-type Submen living in the Matto Grosso in 1914. There is no reason to suppose that they are not still living there.

SUMMARY

This paper describes an apparently tribal group of what appeared to be neanderthaloid Submen in the western Matto Grosso, as originally reported by Colonel P.H. Fawcett in his

diaries, published by his son, Brian Fawcett in 1953. The background of similar reports from other parts of both North and South America are discussed. Colonel Fawcett's standing as a geographer and explorer is also assessed, and the validity of this report from his diaries appraised. The possibility of submen (of neanderthaloid status) and subhominoids having entered the Western Hemisphere via the Bering Strait is considered, with reference to the cultures of excessive primitives in the Old World, and crude artefacts unearthed in the New. It is concluded that the description given by Colonel Fawcett is an accurate and exact statement of fact; and that, therefore, fully-haired Hominids, lacking acceptable speech but using bows, existed to the northeast of the Percis Ranges in the Matto Grosso of Brazil in the year 1914.

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