

## RAYMOND FOUNDATION PRESENTS PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

There remain nine more free motion picture programs for children to be presented at the Museum in the annual spring series of the James Nelson and Anna Louise Raymond Foundation for Public School and Children's Lectures. These will be given on Saturday mornings during March and April. Following is the schedule of dates, and the titles of the films to be shown on each:

**March 4**—A Beaver and His Indian Friend; The Declaration of Independence

**March 11**—Fathoms Deep; Queen of the Waves; Cotton—From Seed to Cloth

**March 18**—The Coyote Family; From Tree to Newspaper

**March 25**—Porcupines, Bears and Badgers; Buried Sunshine

**April 1**—The Tortoise and His Cousins; The Frontier Woman

**April 8**—The Rhino Meets an Automobile; A Dyak Wedding; A Trip Through Yellowstone Park

**April 15**—The Realm of the Honeybee; Among the Elephant Seals

**April 22**—A Trip to Penguin-land; Peter Stuyvesant

**April 29**—From Egg to Butterfly; Flower Friends of Brook and Roadside; Wild Wings

Each program is given twice, at 10 A.M. and at 11, in the James Simpson Theatre of the Museum. Children from all parts of Chicago and suburbs are invited to attend. No tickets are required for admission.

## Herpetologist Schmidt Returns

Karl P. Schmidt, Assistant Curator of Reptiles, has returned to Field Museum after six months of research at European museums, carried on under a grant from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation of New York. Studies long in hand on the Central American reptilian fauna were concluded by examination of type specimens in these museums. These studies are a part of the program of investigation of the reptiles and amphibians of Central America begun in 1923 with Field Museum's expedition to British Honduras and Honduras.

## REMARKABLE AMAZON WOODS RECEIVED AT MUSEUM

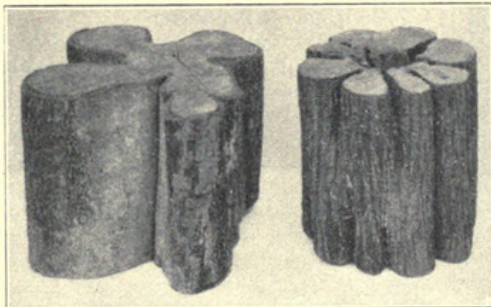
BY B. E. DAHLGREN  
Acting Curator, Department of Botany

At times an aromatic haze spreads through the offices and workshops of the Museum, and is perceptible even in the exhibition halls. Traced to its source it will be found to emanate from the quarters of the Department of Botany, where it is apt to take the form of a blue smoke, becoming denser as one approaches the Department's carpenter shop, where it originates.

This phenomenon, which recurs periodically, marks the arrival in the Museum of a new sending of Amazonian woods from the Ford Motor Company's concession on the Tapajos River in Brazil. Many of these woods are so hard that it is difficult to cut them into hand specimens with the power-driven band saw. Others are hard and at the same time resinous or gummy. On cutting them, even with the greatest care,

the rapidly running band saw becomes heated and scorches the gum or volatilizes the resin contained in the wood. The result is a dense fog, sometimes veritable clouds of smoke, which may be pungent almost to suffocation or, almost as often, pleasantly aromatic, spreading like incense through the building. Certain of the woods are, in fact, well-known sources of incense gums.

Their resistance to cutting instruments is not always due solely to density of structure. Some are known to contain fine particles of silica, capable of dulling the best of saws in a few moments. Such woods are immune to insect attacks and even resistant to the rasping action of the tongue of the toredo or shipworm. Some have their bundles of woody fibers twisted and interlaced so effectively that, though they may be sawed, they can scarcely be split with an ax. Others are remarkable for their color which may become more intense, or may disappear, on exposure to light. Many are interesting for their grain—all for their minute structure, and the size and disposition of their



Sections of Odd Tree Trunks

Two Amazonian woods of strange contour. In the one on the left the ace of clubs outline indicates a buttressed base. In the other the wood forms bundles enveloped by bark as in some lianas. Both are of the Indian hemp family.

vessels, which distinguish one genus of trees from another.

By no means all of these tropical woods are either heavy or difficult to work. Some are of moderate weight and may be cut and shaped with facility. Many take a beautiful finish. A considerable part of them must be classed as soft woods although there are no conifers among them. A few, like the well-known balsa, are almost as light as pith.

## MAGIC RITUAL PLAYS PART IN AFRICAN INDUSTRY

BY W. D. HAMBLBY  
Assistant Curator of African Ethnology

In aboriginal negro society, apprenticeship, initiation as a skilled craftsman, and the production of satisfactory work in native handicrafts and industry, are deeply involved in ritual and magic. Among the objects acquired in Angola by the Frederick H. Rawson-Field Museum Expedition to West Africa (1929) is a set of blacksmith's tools, which are so simple in structure and so obvious in their use, that the difficulty experienced in obtaining them would hardly be suspected.

On arriving among the Ovimbundu of Angola I was anxious to find to what extent ritual in handicraft survived. No objection was made by the tribesmen to an inspection of their tools and processes, or to making photographs of these; but no monetary offer could persuade a blacksmith to part with his tools, despite the fact that he had the material and skill for making others. The money offered was sufficient to reim-

burse a man not only for the tools themselves, but for loss of time suffered during the manufacture of new implements. Yet the blacksmiths remained obdurate.

The tool to which most importance was attached is the large hammer, now shown in Hall D, which the blacksmith wields at his anvil. This was finally obtained at Elende, Angola, after much difficulty in overcoming the owner's reluctance to part with it.

A boy who wishes to become a blacksmith must serve an apprenticeship of two years during which he receives no pay—only instruction by the master blacksmith. At the end of this time the youth asks for an examination which the master conducts in a practical way by asking his pupil to make the blade of a hoe, an ax head, or some other article in demand.

When this task is successfully performed, a day is arranged for formal initiation of the novice, who must stand on the small anvil during the entire ceremony. Meanwhile the master has made for his pupil a complete set of tools, and in his turn the novice promises not to part with these under penalty of dire misfortune. In earlier days death was the penalty of a man who disposed of the large hammer.

While the large hammer is hot, and at the moment of its completion, a dog is killed with it. About the same time a goat and four chickens are killed. All the newly presented tools are placed close together so that they may be conveniently sprinkled with blood from the sacrificed animals. The master blacksmith turns to his pupil, standing on the anvil, and says, "You may speak and tell us what name you want." The boy may say, "I am Ndumbu," whereupon the spectators clap hands and make a trilling with their fingers in their mouths. Then, in the words of my interpreter, "the boy steps from the anvil; he is a blacksmith; he must work hard, and people must pay him; he used to work hard, but his master took the money."

I noticed that, although clay for making pottery was easily obtainable at a pit near the village, women made an unnecessary journey to secure clay. The reason for this was the consecration of a particular spot by the medicine-man, who killed a chicken and allowed its blood to drop on the clay. In some mysterious manner this ritual act was supposed to sanctify the clay. Similarly a rock must be consecrated as a surface for pounding grain. Likewise, ritual is important in connection with the hunter's occupation.

A hunter serves an apprenticeship when young, and his formal initiation is similar to that of a young blacksmith. His bow and arrows are sprinkled with blood of sacrificed animals, and presented to him by his trainer. A hunter is expected to use certain pottery vessels for cooking. These utensils are for his exclusive use. The bows and arrows of dead hunters are kept in a hut which is entered only by a professional adult hunter who lives near-by. The night before the hunt he pours over the weapons of his predecessors a libation of beer mingled with the blood of a sacrificed fowl.

During life a hunter mounts the skulls of slain animals on poles near his dwelling. At death he is the only person who is buried in a stone tomb, which is situated on the top of a rocky hill.

Fossil scales of the earliest known fishes, which lived about 590,000,000 years ago, are included among the exhibits in Ernest R. Graham Hall.



Dahlgren, B. E. 1933. "Remarkable Amazon Woods Received By Musuem." *Field Museum news* 4(3), 3-3.

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