

RARE PLANT IS FOUND AT JOLIET, ILLINOIS

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Several of the rarest plants of the world grow in the Chicago region. Because of their limited and curious distribution they are of great interest to botanists.

In June the writer, with Dr. Charles Baehni of the Botanic Garden of Geneva, Switzerland, through the courtesy of Mr. H. Forrer, visited Joliet to see one of these rare plants, whose Latin name is *Actinea herbacea*. A member of the sunflower family, it is a low tufted perennial, with a dense cluster of silky, silvery leaves, from which rise short stems, each with a single golden-yellow flower head. It is a handsome and decorative plant, well worthy of cultivation, although it is rather improbable that it would thrive in an ordinary garden.

The party was successful in finding the plant still in blossom, although most of the clumps had passed the flowering stage. It is rather plentiful on the low glacial moraines near Joliet, growing among rocks where there is little soil.

This rare plant has been found in but one other locality, near Sandusky, Ohio, where it is called "lakeside daisy." Its interest lies in the fact that the other *Actineas*, which are rather numerous, all grow on the prairies of the Great Plains, on the hills and plains of the Rocky Mountains and the Great Basin, or along the western coast of South America. How this isolated one happens to inhabit the Mississippi Valley is one of the mysteries of plant distribution.

IMPORTANT BIRD COLLECTION ACQUIRED BY MUSEUM

A significant addition to Field Museum's study collection of birds has recently been made through the acquisition of part of the Henry K. Coale Collection. This addition to the Museum's already notable research material consists of approximately 2,500 specimens representing more than 1,000 species. It is especially rich in Old World birds, and includes about 200 species from Madagascar, Asia and Australia which hitherto were unrepresented in the collections of this institution.

The late Henry Kelso Coale of Highland Park, Illinois, assembled three important collections during more than fifty years. The first was acquired by the British Museum in 1880. The second came to Field Museum early in 1900. The last, a truly representative world-wide collection, was built up by purchase and exchange of Illinois specimens for exotic birds with collectors in foreign countries.

At his death in 1926, Mr. Coale's collection numbered about 11,000 specimens. Half of them were American birds and have been dispersed to many collections throughout the country. The remainder has been divided by Field Museum and the University of Michigan, the latter taking the birds of the New World. Field Museum's share was purchased through the Emily Crane Chadbourne Fund.

—R.B.

Meteorology and Meteoritics

The meteorites of the meteorite collection have no relation to meteorology, the weather science. The two names are similar because they are both derived from the same Greek word which means phenomena of the upper atmosphere. Meteorology, the weather science, is largely based on such atmospheric phenomena as winds and rains,

and meteors become luminous in the upper air. The science of meteorites is called meteoritics.

THE STRANGE NESTING HABITS OF RHINOCEROS HORNBILL

An example of successful companionate marriage among the birds is found in the life of the rhinoceros hornbill. This large and peculiar bird, which has a grotesque sort of beauty, is native to the Malay Peninsula, Borneo, and Sumatra.

The extraordinary nesting habits of this bird are illustrated in an exhibit in the systematic bird series in Hall 21. After pairing, the hornbills select a hollow tree which the female enters. Then, with the assistance of the male, who remains outside, the female walls up the entrance with mud and other materials until only a small slit is left open through which she can thrust her long narrow bill. During the entire



Rhinoceros Hornbill

Exhibit in Hall 21 showing male bird on outside of hollow tree in which his mate has been sealed during nesting period. Her bill can be seen protruding through hole in trunk.

period of laying and incubating the eggs, and the growth of the young to the flying age, the female remains imprisoned in the trunk. The male, free on the outside to do as he pleases, remains nevertheless faithful to his mate, returning frequently with food which he deposits in her bill through the slot in the tree, and otherwise assiduously attending to her needs.

This peculiar habit is undoubtedly resorted to as a protection for the eggs and young from the marauding squirrels and monkeys which abound in the tropical forests. The Museum's exhibit of the rhinoceros hornbill shows the male characteristically perched on the outside of a hollow tree trunk, and the bill of his mate protruding through the slit from the inside, preparatory to receiving food.

The rhinoceros hornbill is so-called because it has a large hornlike casque above its bill which gives its head a resemblance to that of a rhinoceros. Specimens of other hornbills with the same general characteristics, but differing in size, color and shape of the horn, are also on exhibition. Among them are species from Asia, Africa, the Philippines, and New Guinea.

EGYPTIANS' MORAL CODE REVEALED BY PAPYRUS

A good key to the standards of morality existing in ancient Egypt is found in the pleas to the gods contained in a "book of the dead" belonging to a lady named Isty who lived about 1000 B.C. This funeral papyrus is one of a collection on exhibition in Hall J at Field Museum. Dr. T. George Allen, Assistant Curator of Egyptian Archaeology, deciphered it. It describes Isty as "the housemistress, the chantress of Amon."

That the moral ideals of the Egyptians were similar to those of Christianity is revealed in the denials of sins made by Isty in her manuscript, which is about eight feet long, and about half of which is devoted to these denials. The papyrus depicts forty-one divine judges, to each of whom is addressed one denial of a specific sin. Most of these sins would classify as such under the Christian code. Isty denies, among other things, that she has been guilty of murder, stealing, uttering falsehoods, sacrilege, wrathfulness, cruelty, adultery, violence, rebellion, extravagance, plundering, lust, blasphemy, uncleanness, nagging, quarrelsomeness, causing sorrow, or hasty judgment. Even the Christian idea of "turning the other cheek" and forgiveness seems to have been anticipated, as one of Isty's pleas reads, "I have not harmed an evil-doer."

The papyrus is accompanied in the exhibit by a line-by-line translation and explanation of the hieroglyphics. Isty's burial was found in a great cache at Deir el-Bahri, part of the cemetery of Thebes, which was uncovered by archaeologists in 1891. The burial document was presented to the Museum by the late Martin A. Ryerson. It is half in colored vignettes, and half in hieroglyphics. Pictures represent incidents connected with the death and posthumous adventures of Isty among the magical powers of the land of the dead. The sacred phoenix, and the gods Nut, Osiris and other deities appear. The papyrus ends with a spell supposed to enable the deceased to join Re, the sun-god, in his daily journeys across the sky.

NEGRO CULTURE IN GUIANA

Eight objects from Dutch Guiana, South America, recently presented to the Museum by Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Berkson, of Highland Park, Illinois, are of especial interest because they show the survival of Negro crafts that have persisted in the West Indies and Guiana since the importation of slaves from West Africa several centuries ago.

Research has indicated that much of the culture of West Africa—for instance folklore, magical practices, religious beliefs, and artistic designs—has survived despite a foreign and hostile environment. This observation is confirmed by inspecting the wood carvings from Mr. and Mrs. Berkson.

Included are a barrel-shaped drum with a pegged membrane, and a stool which has a decorative design in the form of a figure eight, both of which are characteristic of West African art. A stirrer and spoon carved from one piece of wood and fastened together by four wooden links could be matched not only in West Africa but as far south as Zululand. An excellent wooden hair comb is typical of those worn by Negroes of West and Central Africa.

These objects provide an impressive example of the vitality of a culture even when the roots of that culture are torn from their native soil.

—W.D.H.



1935. "The Starne Nesting Habits of Rhinoceros Hornbill." *Field Museum news* 6(9), 3-3.

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